

KNIGHTS-AT-REST

THERE are some places, so it seems to me, which have in them the quality of eternity. They are, as it were, little plots from the garden of Heaven to be reinclosed when the fitful breeze of time has blown itself out, and the universe is left undisturbed again with God.

One of such places is known to me, and there may be others; for I cannot think that one spot alone in the world can be thus singled out for eternity to the exclusion of all others, though for my part I know only one. For convenience I will call it *Knights-at-Rest*, since there are indeed knights at rest in one at least of its quiet fields; and to give it its true name savours of sacrilege, as if one were to speak intimately of a dear friend in public. For to me it is truly a dear friend and—which is a far greater thing—it is holy ground. And if it be said that this holiness is a figment of my mind and not inherent in the place itself, but induced by long sojourning there and happy associations; I answer that, though I have often visited it, and never unhappily, I have passed no more than a few nights there in all; that the very first evening I saw it there fell upon me in some measure at any rate a sense of the presence of eternal things; and that one other human being at least, who has even less close associations with it than I have, has known the same sensation and holds it true.

As in the soul that is near to God there exist a wide calm and a silence that pervades the jangling noises of life, so, whenever I come to *Knights-at-Rest*, I am caught up as on to a mountain top, where even the loudest sounds beat harmlessly upon the protecting silence, and the voices of the village come to my ears muted and full of peace. Nor is this a mere trick of

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the senses brought on by the experience of a few calm evenings of summer. I have known Knights-at-Rest in all kinds of weather; and, though over other country villages there dwells the contentment of a quiet repose, a sweet remoteness from the rush of life, yet the difference between such places and Knights-at-Rest is for me so marked as to escape comparison. Knights-at-Rest does indeed include all that is most desirable in the villages of England, but it possesses, at least in my eyes and those of my friend, what *they* do not possess, and what I have called the quality of eternity.

It may well be asked what knowledge any one of us has of so transcendent a thing as eternity, what key to the glory of the vision of God. It is true that the finite mind of man cannot envisage infinity, nor has God divulged to him the wonders of Heaven. Yet as surely as each human being holds within him the hope of eternal blessedness, so surely must he be imbued with some faculty for recognizing the quality of such blessedness.

Faith presents eternity through the medium of time, and in a special sense may be described as a link between man and God. In this same sense Knights-at-Rest appears to me as a link between Earth and Heaven. For in a way, difficult to describe, it satisfies that physical side of eternity which faith—occupied as it is with us as finite beings—outlines for us in a spiritual sense while as yet ‘we see through a glass in a dark manner.’

Can it be said then that Knights-at-Rest will actually form part of Paradise itself? That from delighting our natural bodies it will in some way help in the satisfaction of our spiritual bodies? We cannot say. But this I believe: for some reason known only to God—whether through the presence in its fields of the bodies of His saints, or because of the praise that has risen to Him from within its boundaries, or, as at

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Lourdes, from some inscrutable act of choice by the Divine Being Himself—Knights-at-Rest is here for us an outpost of earth very close to the Eternal City. This I repeat I cannot help but believe. But how it may be, in what dimension of infinity, explicable by what preternatural motions of the Divine Mind, I can no more say than I can tell the meaning of the windflower or understand the scent of the honeysuckle.

Perhaps in the same way as there exists in all joyful things some common essence of delight—some leaping flame of ecstasy—so from some places of the world may be drawn a distilled radiance for which the immortal in us craves. If in the Beatific Vision place, like time, shall cease to exist, lapsing into the larger processes of eternity, yet I confidently treasure the hope that Knights-at-Rest, where I have known the smile of God, will continue essentially, and help to perfect the praise of its Creator and the everlasting beatitude of man.

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