

In October



WHERE ARE they gone that did delight in honour
Abrupt and absolute as an epic ends,
What light of the Last Things, like death at morning,
Crowns the true lovers and the tragic friends?

Young priests with eager faces bright as eagles,
Poor scholars of the harp-string, strict and strong,

All the huge thirst of things irrevocable

And all the intolerant innocence that died young.

The dark largesse of the last gesture flinging

The glove in challenge or gold in sacrifice-----

Where are they gone that had delight in honour,

That the world grows so greedy and so wise?

Vow and averted head and high refusal

Clean as the chasm where the dawn burns white,

Where shall they go that have delight in honour

When all men honour nothing but delight?

Out of the infinite came Finality,

Freedom that makes unfathomably sure,

For only a wind of all the widest windows

Can close with such a clang that iron door:

The doors that cannot shut shall never open

Nor men make windows when they make not walls,

Though emptiness extend its endless prison

In the white nightmare of its lengthening halls.

Shall they not rise and seek beyond the mountains

That which unsays not and is not forsworn?

Where should they wander and in what other Eden

Find the lost happiness of the hope forlorn,

Look in what other face for understanding,

But hers who bore the Child that brought the Sword,

Hang in what other house, trophy and tribute,

The broken heart and the unbroken word?

This month of luminous and golden ruin

Lit long ago the galleys and the guns.

Here is there nothing but such loitering rhyme

As down the blank of barren paper runs,

As I write now, O Lady of Last Assurance,

Light in the laurels, sunrise of the dead,

Wind of the ships and lightning of Lepanto,

In honour of Thee, to whom all honour is fled.

G.K. Chesterton