

The Napoleon Of Notting Hill

by

G. K. Chesterton

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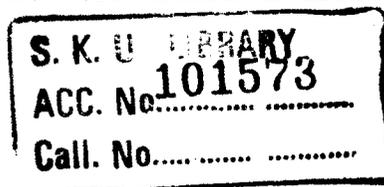
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The Napoleon of Notting Hill and **The Ball and the Cross** are in fact the most representative of all the novels of Chesterton. They mediate a distinctive political and social view of life. This is true not only of the themes which they present but also of the way in which they present them. The way in which these themes are developed is also characteristic of the method used in the subsequent fiction. This is of course particularly true of the much criticized and frequently misunderstood use of allegory. What Chesterton meant by allegory is never clearly expressed in his writing, but there is some evidence that he associated it with an almost Platonic view of life. M.H.Abram's definition of allegory as the simple conversion of a doctrine or thesis into a narrative "in which the agents, and sometimes the setting as well, represent general concepts, moral qualities, or other abstractions" describes only a part of what he meant by the term.¹ Similarly the definition of a parable as a short narrative "presented so as to bring out the analogy, or parallel between its elements and the lesson that the speaker is trying to bring home to us" is also unsatisfactory as a complete description of what Chesterton meant.² For one thing, there is no indication that Chesterton made any distinction between allegory and parable. When he uses these terms, he uses them as though they are interchangeable. The implication of Chesterton's view is that the whole of human life is made up of an

unending series of hieroglyphs which it is the business of the allegorist to select and interpret. This notion of allegory helps to illuminate what Chesterton meant by fiction as a kind of propaganda. The novels are political in the general sense that they are directed towards an illumination of the political and social questions which Chesterton believed to be of central importance. Occasionally, too, one is able to recognize what seem to be topical political issues in the background of the novels, whether it is the Boer War in **The Napoleon of Notting Hill** or the General Strike in **The Return of Don Quixote**. But although the novels sometimes have their beginnings in particular political or social problems, their allegorical form gives these incidents a more general significance. Chesterton's characterization is in terms of the typical rather than the individual so that what one encounters in his fiction is not a series of fully rounded characters but a series of political and social types. The importance of each character is in what he represents and in what he tells one about a particular Chestertian point of view rather than in what he is.

Besides this, Chesterton had opted against "the vulgarity that is called realism", wielding his prejudice most effectively against those realists who were always condemning Dickens for his "melodramas" and "caricatures." Chesterton's critical animus against "realism" is of a piece with the "anti-realism" of his fiction. The word "fiction" is used



deliberately because he did not write a “novel” so much as “romances” or “fictions.”³

In fact, Chesterton’s romances resist all the allurements of the modern novel: the bourgeois ambience, the cool efficiency of style, the psychological interest, and the materialistic value system. Chesterton’s romances are not “pure” romances, they are combined with what Northrop Frye calls “anatomies” – fictions which are essentially written for purposes of presenting and analyzing ideas.⁴ Once again one detects in Chesterton that sheer love of ideas – even above his love of humans – that sensation of a vitality in all ideas and concepts. His life was spent pouring his ideas into his weekly columns, letters to editors, book-length studies, debates with socialists and atheists, and lectures to generally enchanted audiences.

In matters of plotting for example, Chesterton’s romances are organized around only two types of mythos: that of the detective questing for the truth and that of an Armageddon involving the struggle of some hero (usually with a small band of followers) against an overwhelming superior enemy. The two myths, alternating through his fictions and sometimes appearing together, undoubtedly reflect Chesterton’s vision of the struggle in modern life and his desire to uncover the truth. Generally all his romances take the form of apocalyptic myths. In each of them a stalwart hero and a group of followers confront the forces of evil in some grand, climatic struggle.

Of these, **The Napoleon of Notting Hill** must be ranked supreme, and may be the most quintessentially a Chesterton romance. Chesterton had no use for Shelley's Pantheism and love of the infinite. Like a medieval Christian, he regarded the universe as a finite and compact thing and life as a drama and a final act.

This child-like idea developed into his love of small units, and even here he showed his preference for medieval feudal organisation and chivalry. He fills into his novel, **The Napoleon of Notting Hill**, blazing armour, colourful robes, coats of arms, the chartered freedom of the boroughs, and other medieval features. It is a fantastic sensational story. England is truly a nation of shopkeepers. An efficient bureaucracy presides over affairs while the head of the State is a monarch chosen by means of an alphabetical system.

In other words, the King is chosen by lots instead of by heredity on the theory that anybody could be a good king. Parliament was only a memory of days when government was a tedious process. The people have lost their faith in revolutions, having substituted for their belief in the efficacy of effort a trust in a kind of automative evolution, all changes are slow and unimportant. For the purposes of the story the most important of these trival changes is the displacement of the hereditary principle of monarchy by a system of choice similar to the method by which, in our own time, Jurymen are selected. We are made acquainted with this constitutional change by the very neat device of a

conversation between James Barker, a civil servant, and the ex-president of Nicaragua, the last republic to be assimilated by the hegemony of Europe. Barker says:

We are in a sense, the purest democracy. We have become a despotism. Have you not noticed how continually in history democracy becomes despotism? People call it the decay of democracy. It is simply its fulfilment. Why take the trouble to number and register and enfranchise all the innumerable John Robinsons, where you can take one John Robinson with the same intellect or lack of intellect as all the rest, and have done with it? All that we want for government is a man not criminal and insane, who can rapidly look over some petitions and sign some proclamations (30-31).

A few days after this conversation, we find Auberon Quin as an eccentric. He is an antiquary with a penchant for the absurd. A kind of early Dadaist, he is given to telling pointless stories, standing on his head on the sidewalk, and bearing like a grail the accumulated non-sense of the human race. During their walk, Quinn and his friends, Barker and Lambert, were astonished to see a fine-looking man in a green military uniform decorated with many insignia. The man was attracting a good deal of attention, for the people had never seen brilliant clothes before. When Lambert and Barker invited the man to dinner, they learned that he was the ex-President of

Nicaragua, the last small state to be conquered. They considered the ex-President an affable, saddened man. He still believed firmly in the right of the individuals and of states to be different, but he was obviously very old-fashioned in his thinking. The smaller nations had disappeared among the larger nations. In fact, after Barker and Lambret argued with him and showed him the current reasonable view, he went out and committed suicide. Similarly to their surprise, when Quinn stood on his head, some policemen came up and brought word that he had been chosen King. Barker protested loudly that Britain had no need to choose a buffoon as King. Quinn, however, was quite willing to be a King. He immediately styled himself King Auberon.

As soon as Quin is crowned, he begins to impose his mad vision on his materialistic polity. His main goal is to reestablish the past, particularly the local pride that sections of London once had. He revives medieval liveries, rituals, local holidays, costumes, and heraldry. The pragmatic and mechanical are displaced by the beauty of the ritualistic. Highway building and urban development are brought to a halt. As he wanders through Notting Hill, a small boy, Adam Wayne, prods him with a wooden sword and announces: "I'm the king of the castle!"⁵ This gives Auberon an idea. He decrees a "revival of the arrogance of the old medieval cities applied to our glorious suburbs" (80). He invents mythologies for Bayswater, Kensington and

Knightsbridge, devices ceremonies, designs liveries, and holds mock feudal colloquies with his provosts. "Hammersmith, Kensington, Bayswater, Chelsea, Battersea, Clapham, Balham, and a hundred others – each shall immediately build a city wall with gates to be closed at sunset. Each shall have a city guard, armed to the teeth. Each shall have a banner, a coat-of-arms, and if convenient, a gathering cry." On the details of this elaborate scheme Chesterton broods with delightful and dazzling folly. The whole affair is conceived and carried out in the very ecstasy of nonsense, high jinks *in excelsis*. It is all a game, although an annoying one for most of his subjects. All, except the king himself, fail to enjoy the joke.

Adam Wayne enthusiastically embraces the gospel of medieval smallness. As a man of pure feeling, he deplores the world's becoming more and more modern, practical, bustling and rational. More than Quin, he perceives that the progressive achievements of modern society have had their psychological effects: "what a farce is this modern liberality. Freedom of speech means practically in our modern civilization that we must only talk about unimportant things. We must not talk about religion for that is illiberal.... It cannot last. Something must break this strange indifference, this strange dreamy egoism, this strange loneliness of millions in a crowd. Something must break it. Why should it not be you and I" (30). With Quin's approval, Wayne pledges his life to implementing Quin's ways.

But ten years later, Adam Wayne, as the Provost of Notting Hill, plays the game in deadly earnest. A business consortium wants to build a highway through the heart of Wayne's beloved district. He will not permit this. He vows to defend his domain and raises a tiny army. His chief strategist is Turnbull, the owner of the local toyshop. The businessmen raise opposing armies and three fierce battles are fought using spears and swords. King Auberon, in the guise of a war correspondent, reports the conflict. In the colourful battles, Adam Wayne's zeal enables him to rout the forces of materialism and modernism. The Armageddon occurs in the "Battle of the Lamps," so-called because Wayne defeats his enemies in pitch darkness by snuffing out the man-made street lamps which the makers thought were infallible. With this success, the medieval cause of the two heroes spreads rapidly through England. Localities are redeemed from their long sleep of modernism. The old England dreamed of by Carlyle, Ruskin, and Morris is suddenly revived. Fierce local patriotisms emerge and after a dispute about a statue, the battle is resumed. The army of Notting Hill is massacred. Only Wayne survives, and amidst the corpses, he and King Auberon discuss their actions. Auberon explains that he was playing "a vulgar practical joke." Wayne responds that, none the less, he has lifted the modern cities into that poetry which everyone knows mankind knows to be immeasurably more common than the common place." Auberon accepts the truth of this

and the two march off together 'into the unknown world!' (200). Thus Notting Hill is successfully and heroically defended.

In the final part of the novel, Notting Hill itself becomes the centre of an empire. Auberon is still King, and to his bewilderment and amusement, he discovers that the neo-medievalism which he began as a private joke is now accepted as a wise social arrangement. But at the same time the nationalism of Notting Hill spreads to districts which it has conquered and the novel ends with a final battle in which Adam Wayne's army is annihilated. Wayne's unexpected victory revives local patriotism everywhere, and the book closes with a vision of every borough closed within its own wall, with its own customs and coat of arms. "So has the soul of Notting Hill gone forth," cries Adam Wayne, "and made men realize what it is to live in a city." The humanist and the fanatic "laughter and love ... two lobes of the same brain." They have between them created a new world no longer haunted with the burden of broken empires. This is obviously a dramatic treatment of a main Chestertonian doctrine, that the greatest happiness and freedom comes from the love of small things, that a city is more romantic than an empire. At the end of *The Napoleon Notting Hill*, Auberon and Adam recognize the failure of their medieval experiment and express the hope that the conflict between irony and idealism which has torn their country apart will be finally resolved when political power is given to the ordinary citizen,

“the equal and eternal human being ...(who) sees no antagonism between laughter and respect ... the common man, whom were geniuses like you and me can only worship like a god” (200). But the myth of the heroic medieval past, provides no real solution for the practical problems of politics. Indeed, the common man remains an ideal only because he has never had to carry the corrupting burden of actual political power. And the failure to distinguish between what is a mythic and what is a practical reality could result in the same kind of tragedy that destroyed the experiments in medieval politics.

The story is supposed to begin in 1984. This may be a coincidence, but it is appropriate that Orwell, who admired the prophetic quality in Chesterton's writing, should choose that date for the title of a novel that draws another horrifying picture of the future.

Neither in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* nor in the other novels of G.K.Chesterton do we get any subtle characterization. Chesterton's characters are all mouth pieces for various ideas or philosophies and his aim is to show the conflict as if in the final analysis vindicates an idea. It is interesting to note that in the present novel there are no female characters at all. The whole novel is fantastic and delightful and though every critic of Chesterton's time enjoyed it immensely, few took it seriously. But as Maisie Ward puts it, “besides being the best of his fantastic stories, it contains the most picturesque account of Chesterton's social philosophy he ever gave.”⁶

The argument of the novel involves the general question of the relationship of irony to political earnestness and the more particular question of the meaning and value of nationalism to Imperialism. And although the novel ends with the apotheosis of the common man, it says Nothing about the relationship of politics to religion. For a clear understanding of this theme, the novel requires some understanding not only of the particular background against which it was written, but also of the particular political point of view which it was meant to express.

The Napoleon of Notting Hill was written in 1904, but it had its beginning in two events which occurred some years earlier. The first of these was a plan which Chesterton had worked out as a child for the possible defence of a street in his home district of North Kensington. The childish fancy involved the capture of a water tower and the threat to flood the valley in which an enemy was camped. In the dedicatory poem Chesterton explains to Belloc and to the reader the way in which the novel grew out of this curious day dream:

This legend of an epic hour
A child I dreamed, and dream it still,
Under the great grey water – tower
That strikes the stars are Campden Hill! (39)

The second event was the Jameson Raid of 1895 and the outbreak of the South African war a few years later. For Chesterton the raid and the war which eventually followed it were two aspects of a single event which provided him with a kind of political illumination. In his autobiography, in commenting on the genesis of his early political views, he describes the way in which he was torn between the claims of socialism and Imperialism on the one hand and an inner instinct for a political system on the smallest possible scale on the other. The war was important not because it added significantly to his political knowledge but because it provided him with a way of resolving the conflict. In the approval which the imperialists and socialists seemed to give to the policy of unification and centralization, he saw the proof that the two movements were equally abhorrent and essentially the same. And in the Boers' apparently hopeless resistance to this policy, he saw the heroic embodiment of his own instinctive political dream. It was an event which taught him the first principle of his political beliefs: he must always be on the side of the small nation. In his own words, it was an event which "not only woke me from my dreams like a thunder-clap but like a lightning-flash revealed me to myself."⁷

But it was only as the war continued and the British armies began to encounter unexpected difficulties that his early memory of the defence of a London street and his new sympathies for the Boers began to coalesce in the shape of an idea for his novel:

... the note struck from the first was the note of the inevitable; a thing abhorrent to Christians and to lovers of liberty. The blows struck by the Boer nation at bay, the dash and dazzling evasions of Dewet, the capture of a British general at the very end of the campaign, sounded again and again the opposite note of defiance; of those who as I wrote later in one of the my first articles, 'disregard the omens and disdain the stars.' And all this swelled up within me into vague images of a modern resurrection of Marathon or Thermopyle; and I saw again my recurring dream of the unscalable tower and the besieging citizens; and began to draw out the rude outlines of my little romance of London.⁸

In the above quotation, Chesterton argues that the spirit in which one states one's political aims is more important than the details with which they are elaborated. When a great revolution is made, it seldom involves the fulfillment of its exact formula. That is, in the novel, Auberon's irony and Wayne's fanaticism are revealed as the two essentials of political sanity which achieve their equilibrium in the Chestertonian common man.

The anti-imperialist and anti-socialist meaning of the novel is quite plain. A public house, a church and a few shops, huddled together on a single street are immeasurably more important and worth defending than the empire of the imperialists or the world-state of the Fabians. Whether the Boers are more truly represented in the

hopeless plight of Nicaragua, the last small nation to resist annexation at the beginning of the novel, or in the unexpected victories of Wayne's armies in the central part of the book, which correspond in a way to the early Boer victories that had delighted Chesterton, or in the heroism with which Wayne fights his final battle at the novel's conclusion, does not really matter. For what the novel celebrates is the superiority of the human spirit to mere force and numbers. What is hateful to Wayne is the same thing which made the Boer war hateful to Chesterton.

It is part of Chesterton's indirect method that the ironic defects of his own Utopia are implied without ever being stated. Nothing is what it appears to be. Thus the system of government by lots at first suggests the perfection of democracy, since it seems to imply an absolute trust in the ordinary citizens ability to rule. In fact, it is an index of a total lack of interest in politics. The King is chosen "like a jury man upon an official rotation list (36), partly because of the apathy of the citizens, and partly because the position carries no real power with it. Auberon quickly discovers that his liberty to do anything he pleases does not include the liberty to do anything that seriously displeases the businessmen who are the real rulers of the empire. In a moment of crisis, the theoretically absolute ruler learns the limits of his authority that the bureaucratic utopia is also a plutocracy. So, too, with the claim that the empire includes all the talents of the peoples it absorbs. In fact, as the experience of Juan Del

Fuego, the last president of Nicaragua, suggests, Nothing distinctive from the conquered nation is preserved except the bitterness of its patriots. Indeed Chesterton's England of 1884 bears a strong resemblance to Conard's republic, Nostramo. Like Sulaco, the ideal society of the future is materially comfortable and spiritually bankrupt. This negative quality of the utopia does not, however, exhaust the novel's meaning. There is a positive meaning, too, which is revealed by a series of ironic reversals and symbolic effects. The choice of Auberon as King, for example, does vindicate the cynical political system which enables the choice to be made. Nor is the popular basis of the system nearly as large as James Barker suggests when he speaks of an enduring democracy founded on the stupidity of all men. In fact, the choice is made from only a very small part of the total population: "Democracy was dead, for no one minded the governing class governing. England was now practically a despotism, but not an hereditary one. Someone in the official class was made king. No one could how: no one cared who. He was merely a universal secretary." (16) As a man who cares only for a joke, he exploits the comic possibilities of his authority to the full, and in doing so sets in motion forces which destroy the system which brought him to power. But he is as much a victim of the situation he creates as the men who enabled him to do so. The artistic side of his temperament is satisfied by the charter of the cities, which makes his artistic dreams come to life and provides him with the delightful spectacle of self-conscious

businessmen in heraldic costumes. But the irresponsible humorist is also a dangerous man. By converting Adam Wayne to a political philosophy which he does not believe in, he discovers to his surprise that his joke has changed first into something like an epic and ultimately into something like a tragedy.

Adam Wayne's failure to understand Auberon provides the chief conflict in the novel. The Notting Hill war in which Wayne's tiny army wins victory does possess a kind of romantic grandeur, but this is being constantly undercut by the reader's awareness that Auberon laughs at the things which he taught Wayne to admire. When Auberon appoints himself war correspondent, Wayne's epic is in the gravest danger of becoming a farce (144-59). What one discovers in fact is that the real conflict is not between the empire and the absurdly small nation that rebels against it, but between the frivolous satirist and the humourless fanatic. Even the victory of Notting Hill does Nothing to resolve this unconscious antagonism. Success corrupts the suburb and it becomes the centre of a new kind of imperialism and the focus for the envy and the hatred of all the patriots which its tyranny creates. But for Auberon it remains ridiculous. One can argue, as Wayne does, that the destruction of Notting Hill by the bureaucrats and businessmen marks its ultimate victory, because its enemies are now inspired by the very patriotism which they had previously ridiculed.

Do you not see that it is the glory of our achievement that we have infected the other cities with the idealism of Notting Hill? It is we who have created not only our own side, but both sides of this controversy. O, too humble fools – why should you wish to destroy your enemies? You have done something more to them. You have created your enemies. (182)

By the end of the novel Auberon and Wayne's contempt has given way to hatred, and in fighting Notting Hill they have come to accept Notting Hill's view of itself. But Auberon's judgement still throws Wayne's achievement in doubt. Only in the strange confrontation after the last battle is this conflict finally resolved.

The meaning of this concluding episode is difficult to assess unless one makes an effort to understand Chesterton's use of symbols throughout the novel. One thinks for example of the emphasis on the heraldic colours of Notting Hill. In the final battle, Wayne tears a yellow shred from the banner of the victors: "Here is one colour! ... And here!" he cried, pointing to his own blood, "here is the other" (182). The incident derives its meaning from the fact that the President of Nicaragua makes an identical gesture with the same colours at the beginning of the novel. In his lament for the last of the small nations and in his somewhat theatrical rhetoric about "the sanctity of colours," he provides the symbolic explanation for the later event:

... Senor, you asked me why, in my desire to see the colours of my country, I snatched at paper and blood. Can you not understand the ancient sanctity of colours? The church has her symbolic colours. And think of what colours mean to us think of the position of one like myself, who can see Nothing but those two colours, Nothing but the red and the yellow. To me all shapes are equal, all common and noble things are in a democracy of combination, wherever there is a field of marigolds and the red cloak of an old woman, there is Nicaragua. Where there is a field of poppies and a yellow patch of sand, there is Nicaragua, wherever there is a human and a red sunset there is my country. (26)

The implication is that Notting Hill, has by its choice of the Nicaragua colours, continued the life of the tiny republic, destroyed by the imperialists and that the idea of Notting Hill may similarly survive the destruction of its army.

Another and more important example of symbolic writing is the use of symbolic types as characters. In fact, the characters must be identified as types if the novel is to be understood. This is particularly true of the two main characters who become, in the words of the final chapter, little more than voices. Wayne is easily recognized as the ideal of idealists, and the symbolic overtones of the name 'Adam' give an added meaning both to his attempt to create a new world and to his defeat under the great tree in Kensington gardens. Auberon Quin is

much more difficult to identify as a type, perhaps because he is based on the character of Max Berbohm. He has something of the complexity of his original. Maisie Ward's account of the matter from Frances notes clearly indicates the event:

A delightful dinner party at the Lames.... The talk was mostly about Napoleon. Max took me (Frances) into dinner and was really nice. He is a good fellow... He seems only pleased at the way he has been identified with king Auberon. "All right, my dear chap," he said to G., who was trying to apologize. "Mr.Lame and I settled it all at a lunch."⁹

In fact, Auberon's many-sidedness explains part of the difficulty one has in understanding the concluding incident of the novel. He has become so much an individual that it is a shock to discover that he is meant primarily as a type. For the ultimate confrontation between Wayne and Quin is not a confrontation between individuals, but a confrontation between earnestness and humour. What the novel finally implies is that this conflict which is the source of the entire action of the novel can only be resolved by the common man who possesses the balance which both Quin and Wayne lack. Modern society has polarized the comic and the serious spirits. "Funny is the opposite of serious. Funny is the opposite of not funny, and of nothing else."¹⁰ What the novel suggests is that this division will be remedied only when political power is given to the ordinary citizen who sees "no

real antagonism between laughter and respect" (192). So in a novel in which there is no representative of the working classes, an ultimate equilibrium is achieved symbolically when Auberon Quin and Adam Wayne leave to wander the world together. For they are finally identified as the humanist and the fantastic, "laughter and love.... The two loves of the same brain of a ploughman" (192). They create a new world no longer haunted with the burden of broken empires. This is obviously a dramatic treatment of a main Chestertonian doctrine, that the greatest happiness and freedom comes from the love of a small things, that a city is more romantic than an empire. Thus the allegorical element becomes clear only towards the conclusion of **The Napoleon of Notting Hill**.

The sword is a recurring motif in Chesterton's novels. The dual in **The Ball and the Cross** is fought with two seventeenth-century swords. In the story "The Sword of Wood" Chesterton plays with the idea that an inverted sword makes a cross. The sword is the symbol of Wayne's fanaticism in **The Napoleon of Notting Hill**. Early in the novel, Wayne, as a young boy, challenges King Auberon with a wooden sword. Whimsically Quin commends him for being "so stalwart a defender of your old inviolate Notting Hill" (48). From this, incident stems Auberon's fantastic scheme of a revival of the old medieval cities applied to our glorious suburbs, and Wayne's fanatical local patriotism. The adult Wayne later says to Quin:

I know of a magic ward, but it is a ward that only one or two man rightly use, and only seldom. It is a fairy ward of great fear, stronger than those who use it – often frightful, often wicked to use. But whatever is touched with it is never again wholly common.... If I touch, with this fairy ward, the railways, the roads of Notting Hill, men will love them, and be afraid of them for ever....

What is your ward? Cried the King, impatiently.

'There it is,' said Wayne; and pointed to the floor, where his sword lay flat and shining. (130)

And yet Chesterton was the very opposite of a militarist. Thus, **The Napoleon of Notting Hill** is, in one of its aspects, a pro-Boer pamphlet: it was a defence of the rights of small nations.

Another aspect of **The Napoleon of Notting Hill** is its attempt to answer the problem of how men could be made to realize the wonder and splendour of being alive. This is perhaps the most personal and the most permanent of Chesterton's contributions to literature. He formulated the problem in a characteristic antithesis, "How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet be at home in it?"¹¹ and offered a solution in his novels, which he called 'Romances' because they comprise a mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar.

Besides this, **The Napoleon of Notting Hill** shows Chesterton as a kind of pre-Raphaelite, for he preaches the aesthetic doctrine of

strangeness and beauty as antidotes for the progress of the material world. What is missing at Notting Hill is an interest in religion. Cathedrals exist, but only as part of the local colour. **The Napoleon of Notting Hill** is Chesterton's dream vision, a catharsis of the frustrations he felt in the early years of the century. But the novel still lacks a religious centre because Chesterton himself had not settled into a religious commitment. Only his attitude to war and his social philosophy are brought out in the novel.

As Maisie Ward points, out, **The Napoleon of Notting Hill** is "a fantastic story but contains the most picturesque account of Chesterton's social philosophy."¹² If the test of the success of any book is the pleasure it gives in the reading, this first novel of Chesterton must be pronounced a veritable triumph. The book is at once a fantastic romance, a rich mine of humour, and a kind of allegory of all the contentions which the author has been making since his first appearance in literature.

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