

ON RUNNING AFTER ONE'S HAT

I feel an almost savage envy on hearing that London has been flooded in my absence, while I am in the mere country. My own Battersea has been, I understand, particularly favoured as a meeting of the waters. Battersea was already, as I need hardly say, the most beautiful of human localities. Now that it has the additional splendour of great sheets of water, there must be something quite incomparable in the landscape (or waterscape) of my own romantic town. Battersea must be a vision of Venice. The boat that brought the meat from the butcher's must have shot along those lanes of rippling silver with the strange smoothness of the gondola. The greengrocer who brought cabbages to the corner of the Latchmere Road must have leant upon the oar with the unearthly grace of the gondolier. There is nothing so perfectly poetical as an island; and when a district is flooded it becomes an archipelago.

Some consider such romantic views of flood or fire slightly lacking in reality. But really this romantic view of such inconveniences is quite as practical as the other. The true optimist who sees in such things an opportunity for enjoyment is quite as logical and much more sensible than the ordinary "Indignant Ratepayer" who sees in them an opportunity for grumbling. Real pain, as in the case of being burnt at Smithfield or having a toothache, is a positive thing; it can be supported, but scarcely enjoyed. But, after all, our toothaches are the exception, and as for being burnt at Smithfield, it only happens to us at the very longest intervals. And most of the inconveniences that make men swear or women cry are really sentimental or imaginative inconveniences—things altogether of the mind. For instance, we often hear grown-up people complaining of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train. Did you ever hear a small boy complain of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train? No; for to him to be inside a railway station is to be inside a cavern of wonder and a palace of poetical pleasures. Because to him the red light and the green light on the signal are like a new sun and a new moon. Because to him when the wooden arm of the signal falls down suddenly, it is as if a great king had thrown down his staff as a signal and started a shrieking tournament of trains. I myself am of little boys' habit in this matter. They also serve who only stand and wait for the two fifteen. Their meditations may be full of rich and fruitful things. Many of the most purple hours of my life have been passed at Clapham Junction, which is now, I suppose, under water. I have been there in many moods so fixed and mystical that the water might well have come up to my waist before I noticed it particularly. But in the case of all such annoyances, as I have said, everything depends upon the emotional point of view. You can safely apply the test to almost every one of the things that are currently talked of as the typical nuisance of daily life.

For instance, there is a current impression that it is unpleasant to have to run after one's hat. Why should it be unpleasant to the well-ordered and pious mind? Not merely because it is

running, and running exhausts one. The same people run much faster in games and sports. The same people run much more eagerly after an uninteresting, little leather ball than they will after a nice silk hat. There is an idea that it is humiliating to run after one's hat; and when people say it is humiliating they mean that it is comic. It certainly is comic; but man is a very comic creature, and most of the things he does are comic—eating, for instance. And the most comic things of all are exactly the things that are most worth doing—such as making love. A man running after a hat is not half so ridiculous as a man running after a wife.

Now a man could, if he felt rightly in the matter, run after his hat with the manliest ardour and the most sacred joy. He might regard himself as a jolly huntsman pursuing a wild animal, for certainly no animal could be wilder. In fact, I am inclined to believe that hat-hunting on windy days will be the sport of the upper classes in the future. There will be a meet of ladies and gentlemen on some high ground on a gusty morning. They will be told that the professional attendants have started a hat in such-and-such a thicket, or whatever be the technical term. Notice that this employment will in the fullest degree combine sport with humanitarianism. The hunters would feel that they were not inflicting pain. Nay, they would feel that they were inflicting pleasure, rich, almost riotous pleasure, upon the people who were looking on. When last I saw an old gentleman running after his hat in Hyde Park, I told him that a heart so benevolent as his ought to be filled with peace and thanks at the thought of how much unaffected pleasure his every gesture and bodily attitude were at that moment giving to the crowd.

The same principle can be applied to every other typical domestic worry. A gentleman trying to get a fly out of the milk or a piece of cork out of his glass of wine often imagines himself to be irritated. Let him think for a moment of the patience of anglers sitting by dark pools, and let his soul be immediately irradiated with gratification and repose. Again, I have known some people of very modern views driven by their distress to the use of theological terms to which they attached no doctrinal significance, merely because a drawer was jammed tight and they could not pull it out. A friend of mine was particularly afflicted in this way. Every day his drawer was jammed, and every day in consequence it was something else that rhymes to it. But I pointed out to him that this sense of wrong was really subjective and relative; it rested entirely upon the assumption that the drawer could, should, and would come out easily. "But if," I said, "you picture to yourself that you are pulling against some powerful and oppressive enemy, the struggle will become merely exciting and not exasperating. Imagine that you are tugging up a lifeboat out of the sea. Imagine that you are roping up a fellow-creature out of an Alpine crevass. Imagine even that you are a boy again and engaged in a tug-of-war between French and English." Shortly after saying this I left him; but I have no doubt at all that my words bore the best possible fruit. I have no doubt that every day of his life he hangs on to the handle of that drawer with a flushed face and eyes bright with battle, uttering encouraging shouts to himself, and seeming to hear all round him the roar of an applauding ring.

So I do not think that it is altogether fanciful or incredible to suppose that even the floods in London may be accepted and enjoyed poetically. Nothing beyond inconvenience seems really to have been caused by them; and inconvenience, as I have said, is only one aspect, and that the most unimaginative and accidental aspect of a really romantic situation. An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered. The water that girdled the houses and shops of London must, if anything, have only increased their previous witchery and wonder. For as the Roman Catholic priest in the story said: "Wine is good with everything except water," and on a similar principle, water is good with everything except wine.

G. K. Chesterton

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (29 May 1874 - 14 June 1936) was an English writer, philosopher, lay theologian, and literary and art critic. He has been referred to as the "prince of paradox".

He was born in London, educated at St. Paul's, and went to art school at University College London. In 1900, he was asked to contribute a few magazine articles on art criticism, and went on to become one of the most prolific writers of all time. He wrote a hundred books, hundreds of poems, including the epic Ballad of the White Horse, five plays, five novels and some 200 short stories. In spite of his literary accomplishments, he considered himself primarily a journalist. He wrote over 4000 newspaper essays, including 30 years worth of weekly columns for the Illustrated London News. He also edited his own newspaper, G.K.'s Weekly.

Chesterton was equally at ease with literary and social criticism, history, politics, economics, philosophy and theology.

His essays have also possessed the touch of humour. ~~The~~ The Essay "On Running After One's Hat" is published in 1908, one of the essays from the collection "On Running After One's Hat and Other Whimsies".

The essay shows psychological situation and status of human being. Everything has its own face but it depends on us how we take them because everyone has his own view point and attitude driven by the different circumstances. In this essay, the writer tries to express his view through examples. The writer has not raised any single character in this essay. He has shown the full picture of the society.

His language is very simple and leaves an impression on our mind and compel to think about the problems of the society. He raises a question and answers himself. The theme of this essay deals with the social problem: Connecting personal life of people.

He gives a psychological and moral support to deal with our problems. Every examples glimpses a solutions to face bravely our problems without losing our temper. The title of the essay is also appropriate and justify the story line.

On Running After One's Hat

When the writer was in country side, he heard that London was flooded, he became envious as he felt that his country Battersea had all the favourable conditions to be watered. He compares Battersea with Venice. It is a full of foliage. It is a well suited land for vegetables and fishing. He imagines flooded London as an island. Some people have some romantic view of flood or fire but they have lacking in reality. But this romantic view is a quite practical view. It is an optimistic approach to see enjoyment in such conveniences. Writer feels it sensible and logical. Real pain, as in the case of being burnt at Smithfield or having a toothache is a positive thing and it can be supported but it is difficult to enjoy. Toothache and being burnt are not regular happenings. These occur very often. Inconveniences, which make men cry, are sentimental and imaginative of mind. It is humourous to see grown up complaining to hang about a railway station and wait for a train while a young boy enjoys it and gets poetical pleasures. He enjoys falling of signals as symbol of sun or moon. The writer himself has habits of little boys in these matters. So he also desires to enjoy flood of London. All these happenings are abstract things. Annoyance and enjoyment depends upon the emotional point of view. It can be applicable in all the cases of daily life.

Running after one's hat may be unpleasant for the well ordered and pious mind. Merely running may exhaust someone. Some people run much faster in games and sports. If some people can run after uninteresting little leather ball, what is harm to run after a nice still hat. Some may say that running after one's hat is humiliating, but it may be comic for someone. Man is comic by nature. He does many comic things. Making love is also comic. So, running after one's hat is less comic and ridiculous than a man running after a wife. If a man feels it, he rightly thinks in his matter. He can run after his hat with the manliest ardour and can enjoy the most scared joy. He might regard himself as a jolly hunts man pursuing a wild animal for certainly no animal could be wilder.

could be
There is a meeting held in a ground on a
gusty morning. Crathered people will be told that professional
attendants have started a hat in some technical terms.
The hunter would feel that they were not inflicting pain.
They would feel that they were inflicting pleasure.
Such almost riotous pleasure upon the people who were
looking on. When the writer saw an old gentleman
running after his hat to Hyde park he told him
that a heart so benevolent as his ought to be filled
with peace and thanks at the thought of how much
unaffected pleasure his every gesture and bodily attitude
were at the moment giving to the crowd.

The cases of worry
The principle is applicable to every other typical
domestic worry. A person tries to get a fly out of milk or a piece
of cork out of his glass of wine can often irritated. This
irritation can be seen in case of angler sitting by dark pools.

Critical Analysis of the Essay.

In On Running After One's Hat by G.K. Chesterton we have the theme of escape, embarrassment and acceptance. Taken from his On Running After One's Hat and Other Whimsies collection the reader realises after reading the essay that Chesterton may be exploring the theme of escape. For Chesterton it is easier to imagine himself acting as a child might do when it comes to matters of inconvenience. He believes that a person will be happier should they change their outlook or view life through the lens of a child when encountering inconvenience. Not only will an individual remain calm but they will treat each inconvenience as an adventure. Just as a child might. Chesterton using the young boy at the train station as an example. The boy does not frown upon the fact that train is late. Rather he sees everything at the station as being wonderfully exciting. Though Chesterton may have a point it might be important to remember that many people will encounter difficulty looking at life through the lens of a child. Embarrassment will overtake them and they will feel isolated from the world. As many people who have chased their hats might feel.

It is this embarrassment that an individual feels which will stop an individual chasing their hat as they know that those onlookers who notice what is happening are laughing at the individual rather than with them. Something that Chesterton does not mention in the essay. For Chesterton life is simply better when society drops its guard and allows for the individual to be themselves without being overtly criticized by society. However the reality in life is very much different. Society likes to laugh at the mishaps that occur in an individual's life. It helps society to deflect away from its own problems or worries. It is easier to laugh at another person than to reflect on one's own misfortunes. Something that will not change regardless of Chesterton's assertion that it is good to laugh at a man chasing a hat. One point in whereby Chesterton might be right is on the matter of men chasing after women. Though this in itself may be deemed by some to be ridiculous. It is nonetheless acceptable to society. So as such it does not merit the same attention for others. People will notice a man chasing his hat quicker than they will notice a man chasing a woman down the street.

Chesterton may also be suggesting that society should look closer at itself and realign itself with his train of thought. Which would be a romantic view on life that is not necessarily productive. Taking the flooding in London as an example. For Chesterton there is a degree of excitement. However for those who live in London. The flooding of their homes may be something that

could be considered detrimental and costly. That is if an individual has the necessary funds to refurbish and redecorate their home. For some rather than the flooding being romantic it could lead to homelessness and poverty. Chesterton is looking at life through tinted glasses and not really being honest with the reader. Flooding causes tremendous damage and hardship for some and it is difficult to look at the devastation that flooding causes as being an adventure to be enjoyed. It is also interesting that Chesterton is able to split himself into two separate camps. The outlook of a child and the outlook of an adult. Though the reader is left wondering as to what might trigger Chesterton to view life through the eyes of an adult.

If anything Chesterton simplifies situations in order to maintain a romantic view on life. Something which may leave some readers to suggest that Chesterton is simply wrong on his outlook. Life itself is not a simple matter and is in fact complicated by man himself. On the other hand Chesterton's outlook does have some validity and may be of benefit to people. Life can be much simpler and less annoying should an individual be positive in their outlook regardless of the mishaps they may incur. A positive mind will rectify a negative situation quicker than a negative mind will. In reality a person with a positive mind is difficult to defeat. Although maintaining positivity when facing negativity can be difficult. Something that Chesterton does not admit to nor does he see it as being important. For Chesterton positivity is something that an individual can immediately switch on. The case of Chesterton's friend and the drawer being an example. Chesterton simply isn't being practical though his romantic view on life is admirable. However as mentioned Chesterton may be looking at things through tinted glasses or from a distance. He himself has not mentioned as to whether he struggles when it comes to admitting to running after his hat. Chesterton has chosen to look outward rather than inward. Something that society itself does.