

**A PICKED COMPANY;  
BEING A  
SELECTION FROM THE  
WRITINGS OF H. BELLOC**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649671311

A Picked Company; Being a Selection from the Writings of H. Belloc by H. Belloc

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H. BELLOC

SECOND EDITION

METHUEN & CO. LTD.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON

*First Published* . . . . *July 28th, 1915*  
*Second Edition* . . . . *November 1915*

## PREFACE

THIS volume, which has been compiled from seventeen of Mr. Belloc's books, may be claimed to be representative of his many-sided genius. The selection has been made by Mr. E. V. Lucas. The omission of any passage from *The Path to Rome* is due to copyright difficulties, while the author himself prefers that his poems should remain in his volume, *Verses*, 1910.

Thanks are due to Mr. Eveleigh Nash for permission to use extracts from *The Eye-Witness* and *Cautionary Tales for Children*, to Messrs. Duckworth & Co. for quotations from *Esto Perpetua*, *Caliban's Guide to Letters*, *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts* and *More Beasts for Worse Children*, to Mr. Edward Arnold for the letters G and O from *A Moral Alphabet* and to Messrs. Thomas Nelson & Sons for an extract from *The Four Men*.





## CONTENTS

### ESSAYS

	PAGE
ON THE PLEASURE OF TAKING UP ONE'S PEN .	9
THE PLEASANT PLACE . . . . .	13
ON INNS . . . . .	24
ON THE HOTEL AT PALMA AND A PROPOSED GUIDE- BOOK . . . . .	30
THE ONION-EATER . . . . .	35
THE HARBOUR IN THE NORTH . . . . .	40
THE YOUNG PEOPLE . . . . .	46
ON A HERMIT WHOM I KNEW . . . . .	50
THE OLD THINGS . . . . .	57
MR. THE DUKE : THE MAN OF MALPLAQUET .	63
ON THE SOURCES OF RIVERS . . . . .	68
THE EYE-OPENERS . . . . .	72
THE LITTLE OLD MAN . . . . .	77
A CROSSING OF THE HILLS . . . . .	82
ON A GREAT WIND . . . . .	88
ON A WINGED HORSE AND THE EXILE WHO RODE HIM . . . . .	92
ON REST . . . . .	99

## HISTORY

	PAGE
THE LAST DAYS OF MARIE ANTOINETTE . . . . .	103
MR BARR'S ANNOYANCE . . . . .	152
THE BARRICADE . . . . .	158

## TRAVEL

PYRENEAN HOSTELRIES . . . . .	163
THE LITTLE SHIPS . . . . .	167

## FICTION

LORD BENTHORPE . . . . .	171
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## THE OBLIQUE METHOD

THE SHORT LYRIC . . . . .	182
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## NONSENSE FOR CHILDREN

PROEM . . . . .	195
THE YAK . . . . .	196
THE PYTHON . . . . .	197
G . . . . .	198
O . . . . .	199
GODOLPHIN HORNE . . . . .	200

## CONCLUSION

ON COMING TO AN END . . . . .	202
"HE DOES NOT DIE" . . . . .	207

# A PICKED COMPANY

## ESSAYS

### ON THE PLEASURE OF TAKING UP ONE'S PEN<sup>1</sup>

**A**MONG the sadder and smaller pleasures of this world I count this pleasure: the pleasure of taking up one's pen.

It has been said by very many people that there is a tangible pleasure in the mere act of writing: in choosing and arranging words. It has been denied by many. It is affirmed and denied in the life of Doctor Johnson, and for my part I would say that it is very true in some rare moods and wholly false in most others. However, of writing and the pleasure in it I am not writing here (with pleasure), but of the pleasure of taking up one's pen, which is quite another matter.

Note what the action means. You are alone. Even if the room is crowded (as was the smoking-room in the G.W.R. Hotel, at Paddington, only the other day, when I wrote my "Statistica! Abstract of Christendom"), even if the room is crowded, you must have made yourself alone to be able to write at all. You must have built up some kind of wall and isolated your mind. You are alone, then; and that is the beginning.

If you consider at what pains men are to be alone: how they climb mountains, enter prisons, profess monastic vows, put on eccentric daily habits, and

<sup>1</sup> From *On Nothing*.