

## A Book of the Week.

### THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL.\*

It is the essence of all satire to be misunderstood, and, to judge by the reviews, this is the fate of Mr. Chesterton's delicious story.

Mrs. Browning, in her clever Essay on the Poets, once showed how easy it is for a foolish person to compile a bad anthology from the works of the best authors, by giving the example of a small child sent into the garden to gather flowers. It will gather heedlessly at random; it will arrange carelessly, upside down.

But if you take a genius like Mr. Chesterton, and set him down in that curious *mélange* which we call the twentieth century, however random his utterances may sound, you may safely assume that the bunch of strange conclusions he will offer you is a most carefully-arranged one, and that of the contents of the garden he has brought you the typical examples.

But his method is that of a robust child, who will seize upon and make a plaything of whatever he finds to hand.

What Mr. Chesterton finds to hand is the sordidness, the lack of beauty, which grows more and more general in a people which is parting, one by one, with all its ideals.

Religion has gone from Mr. Chesterton's imagined world, and, in its wake, all reverence, all patriotism, the sanctity of home, the loveliness of all spiritual things. Life, as Coventry Patmore foretold, has become "all externals."

Over this country rules a king who is chosen automatically, wholly apart from any question of worth or desert; and Auberon Quin, the humorist, is so chosen, and, to him, the finding himself at the head of the State is a cause for excruciating mirth, and for marching into his kingdom with his coat worn hind-side before.

In pursuit of his vast desire to render his subjects amusing to himself, it occurs to him to confer upon the various suburbs of London the Charters of Free Cities, to create Lord High Provosts of Shepherd's Bush, Battersea, &c., and to provide them with Guards of Halberdiers in coloured uniforms, with appropriate banners. The dreary farce moves on, providing his Majesty with food for his sense of humour, and mightily exasperating his subjects. Until, among the dry husks of materialism all around, there arises the Man who is in Earnest.

The Lord High Provost of Notting Hill is Adam Wayne, and he takes himself and his mission seriously. To him the liberties enjoyed by his people under the Great Charter are as sacred as was the Pass of Thermopylæ to Leonidas and his Three Hundred. What matter the numbers engaged? What matter the size of the battle-ground? What is of real account is the singleness of purpose, the glad recklessness with which men go to death for a cause they consider worthy.

And, as it is the unexpected which always happens, so in this fantastic vision it is the man with the soul of the mediæval hero who moves the world. In the eyes of Adam Wayne, the Waterworks Tower on Campden Hill is as sacred as that bridge which was once kept by Horatius. And patriotism and battle and

romantic warfare, with obsolete weapons, become the order of the day; and Adam Wayne triumphs over what is more terrible than defeat—he conquers ridicule.

"Men," says the King, "will laugh at your Notting Hill, and will study and rehearse and sing of Athens and Jerusalem, but Athens and Jerusalem were just silly suburbs like your Notting Hill."

And it is to this proposition that the book gives its answer.

"Whatever makes men feel young, is great—a great war, or a love story. . . . No man who is in love thinks that anyone was in love before. No woman who has a child thinks that there have been such things as children. No people that fight for their own city are haunted by the burden of broken empires.

"Cannot you be content with that destiny which was enough for Athens, which was enough for Nazareth? . . . The soul of Athens went forth and made men drink hemlock, and the soul of Nazareth went forth and made men consent to be crucified."

This is the vision seen by our latest prophet; the greatness of him who earnestly contends for that which he considers essential, and the extraordinary influence over the men of his time which enables Adam Wayne to breathe new life into the languid indifference of his century.

The prophecy is not for all; but they whom it can reach will love it. G. M. R.

## Coming Events.

*April 22nd.*—Meeting at Chelsea Infirmary, Cale Street, S.W., to discuss State Registration. Miss Isla Stewart will preside. Speakers: The Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, Mr. H. J. Tennant, M.P., Surgeon-General Evatt, C.B., and Mr. James Cantlie, F.R.C.S. 8 p.m.

*April 27th.*—Meeting on behalf of the Trained Nurses' Annuity Fund, at 19, Stratford Place (by kind permission of Emily Lady Amptill), Lady Loch in the chair. 3.30 p.m.

*April 27th and 28th.*—Sale of Work at the London Homœopathic Hospital, Great Ormond Street, Bloomsbury. Objects: To provide work for crippled patients who have left the hospital, to provide extra comforts for the children's ward, to increase the Samaritan Fund. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

*April 28th.*—Opening of new offices of the Registered Nurses' Society. Tenth Birthday Party. Registered Nurses at Home, 4.30—7. Tea and coffee.

*May 13th.*—Annual Meeting of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 20, Hanover Square, W., 3 p.m.

## What to Read.

"My Memories." By the Countess of Munster.

"Rulers of Kings." By Gertrude Atherton.

"Tomaso's Fortune and other Stories." By Henry Seton Merriman.

"The Admirable Tinker." By Edgar Jepson.

"The Court of Sacharissa." By H. T. Sheringham and N. M. Meakin.

"Strong Mac." By S. R. Crockett.

"Esuv." By Joseph Hocking.

\* By G. K. Chesterton,

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