

## THE WRATH OF GOD

Love was burning in the snow,  
 Purple star in leafless tree,  
 Joy was shaken from a cloud  
 Crowning dark-wet boughs with glee.

The troubadour with careless song  
 Tosses the honey balls of mirth  
 Up to the unforgiving sky  
 Down to the aloe-hearted earth.

He can snatch the scarlet spark  
 Out from the hurt of icy pain,  
 Hear the music of his love  
 Drum in the silver beat of rain.

Crystal glitter of distress  
 Tells nothing of its piercing dole,  
 Burning spark from the fire of truth  
 Brings no vision of the whole:

When the bough springs into bud  
 There may be terror in the green,  
 The wrath of God in a buttercup,  
 His judgment in the lilac sheen.

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**I** ONCE knew a charming lady, somewhat topheavy with titles, who had a delicious assurance that all things she desired were hers by the right of desiring. As we walked down Bond Street she would glide through shop doors, ordering whatever took her fancy. Because of the titles the goods were sent without question. Much later she would be astonished and dismayed by following bills. With cries of distress she would rally those friends to her side whose cognomens were less rare but whose view of life included the inevitability of payment.

The analogy is weak, yet there is a relationship between her conception of existence and the spiritual state of the troubadour who was bowled over by a buttercup. Both of them snatched at beauty without envisaging a bill. Sometimes those flaming playboys of the spiritual world, painters, poets, any 'creative' human beings, catch at a glorious glint of truth and show its loveliness to the world. Perhaps

in their candid love of beauty they break off a morsel of that beauty which is perfect truth. But it is only a bit of mosaic, a scrap detached from its coherent scheme of background. The colour flares in the darkness of our sky and we call it a vision.

The troubadour has grabbed his bit of jewellery before he has learned the necessity of abnegation: because he gets the fleeting glimpse of a joy which may radiate from the heart of icy pain, he takes it to express the whole meaning of sorrow. After sensing the glory in the storm he believes himself to know its bitter secret. He snatches at delight in a buttercup to find that it may hold the inevitability of justice. His joy crashes to despair; he cannot take the integral awfulness of truth because his conceptions of it are all broken up in little pieces and he has never related the bits to the whole.

I suppose the lady in Bond Street may have served a purpose by forcing others to look the whole question of just payment in the face; the troubadour, with his gleams of colour, may arouse hunger for the reality which makes them live. After all, he and she are themselves bits of the spiritual reality which makes the indivisibility of truth. To find out how they fit in you must stand back and see them related to the complete, essential picture.

Perhaps truth, being life itself, has to be lived by a human being before it can be even dimly divined as a whole. One human life, however unspectacular, can express through holiness the substance of eternal verity; in this way alone an individual can express the oneness of every living thing. The humble existence of the uncultured saint shines with a luminosity more revealing of God than the most breath-taking beauty of a work of trained art—and God is truth.

To any finite creature, the infinite wholeness of truth must remain incomprehensible, and incommunicable to other creatures through any of the transient senses. Nevertheless it is through the breath of holiness, breathed and lived by a human being in time, that we come nearest to a comprehension of that wholeness. The troubadour may bring us rainbow colours in his rags of joy, or music in the fury of tribulation; he cannot show us, as the visions of the saints show us, that neither joy nor grief can be torn apart from their intrinsic oneness. He has not discovered that they, with every other moment in his life, must be co-related with the trinity in unity which is the beginning and end of all life. He is afraid of wrath, for he sees it detached from love. The saint will have his joy aflame in the very dread of judgment; perhaps, like Mother Julian, he will see no wrath in God, having found in his own spirit the oneness of life.

The troubadour wanted his light without the blackness which is its other face; payment of any kind has seemed alien to the perfect freedom of truth; he has not understood that he himself is part of the

whole and so must take his share of all. Realising the inexorable roundness of reality, he is beaten back into his own fear. Grabbing at the circle, he has found a fragment of light so blinding that it brings him deepest night.

Well, there is the poor troubadour, left with his shattered bits of truth beside the buds of spring. Perhaps he will drown in the intolerable waters which surge over his ruins; yet, although a robber, it *was* truth for which he hunted. If in his darkness he can hold the morsel which he tried to tear away, he may stumble to a nearer understanding of the wholeness of that beauty which he tried to steal.

DOROTHEA STILL

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#### O B I T E R

'WHAT A WONDERFUL RESULT to your appeal! All your parcels have arrived and I have been able to give pleasure incalculable'. So writes the Friends' Relief Service worker who undertook to distribute the gifts that came pouring in as a result of our appeal in the April BLACKFRIARS for 'rations for the mind' to be sent to German Dominicans. Among other activities, the Fathers have opened at Vechte a school for 72 boys—orphans, sons of Displaced Persons, a pathetic microcosm of the deepest of all European tragedies. They had nothing to start with. It can be imagined how providential must have seemed the arrival of books, paper, pencils, and all the other things that were so generously sent from all parts of the country—and beyond it; from all sorts of people—nuns, doctors, schoolteachers, housewives. May we express our thanks on behalf of our German brethren and sisters (for they too have been helped), to all those who have assisted in this most practical work of charity. It has not been possible to thank everyone individually. Sometimes parcels bore no name, sometimes donors asked that no acknowledgment should be sent. But to all we send our grateful thanks.

FROM THE VATICAN MISSION Miss C. Andersson also writes: 'The appeal in the May number has met with such a generous response that it is impossible for me to thank all the donors by a personal letter, which I would very much like to do. Do you think that you could insert a short note in your next number to the effect that the Vatican Mission is more than grateful for the numerous copies sent, and that our long list of recipients of periodicals appreciate very much indeed the addition of BLACKFRIARS to what they already receive? I may add that the Director, Rev. Father P. Dickinson, S.J., was delighted at this addition to our available periodicals'.