

Classic Poetry Series

Hilaire Belloc
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Hilaire Belloc(27 July 1870 – 16 July 1953)

Joseph Hilaire Pierre René Belloc was an Anglo-French writer and historian who became a naturalised British subject in 1902. He was one of the most prolific writers in England during the early twentieth century. He was known as a writer, orator, poet, satirist, man of letters and political activist. He is most notable for his Catholic faith, which had a strong impact on most of his works and his writing collaboration with G. K. Chesterton. He was President of the Oxford Union and later MP for Salford from 1906 to 1910. He was a noted disputant, with a number of long-running feuds, but also widely regarded as a humane and sympathetic man.

His most lasting legacy is probably his verse, which encompasses cautionary tales and religious poetry. Among his best-remembered poems are Jim, who ran away from his nurse, and was eaten by a lion and Matilda, who told lies and was burnt to death.

Recent biographies of Belloc have been written by A. N. Wilson and Joseph Pearce.

Life

Belloc was born in La Celle-Saint-Cloud, France (next to Versailles and near Paris) to a French father and English mother, and grew up in England. Much of his boyhood was spent in Slindon, West Sussex, for which he often felt homesick in later life. This is evidenced in poems such as, "West Sussex Drinking Song", "The South Country", and even the more melancholy, "Ha'nacker Hill".

His mother Elizabeth Rayner Parkes (1829–1925) was also a writer, and a great-granddaughter of the English chemist Joseph Priestley. In 1867 she married attorney Louis Belloc, son of the French painter Jean-Hilaire Belloc. In 1872, five years after they wed, Louis died, but not before being wiped out financially in a stock market crash. The young widow then brought her son Hilaire, along with his sister, Marie, back to England where he remained, except for his voluntary enlistment as a young man in the French artillery.

After being educated at John Henry Newman's Oratory School Belloc served his term of military service, as a French citizen, with an artillery regiment near Toul in 1891. He was powerfully built, with great stamina, and walked extensively in Britain and Europe. While courting his future wife Elodie, whom he first met in 1890, the impecunious Belloc walked a good part of the way from the midwest of

the United States to her home in northern California, paying for lodging at remote farm houses and ranches by sketching the owners and reciting poetry.

After his military service, Belloc proceeded to Balliol College, Oxford, as a History scholar. He went on to obtain first class honours in History, and never lost his love for Balliol, as is illustrated by his verse, "Balliol made me, Balliol fed me/ Whatever I had she gave me again".

He was powerfully built, with great stamina, and walked extensively in Britain and Europe. While courting his future wife Elodie, whom he first met in 1890, the impecunious Belloc walked a good part of the way from the midwest of the United States to her home in northern California, paying for lodging at remote farm houses and ranches by sketching the owners and reciting poetry.

He was the brother of the novelist Marie Adelaide Belloc Lowndes. In 1896, he married Elodie Hogan, an American. In 1906 he purchased land and a house called King's Land at Shipley, West Sussex where he brought up his family and lived until shortly before his death. Elodie and Belloc had five children before her 1914 death from influenza. After her death, Belloc wore mourning for the remainder of his life, keeping her room exactly as she had left it.

His son Louis was killed in 1918 while serving in the Royal Flying Corps in northern France. Belloc placed a memorial tablet in the Cathedral at nearby Cambrai. It is in the same side chapel as the noted icon, Our Lady of Cambrai.

Belloc suffered a stroke in 1941 and never recovered from its effects. He died on 16 July 1953 in Guildford, Surrey, following a fall he had at King's Land. He is buried at the Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation of West Grinstead, where he had regularly attended Mass as a parishioner. At his funeral Mass, homilist Monsignor Ronald Knox observed, "No man of his time fought so hard for the good things."

Political career

An 1895 graduate of Balliol College, Oxford, Belloc was a noted figure within the University, being President of the Oxford Union, the undergraduate debating society. He went into politics after he became a naturalised British subject. A great disappointment in his life was his failure to gain a fellowship at All Souls College in Oxford in 1895. This failure may have been caused in part by his producing a small statue of the Virgin and placing it before him on the table during the interview for the fellowship.

From 1906 to 1910 he was a Liberal Party Member of Parliament for Salford

South, but swiftly became disillusioned with party politics. During one campaign speech he was asked by a heckler if he was a "papist." Retrieving his rosary from his pocket he responded, "Sir, so far as possible I hear Mass each day and I go to my knees and tell these beads each night. If that offends you, then I pray God may spare me the indignity of representing you in Parliament." The crowd cheered and Belloc won the election.

His only period of steady employment was from 1914 to 1920 as editor of *Land and Water*, a journal devoted to the progress of the war. Otherwise he lived by his pen, and often fell short of money.

In controversy and debate

Belloc first came to public attention shortly after arriving at Balliol College, Oxford as a recent French army veteran. Attending his first debate of the Oxford Union Debating Society, he saw that the affirmative position was wretchedly and half-heartedly defended. As the debate drew to its conclusion and the division of the house was called, he rose from his seat in the audience, and delivered a vigorous, impromptu defense of the proposition. Belloc won that debate from the audience, as the division of the house then showed, and his reputation as a debater was established. He was later elected president of the Union. He held his own in debates there with F. E. Smith and John Buchan, the latter a friend.

He was at his most effective in the 1920s, on the attack against H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*, in which he criticized Wells' secular bias and his belief in evolution by means of natural selection, a theory that Belloc asserted had been completely discredited. Wells remarked that "Debating Mr. Belloc is like arguing with a hailstorm". Belloc's review of *Outline of History* famously observed that Wells' book was a powerful and well-written volume, "up until the appearance of Man, that is, somewhere around page seven." Wells responded with a small book, *Mr. Belloc Objects*. Not to be outdone, Belloc followed with, "Mr. Belloc Still Objects."

G. G. Coulton, a keen and persistent academic opponent, wrote on Mr. Belloc on *Medieval History* in a 1920 article. After a long simmering feud, Belloc replied with a booklet, *The Case of Dr. Coulton*, in 1938.

His style during later life fulfilled the nickname he received in childhood, Old Thunder. Belloc's friend, Lord Sheffield, described his provocative personality in a preface to *The Cruise of the Nona*.

In Belloc's novel of travel, *The Four Men*, the title characters supposedly

represent different facets of the author's personality. One of the four improvises a playful song at Christmastime, which includes the verse:

'May all good fellows that here agree
Drink Audit Ale in heaven with me,
And may all my enemies go to hell!
Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!
May all my enemies go to hell!
Noel! Noel!'

The other characters regard the verse as fairly gauche and ill-conceived, so while part of Belloc may have agreed with this song, it is not necessarily representative of Belloc's personality as a whole.

Hobbies

During his later years, he would sail when he could afford to do so. He became a well known yachtsman. He won many races and was in the French sailing team. In the early 1930s, he was given an old Jersey pilot cutter called Jersey. He sailed this for some years around the coasts of England, with the help of younger men. One of them, Dermot MacCarthy, wrote a book about his time on the water with Belloc, called *Sailing with Mr Belloc*.

Writing

Belloc wrote on myriad subjects, from warfare to poetry to the many current topics of his day. He has been called one of the Big Four of Edwardian Letters, along with , George Bernard Shaw, and G. K. Chesterton, all of whom debated with each other into the 1930s. Belloc was closely associated with Chesterton, and Shaw coined the term Chesterbelloc for their partnership.

Asked once why he wrote so much, he responded, "Because my children are howling for pearls and caviar." Belloc observed that "The first job of letters is to get a canon," that is, to identify those works which a writer looks upon as exemplary of the best of prose and verse. For his own prose style, he claimed to aspire to be as clear and concise as "Mary had a little lamb."

Essays and Travel Writing

His best travel writing has secured a permanent following. *The Path to Rome* (1902), an account of a walking pilgrimage he made from central France across the Alps and down to Rome, has remained continuously in print. More than a mere travelogue, "The Path to Rome" contains descriptions of the people and places he encountered, his drawings in pencil and in ink of the route, humor, poesy, and the reflections of a large mind turned to the events of his time as he marches along his solitary way. At every turn, Belloc shows himself to be profoundly in love with Europe and with the Faith that he claims has produced it.

As an essayist he was one of a small, admired and dominant group (with Chesterton, E. V. Lucas and Robert Lynd) of popular writers.

There is a passage in *The Cruise of the Nona* where Belloc, sitting alone at the helm of his boat under the stars, shows profoundly his mind in the matter of Catholicism and mankind; he writes of "That golden Light cast over the earth by the beating of the Wings of the Faith."

Poetry

His "cautionary tales", humorous poems with an implausible moral, beautifully illustrated by Basil Blackwood and later by Edward Gorey, are the most widely known of his writings. Supposedly for children, they, like [Lewis Carroll's](http://www.poemhunter.com/lewis-carroll/) works, are more to adult and satirical tastes: Henry King, Who chewed bits of string and was early cut off in dreadful agonies. A similar poem tells the story of Rebecca, who slammed doors for fun and perished miserably.

The tale of Matilda who told lies and was burnt to death was adapted into the play *Matilda Liar!* by Debbie Isitt. Quentin Blake, the illustrator, described Belloc as at one and the same time the overbearing adult and mischievous child. [Roald Dahl](http://www.poemhunter.com/roald-dahl/) is a follower. But Belloc has broader if sourer scope:

*It happened to Lord Lundy then
as happens to so many men
about the age of 26
they shoved him into politics ...
leading up to
we had intended you to be
the next Prime Minister but three ...*

Of more weight are Belloc's *Sonnets and Verses*, a volume that deploys the same

singing and rhyming techniques of his children's verses. Belloc's poetry is often religious, often romantic; throughout *The Path to Rome* he writes in spontaneous song.

History, politics, economics

Three of his best-known non-fiction works are *The Servile State* (1912), *Europe and Faith* (1920) and *The Jews* (1922).

From an early age Belloc knew Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, who was responsible for the conversion of his mother to Roman Catholicism. Manning's involvement in the 1889 London Dock Strike made a major impression on Belloc and his view of politics, according to biographer Robert Speaight. Belloc described this retrospectively in *The Cruise of the Nona* (1925); he became a trenchant critic both of capitalism and of many aspects of socialism.

With others (G. K. Chesterton, Cecil Chesterton, Arthur Penty) Belloc had envisioned the socioeconomic system of distributism. In *The Servile State*, written after his party-political career had come to end, and other works, he criticized the modern economic order and parliamentary system, advocating distributism in opposition to both capitalism and socialism. Belloc made the historical argument that distributism was not a fresh perspective or program of economics but rather a proposed return to the economics that prevailed in Europe for the thousand years when it was Catholic. He called for the dissolution of Parliament and its replacement with committees of representatives for the various sectors of society, an idea that was also popular among Fascists, under the name of corporatism. But original corporatism, sometimes called "paleo-corporatism", was a system that predates capitalism and fascism. Paleo-corporatism was based around the guilds of the Middle Ages and served to appoint legislators. Neo-corporatism is a fascist system that merges the state with the capitalistic corporations and the corporations then are directed by the state, under nominal private ownership. Belloc's views fit medieval paleo-corporatism rather than neo-corporatist fascism.

With these linked themes in the background, he wrote a long series of contentious biographies of historical figures, including Oliver Cromwell, James II, and Napoleon. They show him as an ardent proponent of orthodox Catholicism and a critic of many elements of the modern world.

Outside academe, Belloc was impatient with what he considered to be axe-grinding histories, especially what he called "official history." Joseph Pearce notes also Belloc's attack on the secularism of H.G. Wells's popular *Outline of History*:

Belloc objected to his adversary's tacitly anti-Christian stance, epitomized by the fact that Wells had devoted more space in his "history" to the Persian campaign against the Greeks than he had given to the figure of Christ.

He wrote also substantial amounts of military history. In alternative history, he contributed to the 1931 collection *If It Had Happened Otherwise* edited by Sir John Squire.

Religion

One of Belloc's most famous statements was "the faith is Europe and Europe is the faith"; this sums up his strongly held, orthodox Catholic views, and the cultural conclusions he drew from them. Those views were expressed at length in many of his works from the period 1920–1940. These are still cited as exemplary of Catholic apologetics. They have also been criticised, for instance by comparison with the work of Christopher Dawson during the same period.

As a young man, Belloc lost his faith. Then came a spiritual event which he never discussed publicly, and which returned him to and confirmed him in his Catholicism for the remainder of his life. Belloc alludes to this return to the faith in a passage in *The Cruise of the Nona*. According to his biographer A.N. Wilson (Hilaire Belloc, Hamish Hamilton), Belloc never wholly apostatized from the Faith. The momentous event is fully described by Belloc in *The Path to Rome* (. It took place in the French village of Undervelier at the time of Vespers. Belloc said of it, "not without tears", "I considered the nature of Belief" and "it is a good thing not to have to return to the faith".

Belloc's Catholicism was uncompromising. He believed that the Catholic Church provided hearth and home for the human spirit. More humorously, his tribute to Catholic culture can be understood from his well-known saying, "Wherever the Catholic sun does shine, there's always laughter and good red wine." He had a disparaging view of the Church of England, and used sharp words to describe heretics, such as, "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". Indeed, in his "Song of the Pelagian Heresy" he becomes quite strident, describing how the Bishop of Auxerre, "with his stout Episcopal staff/ So thoroughly thwacked and banged/ The heretics all, both short and tall/ They rather had been hanged".

On Islam

Belloc's 1937 book *The Crusades: the World's Debate*, he wrote,

<i>Our fathers all but re-established the spiritual mastery of Europe over the East; all but recovered the patrimony of Rome... Western warriors, two thousand miles and more from home, have struck root and might feel they have permanently grasped the vital belt of the Orient. All seaboard Syria was theirs and nearly the whole of that "bridge", a narrow band pressed in between the desert and the sea, the all-important central link joining the Moslem East to the Moslem West... Should the link be broken for good by Christian mastery of Syria, all Islam was cut in two and would bleed to death of the wound.</i>

Since the Crusaders missed that chance, Islam survived and eventually overwhelmed the Crusader bridgehead in the Middle East. For Belloc this was not a matter of old history: Islam continued to pose a threat. He wrote, *<i>The story must not be neglected by any modern, who may think in error that the East has finally fallen before the West, that Islam is now enslaved—to our political and economic power at any rate if not to our philosophy. It is not so. Islam essentially survives, and Islam would not have survived had the Crusade made good its hold upon the essential point of Damascus. Islam survives. Its religion is intact; therefore its material strength may return. Our religion is in peril, and who can be confident in the continued skill, let alone the continued obedience, of those who make and work our machines? ... There is with us a complete chaos in religious doctrine... We worship ourselves, we worship the nation; or we worship (some few of us) a particular economic arrangement believed to be the satisfaction of social justice... Islam has not suffered this spiritual decline; and in the contrast between [our religious chaos and Islam's] religious certitudes still strong throughout the Mohammedan world lies our peril.</i>*

In *The Great Heresies* (1938), Belloc argues that, although, *<i>"That Mohammedan culture happens to have fallen back in material applications; there is no reason whatever why it should not learn its new lesson and become our equal in all those temporal things which now alone give us our superiority over it—whereas in Faith we have fallen inferior to it."</i>*

At the time of his writing, the Islamic world was still largely under the rule of the European colonial powers and the threat to Britain was from Fascism and Nazism. Belloc, however, considered that Islam was permanently intent on destroying the Christian faith, as well as the West, which Christendom had built. In *The Great Heresies*, Belloc grouped the Protestant Reformation together with Islam as one of the major heresies threatening the "Universal Church".

Belloc cited the many beliefs and theological principles which Islam shares with Catholicism. For Belloc, the common ground includes the unity and the

omnipotence, personal nature, all-goodness, timelessness and providence of God, His creative power as the origin of all things, and His sustenance of all things by His power alone, the world of good spirits and angels and of evil spirits in war against God, with a chief evil spirit, the immortality of the soul and its responsibility for actions in this life, coupled with the doctrine of reward and punishment after death, the Day of Judgment with Christ as Judge, and the Lady Miriam (Mary) as the first among womenkind—and exactly which, in Belloc's view, identify it as a heresy: where Islam decisively diverges from Catholicism (and Christianity in general) is the "denial of the Incarnation and all the sacramental life of the Church that followed from it"—with Islam regarding Jesus as a merely human Prophet.

Accusations of anti-Semitism

Belloc has been deemed by some to be anti-Semitic and not concerned to conceal his views. A. N. Wilson's biography expresses the opinion that Belloc had a tendency to allude to Jews in conversation, in a seemingly obsessive fashion on occasion. Anthony Powell's review of that biography contains Powell's opinion, that Belloc was thoroughly anti-Semitic, except at a personal level.

There are a number of grounds on which the accusations of anti-semitism have been based. From his days in politics onwards, he repeatedly demonstrated a belief that Jewish people had significant control over society and the world of finance. In *The Cruise of the Nona*, Belloc reflected equivocally on the Dreyfus Affair after thirty years. Norman Rose's book *The Cliveden Set* (2000) poses the question of whether Nancy Astor, a friend of Belloc's in the 1930s until they broke over religious matters, was influenced by him against Jews in general.

On the other hand, Canadian broadcaster Michael Coren wrote:

Belloc's polemics did periodically drift into the realms of bigotry, but he was invariably a tenacious opponent of philosophical anti-Semitism, ostracized friends who made attacks upon individual Jews, and was an inexorable enemy of fascism and all its works, speaking out against German anti-Semitism before the National Socialists came to power.

Robert Speaight cited a letter by Belloc in which he pilloried Nesta Webster because of her accusations against "the Jews". In February 1924, Belloc wrote to an American Jewish friend regarding an allegedly anti-Semitic book by Webster. Webster had rejected Christianity, studied Eastern religions, accepted the Hindu concept of the equality of all religions and was fascinated by theories of reincarnation and ancestral memory. Belloc expressed his views very clearly: *In my opinion it is a lunatic book. She is one of those people who have got*

one cause on the brain. It is the good old 'Jewish revolutionary' bogey. But there is a type of unstable mind which cannot rest without morbid imaginings, and the conception of a single cause simplifies thought. With this good woman it is the Jews, with some people it is the Jesuits, with others Freemasons and so on. The world is more complex than that.

Speaight also points out that when faced with anti-Semitism in practice—as at elitist country clubs in America before World War II—he voiced his disapproval. Belloc condemned Nazi anti-Semitism in *The Catholic and the War* (1940):

The Third Reich has treated its Jewish subjects with a contempt for Justice which even if there had been no other action of the kind in other departments would be a sufficient warranty for determining its elimination from Europe... Cruelty to a Jew is as odious as cruelty to any human being, whether that cruelty be moral in the form of insult, or physical... You may hear men saying on every side, 'However, there is one thing I do agree with and that is the way they (The Nazis) have settled the Jews'. Now that attitude is directly immoral. The more danger there is that it will grow the more necessity there is for denouncing it. The action of the enemy toward the Jewish race has been in morals intolerable. Contracts have been broken on all sides, careers destroyed by the hundred and the thousand, individuals have been treated with the most hideous and disgusting cruelty... If no price is paid for such excesses, our civilisation will certainly suffer and suffer permanently. If the men who have committed them go unpunished (and only defeat in war can punish them) then the decline of Europe, already advanced, will proceed to catastrophe.

Dennis Barton has defended Belloc at length. He notes that Belloc condemned wild accusations against the Jews, in his own book, *The Jews*. Belloc's open praises for the Jews is further evidence that his anti-Semitism, to the degree that it existed, stemmed rather from unexamined cultural or personal prejudices than from conscious hostility to the Jews.

Sussex

Belloc grew up in Slindon and spent most of his life in the county. He always wrote of Sussex as if it were the the crown of England and the western Sussex Downs the jewel in that crown. He loved Sussex to the point of idolatry as the place where he was brought up and as his spritual home. Belloc wrote several works about Sussex including *Ha'nacker Mill*, *The South Country*, the travel guide *Sussex* (1906) and *The County of Sussex* (1936). One of his best-known works relating to Sussex is *The Four Men: a Farrago* (1911) in which the four characters, each aspects of Belloc's personality, travel on a pilgrimage across the county from Robertsbridge in the far east to Harting in the far west. The work

has influenced others including Sussex folk musician Bob Copper, who retraced Belloc's steps in the 1980s. Belloc was also a lover of Sussex songs and wrote lyrics for some songs which have since been put to music. Belloc is remembered in an annual celebration in Sussex, known as Belloc Night, that takes place on the writer's birthday, 27 July, in the manner of Burns Night in Scotland. The celebration includes reading from Belloc's work and partaking of a bread and cheese supper with pickles.

In the media

Stephen Fry has recorded an audio collection of Belloc's children's poetry. A notable admirer of Belloc was the composer Peter Warlock, who set many of his poems to music.

A well-known parody of Belloc by Sir John Squire, intended as a tribute, is Mr. Belloc's Fancy.

Syd Barrett, a founder of Pink Floyd, was a fan. His song "Matilda Mother" was drawn directly from verses in *Cautionary Tales*, and was rewritten when Belloc's estate refused permission to record them. The Belloc version has been released on a 40th anniversary reissue of *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*.

[month Of) July

The Kings come riding back from the Crusade,
The purple Kings and all their mounted men;
They fill the street with clamorous cavalcade;
The Kings have broken down the Saracen.
Singing a great song of the eastern wars,
In crimson ships across the sea they came,
With crimson sails and diamonded dark oars,
That made the Mediterranean flash with flame.

And reading how, in that far month, the ranks
Formed on the edge of the desert, armoured all,
I wish to God that I had been with them
When the first Norman leapt upon the wall,
And Godfrey led the foremost of the Franks,
And young Lord Raymond stormed Jerusalem.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] April

The stranger warmth of the young sun obeying,
Look! little beads of green begin to grow,
And hidden flowers have dated their tops to show
Where late such droughty dusts were rudely playing.
It's not the month, but all the world's a-maying!
Come then with me, I'll take you, for I know
Where the first hedgethorns and white windflowers blow:
We two alone,, that goes without the saying.

The month has treacherous clouds and moves in fears.
This April shames the month itself with smiles:
In whose new eyes I know no heaven of tears,
But still serene desire and between whiles,
So great a look that even April's grace
Makes only marvel at her only face.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] August

The soldier month, the bulwark of the year,
That never more shall hear such victories told;
He stands apparent with his heaven-high spear,
And helmeted of grand Etruscan gold.
Our harvest is the bounty he has won,
The loot his fiery temper takes by strength.
Oh! Paladin of the Imperial sun!
Oh! crown of all the seasons come at length!

This is sheer manhood; this is Charlemagne,
When he with his wide host came conquering home
From vengeance under Roncesvalles ta'en.
Or when his bramble beard flaked red with foam
Of bivouac wine-cups on the Lombard plain,
What time he swept to grasp the world at Rome.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] December

Hoar Time about the house betakes him slow,
Seeking an entry for his weariness.
And in that dreadful company distress
And the sad night with silent footsteps go.
On my poor fire the brands are scarce aglow,
And in the woods without what memories press
Where, waning in the trees from less to less,
Mysterious bangs the hom6d moon and low.

For now December, full of aged care,
Comes in upon the yea and weakly grieves;
Mumbling his lost desires and his despair; .
And with mad trembling hand still interweaves,
The dank sear flower-stalks tangled in his hair,
While round about him whirl the rotten leaves.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] February

The winter moon has such a quiet car
That all the winter nights are dumb with rest.
She drives the gradual dark with drooping crest,
And dreams go wandering from her drowsy star.
Because the nights are silent, do not wake:
But there shall tremble through the general earth,
And over you, a quickening and a birth.
The sun is near the hill-tops for your sake.

The latest born of all the days shall creep
To kiss the tender eyelids of the year;
And you shall wake, grown young with perfect sleep,
And smile at the new world, and make it dear
With living murmurs more than dreams are deep.
Silence is dead, my Dawn; the morning's here.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] January

It freezes- all across a soundless sky
The birds go home. The governing dark's begun:
The steadfast dark that waits not for a sun;
The ultimate dark wherein the race shall die.

Death, with his evil finger to his lip,
Leers in at human windows, turning spy
To learn the country where his rule shall lie
When he assumes perpetual generalship.

The undefeated enemy, the chill
That shall benumb the voiceful earth at last,
Is master of our moment, and has bound
The viewless wind it-self. There is no sound.
It freezes. Every friendly stream is fast.
It freezes; and the graven twigs are still.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] June

Rise up, and do begin the day's adorning;
The Summer dark is but the dawn of day.
The last of sunset fades into the morning,
The morning calls you from the dark away.
The holy mist, the white mist of the morning,
Was wreathing upward on my lonely way.
The way was waiting for your own adorning
That should complete the broad adorned day.

Rise up, and do begin the day's adorning;
The little eastern clouds are dapple grey:
There will be wind among the leaves to-day;
It is the very promise of the morning.
Lux Tua Via Mea: your light's my way -
Then do rise up and make it perfect day.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] March

The north-cast wind has come from Norroway,
Roaring he came above the white waves' tips!
The foam of the loud sea was on his lips,
And all his hair was salt with falling spray.
Over the keen light of northern day
He cast his snow cloud's terrible eclipse;
Beyond our banks he suddenly struck the ships,
And left them labouring on his landward way.

The certain course that to my strength belongs
Drives him with gathering purpose and control
Until across Vendean flats he sees
Ocean, the eldest of his enemies.
Then wheels he for him, glorying in goal
And gives him challenge, bellowing battle songs.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] May

This is the laughing-eyed amongst them all:
My lady's month. A season of young things.
She rules the light with harmony, and brings
The year's first green upon the beeches tall.
How often, where long creepers wind and fall
Through the deep woods in noonday wanderings,
I've heard the month, when she to echo sings,
I've heard the month make merry madrigal.

How often, bosomed in the breathing strong
Of mosses and young flowerets, have I lain
And watched the clouds, and caught the sheltered song -
Which it were more than life to hear again -
Of those small birds that pipe it all day long
Not far from Marly by the memoried Seine.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] November

November is that historied Emperor,
Conquered in age, but foot to foot with fate,
Who from his refuge high has heard the roar
Of squadrons in pursuit, and now, too late,
Stirrups the storm and calls the winds to war,
And arms the garrison of his last heirloom,
And shakes the sky to its extremest shore
With battle against irrevocable doom.

Till, driven and hurled from his strong citadels,
He flies in hurrying cloud and spurs him on,
Empty of lingerings, empty of farewells
And final benedictions, and is gone.
But in my garden all the trees have shed
Their legacies of the light, and all the flowers are dead.

Hilaire Belloc

[month Of] 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

[month Of] 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

[month Of] 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

A Moral Alphabet (Excerpt)

D: The Dreadful Dinotherium he
Will have to do his best for D.
The early world observed with awe
His back, indented like a saw.
His look was gay, his voice was strong;
His tail was neither short nor long;
His trunk, or elongated nose,
Was not so large as some suppose;
His teeth, as all the world allows,
Were graminivorous, like a cow's.
He therefore should have wished to pass
Long peaceful nights upon the Grass,
But being mad the brute preferred
To roost in branches, like a bird.¹
A creature heavier than a whale,
You see at once, could hardly fail
To suffer badly when he slid
And tumbled (as he always did).
His fossil, therefore, comes to light
All broken up: and serve him right.

MORAL

If you were born to walk the ground,
Remain there; do not fool around.

E stands for Egg.

Hilaire Belloc

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

An Author's Hope

When I am dead, I hope it may be said:
'His sins were scarlet, but his books were read.'

Hilaire Belloc

Ballade Of Modest Confession

My reading is extremely deep and wide;
And as our modern education goes—
Unique I think, and skilfully applied
To Art and Industry and Autres Choses
Through many years of scholarly repose.
But there is one thing where I disappoint
My numerous admirers (and my foes).
Painting on Vellum is my weakest point.

I ride superbly. When I say I 'ride'
The word's too feeble. I am one of those
That dominate a horse. It is my pride
To tame the fiercest with tremendous blows
Of heel and knee. The while my handling shows
Such lightness as a lady's. But Aroint
Thee! Human frailty with thy secret woes!
Painting on Vellum is my weakest point.

Painting on Vellum: not on silk or hide
Or ordinary Canvas: I suppose
No painter of the present day has tried
So many mediums with success, or knows
As well as I do how the subject grows
Beneath the hands of genius, that anoint
With balm. But I have something to disclose—
Painting on Vellum is my weakest point.

Envoi
Prince! do not let your Nose, your royal Nose,
Your large imperial Nose get out of Joint.
For though you cannot touch my golden Prose,
Painting on Vellum is my weakest point.

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

Cautionary Tales For Children: Introduction

And is it True? It is not True.
And if it were it wouldn't do,
For people such as me and you
Who pretty nearly all day long
Are doing something rather wrong.
Because if things were really so,
You would have perished long ago,
And I would not have lived to write
The noble lines that meet your sight,
Nor B.T.B survived to draw
The nicest things you ever saw.

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 hus 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.

Courtesy

Of Courtesy, it is much less
Than Courage of Heart or Holiness,
Yet in my Walks it seems to me
That the Grace of God is in Courtesy.

On Monks I did in Storrington fall,
They took me straight into their Hall;
I saw Three Pictures on a wall,
And Courtesy was in them all.

The first the Annunciation;
The second the Visitation;
The third the Consolation,
Of God that was Our Lady's Son.

The first was of St. Gabriel;
On Wings a-flame from Heaven he fell;
And as he went upon one knee
He shone with Heavenly Courtesy.

Our Lady out of Nazareth rode -
It was Her month of heavy load;
Yet was her face both great and kind,
For Courtesy was in Her Mind.

The third it was our Little Lord,
Whom all the Kings in arms adored;
He was so small you could not see
His large intent of Courtesy.

Our Lord, that was Our Lady's Son,
Go bless you, People, one by one;
My Rhyme is written, my work is done.

Hilaire Belloc

Criterion

When you are mixed with many I descry
A single light, and judge the rest thereby.
But when you are alone with me, why then,
I quite forget all women and all men.

Hilaire Belloc

Cuckoo!

In woods so long time bare
Cuckoo!
Up and in the wood, I know not where
Two notes fall.
Yet I do not envy him at all
His phantasy.
Cuckoo!
I too,
Somewhere,
I have sung as merrily as he
Who can dare,
Small and careless love, so to laugh at care,
And who
Can call
Cuckoo!
In woods of winter weary,
In scented woods, of winter weary, call
Cuckoo!
In woods so long time bare.

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

Epitah On The Politician Himself

Here richly, with ridiculous display,
The Politician's corpse was laid away.
While all of his acquaintance sneered and slanged
I wept: for I had longed to see him hanged.

Another on the Same

This, the last ornament among the peers,
Bribed, bullied, swindled and blackmailed for years:
But Death's what even Politicians fail
To bribe or swindle, bully or blackmail.

On Another Politician

The Politician, dead and turned to clay,
Will make a clout to keep the wind away.
I am not fond of draughts, and yet I doubt
If I could get myself to touch that clout.

On Yet Another

Fame to her darling Shifter glory gives;
And Shifter is immortal while he lives.

Epitah Upon Himself

Lauda tu Ilarion audacem et splendidum,
Who was always beginning things and never ended 'em.

Hilaire Belloc

Epitaph On The Favourite Dog Of A Politician

Here lies a Dog.- may every Dog that dies
Lie in security - as this Dog lies.

Hilaire Belloc

Fatigue

I'm tired of Love: I'm still more tired of Rhyme.
But Money gives me pleasure all the time.

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

From: Dedicatory Ode

I will not try the 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

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

Habitations

Kings live in Palaces, and Pigs in sties,
And youth in Expectation. Youth is wise.

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

Her Final Role

This man's desire; that other's hopeless end;
A third's capricious tyrant: and my friend.

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 childing 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
Silvers 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 Lenean, 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 Septembrual, 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

Introduction: More Beasts For Worse Children

The parents of the learned child
(His father and his mother)
Were utterly aghast to note
The facts he would at random quote
On creatures curious, rare, and wild;
And wondering, ask each other:
'An idle little child like this,
How is it that he knows
What years of close analysis
Are powerless to disclose?
Our brains are trained, our books are big,
And yet we always fail
To answer why the Guinea-pig
Is born without a tail.
Or why the Wanderoo should rant
In wild, unmeaning rhymes,
Whereas the Indian Elephant
Will only read The Times.
Perhaps he found a way to slip
Unnoticed to the Zoo,
And gave the Pachyderm a tip,
Or pumped the Wanderoo.
Or even by an artful plan
Deceived our watchful eyes,
And interviewed the Pelican,
Who is extremely wise.'
'Oh! no,' said he, in humble tone,
With shy but conscious look,
'Such facts I never could have known
But for this little book.'

Hilaire Belloc

Introduction: The Bad Child's Book Of Beasts

I call you bad, my little child,
Upon the title page,
Because a manner rude and wild
Is common at your age.

The Moral of this priceless work
(If rightly understood)
Will make you - from a little Turk -
Unnaturally good.

Do not as evil children do,
Who on the slightest grounds
Will imitate the Kangaroo,
With wild unmeaning bounds:

Do not as children badly bred,
Who eat like little Hogs,
And when they have to go to bed
Will whine like Puppy Dogs:

Who take their manners from the Ape,
Their habits from the Bear,
Indulge the loud unseemly jape,
And never brush their hair.

But so control your actions that
Your friends may all repeat.
'This child is dainty as the Cat,
And as the Owl discreet.'

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

King's Land

Stand thou forever among human Houses,
House of the Resurrection, House of Birth;
House of the rooted hearts and long carouses,
Stand, and be famous over all the Earth.

Hilaire Belloc

Kings Live In Palaces, And Pigs In Sties

Kings live in Palaces, and Pigs in sties,
And youth in Expectation. Youth is wise.

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

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

Lord Lundy II - Second Canto

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

Lord Roehampton

During a late election Lord
Roehampton strained a vocal chord
From shouting, very loud and high,
To lots and lots of people why
The Budget in his own opin-
-ion should not be allowed to win.

He sought a Specialist, who said:
'You have a swelling in the head:
Your Larynx is a thought relaxed
And you are greatly over-taxed.'

'I am indeed! On every side!'
The Earl (for such he was) replied
In hoarse excitement.... 'Oh! My Lord,
You jeopardize your vocal chord!'
Broke in the worthy Specialist.
'Come! Here's the treatment! I insist!
To Bed! to Bed! And do not speak
A single word till Wednesday week,
When I will come and set you free
(If you are cured) and take my fee.'

On Wednesday week the Doctor hires
A Brand-new Car with Brand-new Tyres
And Brand-new Chauffeur all complete
For visiting South Audley Street.

But what is this? No Union Jack
Floats on the Stables at the back!
No Toffs escorting Ladies fair
Perambulate the Gay Parterre.
A 'Scutcheon hanging lozenge-wise
And draped in crape appals his eyes
Upon the mansion's ample door,
To which he wades through heaps of Straw,
And which a Butler drowned in tears,
On opening but confirms his fears:
'Oh! Sir!—Prepare to hear the worst!...

Last night my kind old master burst.
And what is more, I doubt if he
Has left enough to pay your fee.
The Budget——'

With a dreadful oath,
The Specialist, denouncing both
The Budget and the House of Lords,
Buzzed angrily Bayswaterwards.

And ever since, as I am told,
Gets it beforehand; and in gold.

Hilaire Belloc

Matilda Who Told Lies, And Was Burned To Death

Matilda told such Dreadful Lies,
It made one Gasp and Stretch one's Eyes;
Her Aunt, who, from her Earliest Youth,
Had kept a Strict Regard for Truth,
Attempted to Believe Matilda:
The effort very nearly killed her,
And would have done so, had not She
Discovered this Infirmary.
For once, towards the Close of Day,
Matilda, growing tired of play,
And finding she was left alone,
Went tiptoe to the Telephone
And summoned the Immediate Aid
Of London's Noble Fire-Brigade.
Within an hour the Gallant Band
Were pouring in on every hand,
From Putney, Hackney Downs, and Bow.
With Courage high and Hearts a-glow,
They galloped, roaring through the Town,
'Matilda's House is Burning Down! '
Inspired by British Cheers and Loud
Proceeding from the Frenzied Crowd,
They ran their ladders through a score
Of windows on the Ball Room Floor;
And took Peculiar Pains to Souse
The Pictures up and down the House,
Until Matilda's Aunt succeeded
In showing them they were not needed;
And even then she had to pay
To get the Men to go away,
It happened that a few Weeks later
Her Aunt was off to the Theatre
To see that Interesting Play
The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.
She had refused to take her Niece
To hear this Entertaining Piece:
A Deprivation Just and Wise
To Punish her for Telling Lies.
That Night a Fire did break out-

You should have heard Matilda Shout!
You should have heard her Scream and Bawl,
And throw the window up and call
To People passing in the Street-
(The rapidly increasing Heat
Encouraging her to obtain
Their confidence) - but all in vain!
For every time she shouted 'Fire! '
They only answered 'Little Liar! '
And therefore when her Aunt returned,
Matilda, and the House, were Burned.

Hilaire Belloc

On The Gift Of A Book To A Child

Child! do not throw this book about!
Refrain from the unholy pleasure
Of cutting all the pictures out!
Preserve it as your chiefest treasure.

Child, have you never heard it said
That you are heir to all the ages?
Why, then, your hands were never made
To tear these beautiful thick pages!

Your little hands were made to take
The better things and leave the worse ones:
They also may be used to shake
The Massive Paws of Elder Persons.

And when your prayers complete the day,
Darling, your little tiny hands
Were also made, I think, to pray
For men that lose their fairylands.

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

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

Sarah Byng, Who Could Not Read And Was Tossed Into A Thorny Hedge By A Bull

Some years ago you heard me sing
My doubts on Alexander Byng.
His sister Sarah now inspires
My jaded Muse, my failing fires.
Of Sarah Byng the tale is told
How when the child was twelve years old
She could not read or write a line.
Her sister Jane, though barely nine,
Could spout the Catechism through
And parts of Matthew Arnold too,
While little Bill who came between
Was quite unnaturally keen
On 'Athalie', by Jean Racine.
But not so Sarah! Not so Sal!
She was a most uncultured girl
Who didn't care a pinch of snuff
For any literary stuff
And gave the classics all a miss.
Observe the consequence of this!
As she was walking home one day,
Upon the fields across her way
A gate, securely padlocked, stood,
And by its side a piece of wood
On which was painted plain and full,
BEWARE THE VERY FURIOUS BULL
Alas! The young illiterate
Went blindly forward to her fate,
And ignorantly climbed the gate!
Now happily the Bull that day
Was rather in the mood for play
Than goring people through and through
As Bulls so very often do;
He tossed her lightly with his horns
Into a prickly hedge of thorns,
And stood by laughing while she strode
And pushed and struggled to the road.
The lesson was not lost upon

The child, who since has always gone
A long way round to keep away
From signs, whatever they may say,
And leaves a padlocked gate alone.
Moreover she has wisely grown
Confirmed in her instinctive guess
That literature breeds distress.

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

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 spreading
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 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 Bison

The Bison is vain, and (I write it with pain)
The Door-mat you see on his head
Is not, as some learned professors maintain,
The opulent growth of a genius' brain;
But is sewn on with needle and thread.

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.
Benedicamus Domino!

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 Diamond

This diamond, Juliet, will adorn
Ephemeral beauties yet unborn.
While my strong verse, for ever new,
Shall still adorn immortal you.

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 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 Elm

This is the place where Dorothea smiled.
I did not know the reason, nor did she.
But there she stood, and turned, and smiled at me:
A sudden glory had bewitched the child.
The corn at harvest, and a single tree.
This is the place where Dorothea smiled.

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 Face

A face Sir Joshua might have painted! Yea:
Sir Joshua painted anything for pay . . .
And after all you're painted every day.

Hilaire Belloc

The False Heart

I said to Heart, 'How goes it?' Heart replied:
'Right as a Ribstone Pippin!' But it lied.

Hilaire Belloc

The Fragment

Towards the evening of her splendid day
Those who are little children now shall say
(Finding this verse), 'Who wrote it, Juliet?'
And Juliet answer gently, 'I forget.'

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 Gnu

G stands for Gnu, whose weapon of defence
Are long, sharp, curling horns, and common sense.
To these he adds a name so short and strong,
That even hardy Boers pronounce it wrong.
How often on a bright autumnal day
The pious people of Pretoria say,
'Come, let us hunt the _____' Then no more is heard
but sounds of strong men struggling with a word;
Meanwhile the distant Gnu with grateful eyes
Observes his opportunity and flies.

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 Llama

The Llama is a woolly sort of fleecy hairy goat,
With an indolent expression and an undulating throat
Like an unsuccessful literary man.

And I know the place he lives in (or at least- I think I do)
It is Ecuador, Brazil or Chile- possibly Peru;
You must find it in the Atlas if you can.
The Llama of the Pampasses you never should confound
(In spite of a deceptive similarity of sound)
With the Llama who is Lord of Turkestan.
For the former is a beautiful and valuable beast,
But the latter is not lovable nor useful in the least;
And the Ruminant is preferable surely to the Priest
Who batters on the woful superstitions of the East,
The Mongol of the Monastery of Shan.

Hilaire Belloc

The Loser

He lost his money first of all
And losing that is half the story-
And later on he tried a fall
With fate, in things less transitory
He lost his heart-and found it dead-
(His one and only true discovery),
And after that he lost his head,
And lost his chances of recovery.
He lost his honour bit by bit
Until the thing was out of question.
He worried so at losing it,
He lost his sleep and his digestion.
He lost his temper- and for good-
The remnants of his reputation,
His taste in wine, his choice of food,
And then, in rapid culmination,
His certitudes, his sense of truth,
His memory, his self control,
The love that graced his early youth,
And lastly his immortal soul.

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 Mirror

The mirror held your fair, my Fair,
A fickle moment's space.
You looked into mine eyes, and there
For ever fixed your face.

Keep rather to your looking-glass
Than my more constant eyes:
It told the truth - Alas! my lass,
My faithful memory lies.

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
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

The Rebel

There is a wall of which the stones
Are lies and bribes and dead men's bones.
And wrongfully this evil wall
Denies what all men made for all,
And shamelessly this wall surrounds
Our homesteads and our native grounds.

But I will gather and I will ride,
And I will summon a countryside,
And many a man shall hear my halloa
Who never had thought the horn to follow;
And many a man shall ride with me
Who never had thought on earth to see
High Justice in her armoury.

When we find them where they stand,
A mile of men on either hand,
I mean to charge from right away
And force the flanks of their array,
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.
Then shall I rest me from my ride
With my great anger satisfied.

Only, before I eat and drink,
When I have killed them all, I think
That I will batter their carven names,
And slit the pictures in their frames,
And burn for scent their cedar door,
And melt the gold their women wore,
And hack their horses at the knees,
And hew to death their timber trees,
And plough their gardens deep and through—
And all these things I mean to do
For fear perhaps my little son
Should break his hands, as I have done.

The Scorpion

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

The South Country

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

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 World Is Full Of Double Beds

The world is full of double beds
And most delightful maidenheads,
Which being so, there's no excuse
For sodomy of self-abuse.

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

Time Cures All

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

Hilaire Belloc

To A Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros, your hide looks all undone,
You do not take my fancy in the least:
You have a horn where other brutes have none:
Rhinoceros, you are an ugly beast.

Hilaire Belloc