

Classic Poetry Series

Hilaire Belloc

- poems -

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A Trinity

Of three in One and One in three
My narrow mind would doubting be
Till Beauty, Grace and Kindness met
And all at once were Juliet.

Hilaire Belloc

Algernon

Who played with a Loaded Gun, and, on missing his Sister was reprimanded by his Father.

Young Algernon, the Doctor's Son,
Was playing with a Loaded Gun.
He pointed it towards his Sister,
Aimed very carefully, but
Missed her!
His Father, who was standing near,
The Loud Explosion chanced to Hear,
And reprimanded Algernon
For playing with a Loaded Gun.

Hilaire Belloc

Ballade to Our Lady of Czestochowa

I

Lady and Queen and Mystery manifold
And very Regent of the untroubled sky,
Whom in a dream St. Hilda did behold
And heard a woodland music passing by:
You shall receive me when the clouds are high
With evening and the sheep attain the fold.
This is the faith that I have held and hold,
And this is that in which I mean to die.

II

Steep are the seas and savaging and cold
In broken waters terrible to try;
And vast against the winter night the wold,
And harbourless for any sail to lie.
But you shall lead me to the lights, and I
Shall hymn you in a harbour story told.
This is the faith that I have held and hold,
And this is that in which I mean to die.

III

Help of the half-defeated, House of gold,
Shrine of the Sword, and Tower of Ivory;
Splendour apart, supreme and aureoled,
The Battler's vision and the World's reply.
You shall restore me, O my last Ally,
To vengeance and the glories of the bold.
This is the faith that I have held and hold,
And this is that in which I mean to die.

Envoi

Prince of the degradations, bought and sold,
These verses, written in your crumbling sty,
Proclaim the faith that I have held and hold
And publish that in which I mean to die.

Hilaire Belloc

Because My Faltering Feet

Because my faltering feet may fail to dare
The first descendant of the steps of Hell
Give me the Word in time that triumphs there.
I too must pass into the misty hollow
Where all our living laughter stops: and hark!
The tiny stuffless voices of the dark
Have called me, called me, till I needs must follow:
Give me the Word and I'll attempt it well.

Say it's the little winking of an eye
Which in that issue is uncurtained quite;
A little sleep that helps a moment by
Between the thin dawn and the large daylight.
Ah! tell me more than yet was hoped of men;
Swear that's true now, and I'll believe it then.

Hilaire Belloc

Big Baboon, The

The Big Baboon is found upon
The plains of Cariboo:
He goes about with nothing on
(A shocking thing to do).

But if he dressed up respectably
And let his whiskers grow,
How like this Big Baboon would be
To Mister So-and-so!

Hilaire Belloc

Birds, The

When Jesus Christ was four years old
The angels brought Him toys of gold,
Which no man ever had bought or sold.

And yet with these He would not play.
He made Him small fowl out of clay,
And blessed them till they flew away:
Tu creasti Domine

Jesus Christ, Thou child so wise,
Bless mine hands and fill mine eyes,
And bring my soul to Paradise.

Hilaire Belloc

Catholic Sun, The

Wherever the Catholic sun doth shine,
There's always laughter and good red wine.
At least I've always found it so.
Benedicamus Domino!

Hilaire Belloc

Charles Augustus Fortescue

The nicest child I ever knew
Was Charles Augustus Fortescue.
He never lost his cap, or tore
His stockings or his pinafore:
In eating Bread he made no Crumbs,
He was extremely fond of sums,

To which, however, he preferred
The Parsing of a Latin Word--
He sought, when it was within his power,
For information twice an hour,

And as for finding Mutton-Fat
Unappatising, far from that!
He often, at his Father's Board,
Would beg them, of his own accord,

To give him, if they did not mind,
The Greasiest Morsels they could find--
His Later Years did not belie
The Promise of his Infancy.
In Public Life he always tried
To take a judgement Broad and Wide;

In Private, none was more than he
Renowned for quiet courtesy.
He rose at once in his Career,
And long before his Fortieth Year

Had wedded Fifi, Only Child
Of Bunyan, First Lord Aberfylde.
He thus became immensely Rich,
And built the Splendid Mansion which

Is called The Cedars, Muswell Hill,
Where he resides in affluence still,
To show what everybody might
Become by SIMPLY DOING RIGHT.

Hilaire Belloc

Drinking Song, On the Excellence of Burgundy Wine

My jolly fat host with your face all a-grin,
Come, open the door to us, let us come in.
A score of stout fellows who think it no sin
If they toast till they're hoarse, and drink till they spin,
Hoofed it amain
Rain or no rain,
To crack your old jokes, and your bottle to drain.

Such a warmth in the belly that nectar begets
As soon as his guts with its humour he wets,
The miser his gold, and the student his debts,
And the beggar his rags and his hunger forgets.
For there's never a wine
Like this tipples of thine
From the great hill of Nuits to the River of Rhine.

Outside you may hear the great gusts as they go
By Foy, by Duerne, and the hills of Lerraulx,
But the rain he may rain, and the wind he may blow,
If the Devil's above there's good liquor below.
So it abound,
Pass it around,
Burgundy's Burgundy all the year round.

Hilaire Belloc

Dromedary, The

The Dromedary is a cheerful bird:
I cannot say the same about the Kurd.

Hilaire Belloc

Early Morning, The

The moon on the one hand, the dawn on the other:
The moon is my sister, the dawn is my brother.
The moon on my left and the dawn on my right.
My brother, good morning: my sister, good night.

Hilaire Belloc

Elephant, The

When people call this beast to mind,
They marvel more and more
At such a little tail behind,
So large a trunk before.

Hilaire Belloc

Evenlode, The

I will not try to reach again,
I will not set my sail alone,
To moor a boat bereft of men
At Yarnton's tiny docks of stone.

But I will sit beside the fire,
And put my hand before my eyes,
And trace, to fill my heart's desire,
The last of all our Odysseys.

The quiet evening kept her tryst:
Beneath an open sky we rode,
And passed into a wandering mist
Along the perfect Evenlode.

The tender Evenlode that makes
Her meadows hush to hear the sound
Of waters mingling in the brakes,
And binds my heart to English ground.

A lovely river, all alone,
She lingers in the hills and holds
A hundred little towns of stone,
Forgotten in the western wolds.

Hilaire Belloc

Franklin Hyde

Who caroused in the Dirt and was corrected by His Uncle.

His Uncle came upon Franklin Hyde
Carousing in the Dirt.
He Shook him hard from Side to Side
And Hit him till it Hurt,

Exclaiming, with a Final Thud,
"Take that! Abandoned boy!
For Playing with Disgusting Mud
As though it were a Toy!"

Moral:
From Franklin Hyde's adventure, learn
To pass your Leisure Time
In Cleanly Merriment, and turn
From Mud and Ooze and Slime
And every form of Nastiness-
But, on the other Hand,
Children in ordinary Dress
May always play with Sand.

Hilaire Belloc

Frog, The

Be kind and tender to the Frog,
And do not call him names,
As "Slimy skin," or "Polly-wog,"
Or likewise "Ugly James,"
Or "Gap-a-grin," or "Toad-gone-wrong,"
Or "Bill Bandy-knees":
The Frog is justly sensitive
To epithets like these.

No animal will more repay
A treatment kind and fair;
At least so lonely people say
Who keep a frog (and, by the way,
They are extremely rare).

Hilaire Belloc

George

Who played with a Dangerous Toy, and suffered a Catastrophe of considerable Dimensions

When George's Grandmamma was told
That George had been as good as gold,
She promised in the afternoon
To buy him an Immense BALLOON.
And so she did; but when it came,
It got into the candle flame,
And being of a dangerous sort
Exploded with a loud report!
The lights went out! The windows broke!
The room was filled with reeking smoke.
And in the darkness shrieks and yells
Were mingled with electric bells,
And falling masonry and groans,
And crunching, as of broken bones,
And dreadful shrieks, when, worst of all,
The house itself began to fall!
It tottered, shuddering to and fro,
Then crashed into the street below-
Which happened to be Savile Row.

When help arrived, among the dead
Were Cousin Mary, Little Fred,
The Footmen (both of them), the Groom,
The man that cleaned the Billiard-Room,
The Chaplain, and the Still-Room Maid.
And I am dreadfully afraid
That Monsieur Champignon, the Chef,
Will now be permanently deaf-
And both his aides are much the same;
While George, who was in part to blame,
Received, you will regret to hear,
A nasty lump behind the ear.

Moral:
The moral is that little boys
Should not be given dangerous toys.

Hilaire Belloc

Godolphin Horne

Who was cursed with the Sin of Pride, and Became a Boot-Black.

Godolphin Horne was Nobly Born;
He held the Human Race in Scorn,
And lived with all his Sisters where
His father lived, in Berkeley Square.
And oh! The Lad was Deathly Proud!
He never shook your Hand or Bowed,
But merely smirked and nodded thus:
How perfectly ridiculous!
Alas! That such Affected Tricks
Should flourish in a Child of Six!
(For such was Young Godolphin's age).
Just then, the Court required a Page,
Whereat the Lord High Chamberlain
(The Kindest and the Best of Men),
He went good-naturedly and took
A perfectly enormous Book
Called People Qualified to Be
Attendant on His Majesty,
And murmured, as he scanned the list
(To see that no one should be missed),
"There's William Coutts has got the Flu,
And Billy Higgs would never do,
And Guy de Vere is far too young,
And ... wasn't D'Alton's father hung?
And as for Alexander Byng!-...
I think I know the kind of thing,
A Churchman, cleanly, nobly born,
Come, let us say Godolphin Horne?"
But hardly had he said the word
When Murmurs of Dissent were heard.
The King of Iceland's Eldest Son
Said, "Thank you! I am taking none!"
The Aged Duchess of Athlone
Remarked, in her sub-acid tone,
"I doubt if He is what we need!"
With which the Bishops all agreed;
And even Lady Mary Flood
(So kind, and oh! So really good)
Said, "No! He wouldn't do at all,
He'd make us feel a lot too small."
The Chamberlain said, "Well, well, well!
No doubt you're right. One cannot tell!"
He took his Gold and Diamond Pen
And scratched Godolphin out again.
So now Godolphin is the Boy
Who Blacks the Boots at the Savoy.

Hilaire Belloc

Ha'nacker Mill

Sally is gone that was so kindly,
Sally is gone from Ha'nacker Hill
And the Briar grows ever since then so blindly;
And ever since then the clapper is still...
And the sweeps have fallen from Ha'nacker Mill.

Ha'nacker Hill is in Desolation:
Ruin a-top and a field unploughed.
And Spirits that call on a fallen nation,
Spirits that loved her calling aloud,
Spirits abroad in a windy cloud.

Spirits that call and no one answers --
Ha'nacker's down and England's done.
Wind and Thistle for pipe and dancers,
And never a ploughman under the Sun:
Never a ploughman. Never a one.

Hilaire Belloc

Henry King

The Chief Defect of Henry King
Was chewing little bits of String.
At last he swallowed some which tied
Itself in ugly Knots inside.

Physicians of the Utmost Fame
Were called at once; but when they came
They answered, as they took their Fees,
"There is no Cure for this Disease.

"Henry will very soon be dead."
His Parents stood about his Bed
Lamenting his Untimely Death,
When Henry, with his Latest Breath,

Cried, "Oh, my Friends, be warned by me,
That Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch, and Tea
Are all the Human Frame requires..."
With that, the Wretched Child expires.

Hilaire Belloc

Heretics All

Heretics all, whoever you may be,
In Tarbes or Nimes, or over the sea,
You never shall have good words from me.
Caritas non conturbat me.

But Catholic men that live upon wine
Are deep in the water, and frank, and fine;
Wherever I travel I find it so,
Benedicamus Domino.

On chiding women that are forelorn,
And men that sweat in nothing but scorn:
That is on all that ever were born,
Miserere Domine.

To my poor self on my deathbed,
And all my dear companions dead,
Because of the love that I bore them,
Dona Eis Requiem.

Hilaire Belloc

Heroic Poem in Praise of Wine

To exalt, enthrone, establish and defend,
To welcome home mankind's mysterious friend
Wine, true begetter of all arts that be;
Wine, privilege of the completely free;
Wine the recorder; wine the sagely strong;
Wine, bright avenger of sly-dealing wrong,
Awake, Ausonian Muse, and sing the vineyard song!

Sing how the Charioteer from Asia came,
And on his front the little dancing flame
Which marked the God-head. Sing the Panther-team,
The gilded Thrysus twirling, and the gleam
Of cymbals through the darkness. Sing the drums.
He comes; the young renewer of Hellas comes!
The Seas await him. Those Aegean Seas
Roll from the dawning, ponderous, ill at ease,
In lifts of lead, whose cresting hardly breaks
To ghostly foam, when suddenly there awakes
A mountain glory inland. All the skies
Are luminous; and amid the sea bird cries
The mariner hears a morning breeze arise.
Then goes the Pageant forward. The sea-way
Sillvers the feet of that august array
Trailing above the waters, through the airs;
And as they pass a wind before them bears
The quickening word, the influence magical.
The Islands have received it, marble-tall;
The long shores of the mainland. Something fills
The warm Euboean combes, the sacred hills
Of Aulis and of Argos. Still they move
Touching the City walls, the Temple grove,
Till, far upon the horizon-glint, a gleam
Of light, of trembling light, revealed they seem
Turned to a cloud, but to a cloud that shines,
And everywhere as they pass, the Vines! The Vines!
The Vines, the conquering Vines! And the Vine
breaths
Her savour through the upland, empty heaths
Of treeless wastes; the Vines have come to where
The dark Pelasgian steep defends the lair
Of the wolf's hiding; to the empty fields
By Aufidus, the dry campaign that yields
No harvest for the husbandman, but now
Shall bear a nobler foison than the plough;
To where, festooned along the tall elm trees,
Tendrils are mirrored in Tyrrhenian seas;
To where the South awaits them; even to where
Stark, African informed of burning air,
Upturned to Heaven the broad Hipponian plain
Extends luxurious and invites the main.
Guelma's a mother: barren Thaspsa breeds;
And northward in the valleys, next the meads

That sleep by misty river banks, the Vines
Have struck to spread below the solemn pines.
The Vines are on the roof-trees. All the Shrines
And Homes of men are consecrate with Vines.

And now the task of that triumphant day
Has reached to victory. In the reddening ray
With all his train, from hard Iberian lands
Fulfilled, apparent, that Creator stands
Halted on Atlas. Far Beneath him, far,
The strength of Ocean darkening and the star
Beyond all shores. There is a silence made.
It glorifies: and the gigantic shade
Of Hercules adores him from the West.
Dead Lucre: burnt Ambition: Wine is best.

But what are these that from the outer murk
Of dense mephitic vapours creeping lurk
To breathe foul airs from that corrupted well
Which oozes slime along the floor of Hell?
These are the stricken palsied brood of sin
In whose vile veins, poor, poisonous and thin,
Decoctions of embittered hatreds crawl:
These are the Water-Drinkers, cursed all!
On what gin-sodden Hags, what flaccid sires
Bred these White Slugs from what exhaust desires?
In what close prison's horror were their wiles
Watched by what tyrant power with evil smiles;
Or in what caverns, blocked from grace and air
Received they, then, the mandates of despair?
What! Must our race, our tragic race, that roam
All exiled from our first, and final, home:
That in one moment of temptation lost
Our heritage, and now wander, hunger-tost
Beyond the Gates (still speaking with our eyes
For ever of remembered Paradise),
Must we with every gift accepted, still,
With every joy, receive attendant ill?
Must some lewd evil follow all our good
And muttering dog our brief beatitude?

A primal doom, inexorable, wise,
Permitted, ordered, even these to rise.
Even in the shadow of so bright a Lord
Must swarm and propagate the filthy horde
Debased, accursed I say, abhorrent and abhorred.
Accursed and curse-bestowing. For whosoe'er
Shall suffer their contagion, everywhere
Falls from the estate of man and finds his end
To the mere beverage of the beast condemned.
For such as these in vain the Rhine has rolled
Imperial centuries by hills of gold;

For such as these the flashing Rhone shall rage
In vain its lightning through the Hermitage
Or level-browed divine Touraine receive
The tribute of her vintages at eve.
For such as these Burgundian heats in vain
Swell the rich slope or load the empurpled plain.
Bootless for such as these the mighty task
Of bottling God the Father in a flask
And leading all Creation down distilled
To one small ardent sphere immensely filled.
With memories empty, with experience null,
With vapid eye-balls meaningless and dull
They pass unblest through the unfruitful light;
And when we open the bronze doors of Night,
When we in high carousal, we reclined,
Spur up to Heaven the still ascending mind,
Pass with the all inspiring, to and fro,
The torch of genius and the Muse's glow,
They, lifeless, stare at vacancy alone
Or plan mean traffic, or repeat their moan.
We, when repose demands us, welcomed are
In young white arms, like our great Exemplar
Who, wearied with creation, takes his rest
And sinks to sleep on Ariadne's breast.
They through the darkness into darkness press
Despised, abandoned and companionless.
And when the course of either's sleep has run
We leap to life like heralds of the sun;
We from the couch in roseate mornings gay
Salute as equals the exultant day
While they, the unworthy, unrewarded, they
The dank despisers of the Vine, arise
To watch grey dawns and mourn indifferent skies.

Forget them! Form the Dionysian ring
And pulse the ground, and Io, Io, sing.

Father Lenaean, to whom our strength belongs,
Our loves, our wars, our laughter and our songs,
Remember our inheritance, who praise
Your glory in these last unhappy days
When beauty sickens and a muddied robe
Of baseness fouls the universal globe.
Though all the Gods indignant and their train
Abandon ruined man, do thou remain!
By thee the vesture of our life was made,
The Embattled Gate, the lordly Colonnade,
The woven fabric's gracious hues, the sound
Of trumpets, and the quivering fountain-round,
And, indestructible, the Arch, and, high,
The Shaft of Stone that stands against the sky,
And, last, the guardian-genius of them, Rhyme,

Come from beyond the world to conquer time:
All these are thine, Lenean.

By thee do seers the inward light discern;
By thee the statue lives, the Gods return;
By thee the thunder and the falling foam
Of loud Acquoria's torrent call to Rome;
Alba rejoices in a thousand springs,
Gensano laughs, and Orvieto sings...
But, Ah! With Orvieto, with that name
Of dark, Etrurian, subterranean flame
The years dissolve. I am standing in that hour
Of majesty Septembril, and the power
Which swells the clusters when the nights are still
With autumn stars on Orvieto hill.

Had these been mine, Ausonian Muse, to know
The large contented oxen heaving slow;
To count my sheaves at harvest; so to spend
Perfected days in peace until the end;
With every evening's dust of gold to hear
The bells upon the pasture height, the clear
Full horn of herdsmen gathering in the kine
To ancient byres in hamlets Appenine,
And crown abundant age with generous ease:
Had these, Ausonian Muse, had these, had these.....

But since I would not, since I could not stay,
Let me remember even in this my day
How, when the ephemeral vision's lure is past
All, all, must face their Passion at the last

Was there not one that did to Heaven complain
How, driving through the midnight and the rain,
He struck, the Atlantic seethe and surge before,
Wrecked in the North along a lonely shore
To make the lights of home and hear his name no
more.

Was there not one that from a desperate field
Rode with no guerdon but a rifted shield;
A name disherited; a broken sword;
Wounds unrenowned; battle beneath no Lord;
Strong blows, but on the void, and toil without
reward.

When from the waste of such long labour done
I too must leave the grape-ennobling sun
And like the vineyard worker take my way
Down the long shadows of declining day,
Bend on the sombre plain my clouded sight
And leave the mountain to the advancing night,
Come to the term of all that was mine own

With nothingness before me, and alone;
Then to what hope of answer shall I turn?
Comrade-Commander whom I dared not earn,
What said You then to trembling friends and
few?
"A moment, and I drink it with you new:
But in my Father's Kingdom." So, my Friend,
Let not Your cup desert me in the end.
But when the hour of mine adventure's near
Just and benignant, let my youth appear
Bearing a Chalice, open, golden, wide,
With benediction graven on its side.
So touch my dying lip: so bridge that deep:
So pledge my waking from the gift of sleep,
And, sacramental, raise me the Divine:
Strong brother in God and last companion, Wine.

Hilaire Belloc

Hildebrand

Who was frightened by a Passing Motor, and was brought to Reason

"Oh murder! What was that, Papa!"
"My child, It was a Motor-Car,
A most Ingenious Toy!
Designed to Captivate and Charm
Much rather than to rouse Alarm
In any English Boy.

"What would your Great Grandfather who
Was Aide-de-Camp to General Brue,
And lost a leg at Waterloo,
And Quatre-Bras and Ligny too!
And died at Trafalgar!-
What would he have remarked to hear
His Young Descendant shriek with fear,
Because he happened to be near
A Harmless Motor-Car!
But do not fret about it! Come!
We'll off to Town
And purchase some!"

Hilaire Belloc

Hippopotamus, The

I shoot the Hippopotamus
With bullets made of platinum,
Because if I use leaden ones
His hide is sure to flatten 'em.

Hilaire Belloc

Is there any reward?

Is there any reward?
I'm beginning to doubt it.
I am broken and bored,
Is there any reward
Reassure me, Good Lord,
And inform me about it.
Is there any reward?
I'm beginning to doubt it.

Hilaire Belloc

Jim

Who ran away from his Nurse and was eaten by a Lion

There was a Boy whose name was Jim;
His Friends were very good to him.
They gave him Tea, and Cakes, and Jam,
And slices of delicious Ham,
And Chocolate with pink inside
And little Tricycles to ride,
And read him Stories through and through,
And even took him to the Zoo--
But there it was the dreadful Fate
Befell him, which I now relate.

You know--or at least you ought to know,
For I have often told you so--
That Children never are allowed
To leave their Nurses in a Crowd;
Now this was Jim's especial Foible,
He ran away when he was able,
And on this inauspicious day
He slipped his hand and ran away!

He hadn't gone a yard when--Bang!
With open Jaws, a lion sprang,
And hungrily began to eat
The Boy: beginning at his feet.
Now, just imagine how it feels
When first your toes and then your heels,
And then by gradual degrees,
Your shins and ankles, calves and knees,
Are slowly eaten, bit by bit.
No wonder Jim detested it!
No wonder that he shouted ``Hi!"

The Honest Keeper heard his cry,
Though very fat he almost ran
To help the little gentleman.
``Ponto!" he ordered as he came
(For Ponto was the Lion's name),
``Ponto!" he cried, with angry Frown,
``Let go, Sir! Down, Sir! Put it down!"
The Lion made a sudden stop,
He let the Dainty Morsel drop,
And slunk reluctant to his Cage,
Snarling with Disappointed Rage.
But when he bent him over Jim,
The Honest Keeper's Eyes were dim.
The Lion having reached his Head,
The Miserable Boy was dead!

When Nurse informed his Parents, they
Were more Concerned than I can say:--

His Mother, as She dried her eyes,
Said, `` Well--it gives me no surprise,
He would not do as he was told!"
His Father, who was self-controlled,
Bade all the children round attend
To James's miserable end,
And always keep a-hold of Nurse
For fear of finding something worse.

Hilaire Belloc

Juliet

How did the party go in Portman Square?
I cannot tell you; Juliet was not there.

And how did Lady Gaster's party go?
Juliet was next me and I do not know.

Hilaire Belloc

Lines For A Christmas Card

May all my enemies go to hell,
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel.

Hilaire Belloc

Lines to a Don

Remote and ineffectual Don
That dared attack my Chesterton,
With that poor weapon, half-impelled,
Unlearnt, unsteady, hardly held,
Unworthy for a tilt with men--
Your quavering and corroded pen;
Don poor at Bed and worse at Table,
Don pinched, Don starved, Don miserable;
Don stuttering, Don with roving eyes,
Don nervous, Don of crudities;
Don clerical, Don ordinary,
Don self-absorbed and solitary;
Don here-and-there, Don epileptic;
Don puffed and empty, Don dyspeptic;
Don middle-class, Don sycophantic,
Don dull, Don brutish, Don pedantic;
Don hypocritical, Don bad,
Don furtive, Don three-quarters mad;
Don (since a man must make an end),
Don that shall never be my friend.

Don different from those regal Dons!
With hearts of gold and lungs of bronze,
Who shout and bang and roar and bawl
The Absolute across the hall,
Or sail in amply bellying gown
Enormous through the Sacred Town,
Bearing from College to their homes
Deep cargoes of gigantic tomes;
Dons admirable! Dons of Might!
Uprising on my inward sight
Compact of ancient tales, and port
And sleep--and learning of a sort.
Dons English, worthy of the land;
Dons rooted; Dons that understand.
Good Dons perpetual that remain
A landmark, walling in the plain--
The horizon of my memories--
Like large and comfortable trees.

Don very much apart from these,
Thou scapegoat Don, thou Don devoted,
Don to thine own damnation quoted,
Perplexed to find thy trivial name
Reared in my verse to lasting shame.
Don dreadful, rasping Don and wearing,
Repulsive Don--Don past all bearing.
Don of the cold and doubtful breath,
Don despicable, Don of death;
Don nasty, skimpy, silent, level;
Don evil, Don that serves the devil.

Don ugly--that makes fifty lines.
There is a Canon which confines
A Rhymed Octosyllabic Curse
If written in Iambic Verse
To fifty lines. I never cut;
I far prefer to end it--but
Believe me I shall soon return.
My fires are banked, but still they burn
To write some more about the Don
That dared attack my Chesterton.

Hilaire Belloc

Lion, The

The Lion, the Lion, he dwells in the Waste,
He has a big head and a very small waist;
But his shoulders are stark, and his jaws they are grim,
And a good little child will not play with him.

Hilaire Belloc

Lord Finchley

Lord Finchley tried to mend the Electric Light
Himself. It struck him dead: And serve him right!
It is the business of the wealthy man
To give employment to the artisan.

Hilaire Belloc

Lord Lundy

Who was too Freely Moved to Tears, and thereby ruined his Political Career

Lord Lundy from his earliest years
Was far too freely moved to Tears.
For instance if his Mother said,
"Lundy! It's time to go to Bed!"
He bellowed like a Little Turk.
Or if his father Lord Dunquerque
Said "Hi!" in a Commanding Tone,
"Hi, Lundy! Leave the Cat alone!"
Lord Lundy, letting go its tail,
Would raise so terrible a wail
As moved His Grandpapa the Duke
To utter the severe rebuke:
"When I, Sir! was a little Boy,
An Animal was not a Toy!"

His father's Elder Sister, who
Was married to a Parvenoo,
Confided to Her Husband, Drat!
The Miserable, Peevish Brat!
Why don't they drown the Little Beast?"
Suggestions which, to say the least,
Are not what we expect to hear
From Daughters of an English Peer.
His Grandmamma, His Mother's Mother,
Who had some dignity or other,
The Garter, or no matter what,
I can't remember all the Lot!
Said "Oh! That I were Brisk and Spry
To give him that for which to cry!"
(An empty wish, alas! For she
Was Blind and nearly ninety-three).

The Dear Old Butler thought-but there!
I really neither know nor care
For what the Dear Old Butler thought!
In my opinion, Butlers ought
To know their place, and not to play
The Old Retainer night and day.
I'm getting tired and so are you,
Let's cut the poem into two!

Second Part

It happened to Lord Lundy then,
As happens to so many men:
Towards the age of twenty-six,
They shoved him into politics;
In which profession he commanded
The Income that his rank demanded
In turn as Secretary for

India, the Colonies, and War.
But very soon his friends began
To doubt is he were quite the man:
Thus if a member rose to say
(As members do from day to day),
"Arising out of that reply . . .!"
Lord Lundy would begin to cry.
A Hint at harmless little jobs
Would shake him with convulsive sobs.
While as for Revelations, these
Would simply bring him to his knees,
And leave him whimpering like a child.
It drove his colleagues raving wild!
They let him sink from Post to Post,
From fifteen hundred at the most
To eight, and barely six--and then
To be Curator of Big Ben! . . .
And finally there came a Threat
To oust him from the Cabinet!

The Duke -- his aged grand-sire -- bore
The shame till he could bear no more.
He rallied his declining powers,
Summoned the youth to Brackley Towers,
And bitterly addressed him thus--
"Sir! you have disappointed us!
We had intended you to be
The next Prime Minister but three:
The stocks were sold; the Press was squared:
The Middle Class was quite prepared.
But as it is! . . . My language fails!
Go out and govern New South Wales!"

The Aged Patriot groaned and died:
And gracious! how Lord Lundy cried!

Hilaire Belloc

Marmozet, The

The species Man and Marmozet
Are intimately linked;
The Marmozet survives as yet,
But Men are all extinct.

Hilaire Belloc

Microbe, The

The Microbe is so very small
You cannot make him out at all,
But many sanguine people hope
To see him through a microscope.
His jointed tongue that lies beneath
A hundred curious rows of teeth;
His seven tufted tails with lots
Of lovely pink and purple spots,
On each of which a pattern stands,
Composed of forty separate bands;
His eyebrows of a tender green;
All these have never yet been seen--
But Scientists, who ought to know,
Assure us that they must be so....
Oh! let us never, never doubt
What nobody is sure about!

Hilaire Belloc

Night, The

Most Holy Night, that still dost keep
The keys of all the doors of sleep,
To me when my tired eyelids close
Give thou repose.

And let the far lament of them
That chaunt the dead day's requiem
Make in my ears, who wakeful lie,
Soft lullaby.

Let them that guard the hornèd Moon
By my bedside their memories croon.
So shall I have new dreams and blest
In my brief rest.

Fold thy great wings about my face,
Hide day-dawn from my resting-place,
And cheat me with thy false delight,
Most Holy Night.

Hilaire Belloc

October

Look, how those steep woods on the mountain's face
Burn, burn against the sunset; now the cold
Invades our very noon: the year's grown old,
Mornings are dark, and evenings come apace.
The vines below have lost their purple grace,
And in Forreze the white wrack backward rolled,
Hangs to the hills tempestuous, fold on fold,
And moaning gusts make desolate all the place.

Mine host the month, at thy good hostelry,
Tired limbs I'll stretch and steaming beast I'll tether;
Pile on great logs with Gascon hand and free,
And pour the Gascon stuff that laughs at weather;
Swell your tough lungs, north wind, no whit care we,
Singing old songs and drinking wine together.

Hilaire Belloc

On the Ladies of Pixton

Three Graces; and the mother were a Grace,
But for profounder meaning in her face.

Hilaire Belloc

On the Little God

Of all the gods that gave me all their glories
To-day there deigns to walk with me but one.
I lead him by the hand and tell him stories.
It is the Queen of Cyprus' little son.

Hilaire Belloc

On Torture: A Public Singer

Torture will give a dozen pence or more
To keep a drab from bawling at his door.
The public taste is quite a different thing-
Torture is positively paid to sing.

Hilaire Belloc

On Two Ministers of State

Lump says that Caliban's of gutter breed,
And Caliban says Lump's a fool indeed,
And Caliban and Lump and I are all agreed.

Hilaire Belloc

On Vital Statistics

Ill fares the land to hast'ning ills a prey (1)
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.'
But how much more unfortunate are those
Where wealth declines and population grows!

(1)This line is execrable; and I note it.
I quote it as the faulty poet wrote it.

Hilaire Belloc

Pelagian Drinking Song, The

Pelagius lived at Kardanoel
And taught a doctrine there
How, whether you went to heaven or to hell
It was your own affair.
It had nothing to do with the Church, my boy,
But was your own affair.

No, he didn't believe
In Adam and Eve
He put no faith therein!
His doubts began
With the Fall of Man
And he laughed at Original Sin.
With my row-ti-tow
Ti-oodly-ow
He laughed at original sin.

Then came the bishop of old Auxerre
Germanus was his name
He tore great handfuls out of his hair
And he called Pelagius shame.
And with his stout Episcopal staff
So thoroughly whacked and banged
The heretics all, both short and tall --
They rather had been hanged.

Oh he whacked them hard, and he banged them long
Upon each and all occasions
Till they bellowed in chorus, loud and strong
Their orthodox persuasions.
With my row-ti-tow
Ti-oodly-ow
Their orthodox persuasions.

Now the faith is old and the Devil bold
Exceedingly bold indeed.
And the masses of doubt that are floating about
Would smother a mortal creed.
But we that sit in a sturdy youth
And still can drink strong ale
Let us put it away to infallible truth
That always shall prevail.

And thank the Lord
For the temporal sword
And howling heretics too.
And all good things
Our Christendom brings
But especially barley brew!
With my row-ti-tow
Ti-oodly-ow
Especially barley brew!

Hilaire Belloc

Rebecca

Who Slammed Doors For Fun And Perished Miserably

A trick that everyone abhors
In little girls is slamming doors.
A wealthy banker's little daughter
Who lived in Palace Green, Bayswater
(By name Rebecca Offendort),
Was given to this furious sport.

She would deliberately go
And slam the door like billy-o!
To make her uncle Jacob start.
She was not really bad at heart,
But only rather rude and wild;
She was an aggravating child...

It happened that a marble bust
Of Abraham was standing just
Above the door this little lamb
Had carefully prepared to slam,
And down it came! It knocked her flat!
It laid her out! She looked like that.

Her funeral sermon (which was long
And followed by a sacred song)
Mentioned her virtues, it is true,
But dwelt upon her vices too,
And showed the deadful end of one
Who goes and slams the door for fun.

The children who were brought to hear
The awful tale from far and near
Were much impressed, and inly swore
They never more would slam the door,
-- As often they had done before.

Hilaire Belloc

Scorpion, The

The Scorpion is as black as soot,
He dearly loves to bite;
He is a most unpleasant brute
To find in bed at night.

Hilaire Belloc

September

I, from a window where the Meuse is wide,
Looked eastward out to the September night;
The men that in the hopeless battle died
Rose, and deployed, and stationed for the fight;
A brumal army, vague and ordered large
For mile on mile by some pale general,-
I saw them lean by companies to the charge,
But no man living heard the bugle-call.

And fading still, and pointing to their scars,
They fled in lessening clouds, where gray and high
Dawn lay along the heaven in misty bars;
But watching from that eastern casement, I
Saw the Republic splendid in the sky,
And round her terrible head the morning stars.

Hilaire Belloc

Song

Inviting the influence of a young lady upon the opening year

You wear the morning like your dress
And are with mastery crown'd;
When as you walk your loveliness
Goes shining all around:
Upon your secret, smiling way
Such new contents were found,
The Dancing Loves made holiday
On that delightful ground.
Then summon April forth, and send
Commandment through the flowers;
About our woods your grace extend,
A queen of careless hours.
For O! not Vera veil'd in rain,
Nor Dian's sacred Ring,
With all her royal nymphs in train
Could so lead on the Spring.

Hilaire Belloc

South Country, The

When I am living in the Midlands
That are sodden and unkind,
I light my lamp in the evening:
My work is left behind;
And the great hills of the South Country
Come back into my mind.

The great hills of the South Country
They stand along the sea;
And it's there walking in the high woods
That I could wish to be,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Walking along with me.

The men that live in North England
I saw them for a day:
Their hearts are set upon the waste fells,
Their skies are fast and grey;
From their castle-walls a man may see
The mountains far away.

The men that live in West England
They see the Severn strong,
A-rolling on rough water brown
Light aspen leaves along.
They have the secret of the Rocks,
And the oldest kind of song.

But the men that live in the South Country
Are the kindest and most wise,
They get their laughter from the loud surf,
And the faith in their happy eyes
Comes surely from our Sister the Spring
When over the sea she flies;
The violets suddenly bloom at her feet,
She blesses us with surprise.

I never get between the pines
But I smell the Sussex air;
Nor I never come on a belt of sand
But my home is there.
And along the sky the line of the Downs
So noble and so bare.

A lost thing could I never find,
Nor a broken thing mend:
And I fear I shall be all alone
When I get towards the end.
Who will there be to comfort me
Or who will be my friend?

I will gather and carefully make my friends

Of the men of the Sussex Weald;
They watch the stars from silent folds,
They stiffly plough the field.
By them and the God of the South Country
My poor soul shall be healed.

If I ever become a rich man,
Or if ever I grow to be old,
I will build a house with deep thatch
To shelter me from the cold,
And there shall the Sussex songs be sung
And the story of Sussex told.

I will hold my house in the high wood
Within a walk of the sea,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Shall sit and drink with me.

Hilaire Belloc

Talking (and Singing) of the Nordic Man

I

Behold, my child, the Nordic man,
And be as like him, as you can;
His legs are long, his mind is slow,
His hair is lank and made of tow.

II

And here we have the Alpine Race:
Oh! What a broad and foolish face!
His skin is of a dirty yellow.
He is a most unpleasant fellow.

III

The most degraded of them all
Mediterranean we call.
His hair is crisp, and even curls,
And he is saucy with the girls.

Hilaire Belloc

Tarantella

Do you remember an Inn,
Miranda?
Do you remember an Inn?
And the tedding and the bedding
Of the straw for a bedding,
And the fleas that tease in the High Pyrenees,
And the wine that tasted of tar?
And the cheers and the jeers of the young muleteers
(Under the vine of the dark veranda)?
Do you remember an Inn, Miranda,
Do you remember an Inn?
And the cheers and the jeers of the young muleteers
Who hadn't got a penny,
And who weren't paying any,
And the hammer at the doors and the din?
And the hip! hop! hap!
Of the clap
Of the hands to the swirl and the twirl
Of the girl gone chancing,
Glancing,
Dancing,
Backing and advancing,
Snapping of the clapper to the spin
Out and in--
And the ting, tong, tang of the guitar!
Do you remember an Inn,
Miranda?
Do you remember an Inn?

Never more;
Miranda,
Never more.
Only the high peaks hoar;
And Aragon a torrent at the door.
No sound
In the walls of the halls where falls
The tread
Of the feet of the dead to the ground,
No sound:
But the boom
Of the far waterfall like doom.

Hilaire Belloc

The Big Baboon

The Big Baboon is found upon
The plains of Cariboo:
He goes about with nothing on
(A shocking thing to do).

But if he dressed up respectably
And let his whiskers grow,
How like this Big Baboon would be
To Mister So-and-so!

Hilaire Belloc

The Big Baboon.

The Big Baboon is found upon
The plains of Cariboo:
He goes about with nothing on
(A shocking thing to do).

But if he dressed up respectably
And let his whiskers grow,
How like this Big Baboon would be
To Mister So-and-so!

Hilaire Belloc

The Birds

When Jesus Christ was four years old
The angels brought Him toys of gold,
Which no man ever had bought or sold.

And yet with these He would not play.
He made Him small fowl out of clay,
And blessed them till they flew away:
Tu creasti Domine

Jesus Christ, Thou child so wise,
Bless mine hands and fill mine eyes,
And bring my soul to Paradise.

Hilaire Belloc

The Catholic Sun

Wherever the Catholic sun doth shine,
There's always laughter and good red wine.
At least I've always found it so.
<i>Benedicamus Domino!</i>

Hilaire Belloc

The Death and Last Confession of Wandering Peter

When Peter Wanderwide was young
He wandered everywhere he would:
All that he approved was sung,
And most of what he saw was good.

When Peter Wanderwide was thrown
By Death himself beyond Auxerre,
He chanted in heroic tone
To priests and people gathered there:

"If all that I have loved and seen
Be with me on the Judgment Day,
I shall be saved the crowd between
From Satan and his foul array.

"Almighty God will surely cry,
'St. Michael! Who is this that stands
With Ireland in his dubious eye,
And Perigord between his hands,

"And on his arm the stirrup-thongs,
And in his gait the narrow seas,
And in his mouth Burgundian songs,
But in his heart the Pyrenees?"

"St. Michael then will answer right
(And not without angelic shame),
'I seem to know his face by sight:
I cannot recollect his name ?'

"St. Peter will befriend me then,
Because my name is Peter too:
'I know him for the best of men
That ever walloped barley brew.

"And though I did not know him well
And though his soul were clogged with sin,
I hold the keys of Heaven and Hell.
Be welcome, noble Peterkin.'

"Then shall I spread my native wings
And tread secure the heavenly floor,
And tell the blessed doubtful things
Of Val d'Aran and Perigord."

This was the last and solemn jest
Of weary Peter Wanderwide.
He spoke it with a failing zest,
And having spoken it, he died.

Hilaire Belloc

The Dromedary

The Dromedary is a cheerful bird:
I cannot say the same about the Kurd.

Hilaire Belloc

The Early Morning

- . The moon on the one hand, the dawn on the other:
The moon is my sister, the dawn is my brother.
The moon on my left and the dawn on my right.
My brother, good morning: my sister, good night

Hilaire Belloc

The Early Morning.

The moon on the one hand, the dawn on the other:
The moon is my sister, the dawn is my brother.
The moon on my left and the dawn on my right.
My brother, good morning: my sister, good night.

Hilaire Belloc

The Elephant

When people call this beast to mind,
They marvel more and more
At such a little tail behind,
So large a trunk before.

Hilaire Belloc

The Evenlode

I will not try to reach again,
I will not set my sail alone,
To moor a boat bereft of men
At Yarnton's tiny docks of stone.

But I will sit beside the fire,
And put my hand before my eyes,
And trace, to fill my heart's desire,
The last of all our Odysseys.

The quiet evening kept her tryst:
Beneath an open sky we rode,
And passed into a wandering mist
Along the perfect Evenlode.

The tender Evenlode that makes
Her meadows hush to hear the sound
Of waters mingling in the brakes,
And binds my heart to English ground.

A lovely river, all alone,
She lingers in the hills and holds
A hundred little towns of stone,
Forgotten in the western wolds.

Hilaire Belloc

The Frog

Be kind and tender to the Frog,
And do not call him names,
As "Slimy skin," or "Polly-wog,"
Or likewise "Ugly James,"
Or "Gap-a-grin," or "Toad-gone-wrong,"
Or "Bill Bandy-knees":
The Frog is justly sensitive
To epithets like these.

No animal will more repay
A treatment kind and fair;
At least so lonely people say
Who keep a frog (and, by the way,
They are extremely rare).

Hilaire Belloc

The Hippopotamus

I shoot the Hippopotamus
With bullets made of platinum,
Because if I use leaden ones
His hide is sure to flatten 'em.

Hilaire Belloc

The Lion

The Lion, the Lion, he dwells in the Waste,
He has a big head and a very small waist;
But his shoulders are stark, and his jaws they are grim,
And a good little child will not play with him.

Hilaire Belloc

The Marmozet

The species Man and Marmozet
Are intimately linked;
The Marmozet survives as yet,
But Men are all extinct.

Hilaire Belloc

The Microbe

The Microbe is so very small
You cannot make him out at all,
But many sanguine people hope
To see him through a microscope.
His jointed tongue that lies beneath
A hundred curious rows of teeth;
His seven tufted tails with lots
Of lovely pink and purple spots,
On each of which a pattern stands,
Composed of forty separate bands;
His eyebrows of a tender green;
All these have never yet been seen--
But Scientists, who ought to know,
Assure us that they must be so....
Oh! let us never, never doubt
What nobody is sure about!

Hilaire Belloc

The Night

Most Holy Night, that still dost keep
The keys of all the doors of sleep,
To me when my tired eyelids close
Give thou repose.

And let the far lament of them
That chaunt the dead day's requiem
Make in my ears, who wakeful lie,
Soft lullaby.

Let them that guard the hornèd Moon
By my bedside their memories croon.
So shall I have new dreams and blest
In my brief rest.

Fold thy great wings about my face,
Hide day-dawn from my resting-place,
And cheat me with thy false delight,
Most Holy Night.

Hilaire Belloc

The Pacifist

Pale Ebenezer thought it wrong to fight,
But Roaring Bill (who killed him) thought it right.

Hilaire Belloc

The Pelagian Drinking Song

Pelagius lived at Kardanoel
And taught a doctrine there
How, whether you went to heaven or to hell
It was your own affair.
It had nothing to do with the Church, my boy,
But was your own affair.

No, he didn't believe
In Adam and Eve
He put no faith therein!
His doubts began
With the Fall of Man
And he laughed at Original Sin.
With my row-ti-tow
Ti-oodly-ow
He laughed at original sin.

Then came the bishop of old Auxerre
Germanus was his name
He tore great handfuls out of his hair
And he called Pelagius shame.
And with his stout Episcopal staff
So thoroughly whacked and banged
The heretics all, both short and tall --
They rather had been hanged.

Oh he whacked them hard, and he banged them long
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Till they bellowed in chorus, loud and strong
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But we that sit in a sturdy youth
And still can drink strong ale
Let us put it away to infallible truth
That always shall prevail.

And thank the Lord
For the temporal sword
And howling heretics too.
And all good things
Our Christendom brings
But especially barley brew!
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Hilaire Belloc

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The Scorpion is as black as soot,
He dearly loves to bite;
He is a most unpleasant brute
To find in bed at night.

Hilaire Belloc

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When I am living in the Midlands
That are sodden and unkind,
I light my lamp in the evening:
My work is left behind;
And the great hills of the South Country
Come back into my mind.

The great hills of the South Country
They stand along the sea;
And it's there walking in the high woods
That I could wish to be,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Walking along with me.

The men that live in North England
I saw them for a day:
Their hearts are set upon the waste fells,
Their skies are fast and grey;
From their castle-walls a man may see
The mountains far away.

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And along the sky the line of the Downs
So noble and so bare.

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I will build a house with deep thatch
To shelter me from the cold,
And there shall the Sussex songs be sung
And the story of Sussex told.

I will hold my house in the high wood
Within a walk of the sea,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Shall sit and drink with me.

Hilaire Belloc

The Statue

When we are dead, some Hunting-boy will pass
And find a stone half-hidden in tall grass
And grey with age: but having seen that stone
(Which was your image), ride more slowly on.

Hilaire Belloc

The Telephone

To-night in million-voiced London I
Was lonely as the million-pointed sky
Until your single voice. Ah! So the sun
Peoples all heaven, although he be but one.

Hilaire Belloc

The Tiger

The tiger, on the other hand,
Is kittenish and mild,
And makes a pretty playfellow
For any little child.
And mothers of large families
(Who claim to common sense)
Will find a tiger well repays
The trouble and expense.

Hilaire Belloc

The Vulture

The Vulture eats between his meals,
And that's the reason why
He very, very, rarely feels
As well as you and I.

His eye is dull, his head is bald,
His neck is growing thinner.
Oh! what a lesson for us all
To only eat at dinner!

Hilaire Belloc

The Whale

The Whale that wanders round the Pole
Is not a table fish.
You cannot bake or boil him whole
Nor serve him in a dish;

But you may cut his blubber up
And melt it down for oil.
And so replace the colza bean
(A product of the soil).

These facts should all be noted down
And ruminated on,
By every boy in Oxford town

Who wants to be a Don.

Hilaire Belloc

The Yak

As a friend to the children commend me the Yak.
You will find it exactly the thing:
It will carry and fetch, you can ride on its back,
Or lead it about with a string.

The Tartar who dwells on the plains of Thibet
(A desolate region of snow)
Has for centuries made it a nursery pet.
And surely the Tartar should know!

Then tell your papa where the Yak can be got,
And if he is awfully rich
He will buy you the creature - or else he will not.
(I cannot be positive which.)

Hilaire Belloc

Tiger, The

The tiger, on the other hand,
Is kittenish and mild,
And makes a pretty playfellow
For any little child.
And mothers of large families
(Who claim to common sense)
Will find a tiger well repays
The trouble and expense.

Hilaire Belloc

Time Cures All

It was my shame, and now it is my boast,
That I have loved you rather more than most.

Hilaire Belloc

Vulture, The

The Vulture eats between his meals,
And that's the reason why
He very, very, rarely feels
As well as you and I.

His eye is dull, his head is bald,
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Hilaire Belloc

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