

GLADSTONIAN GHOSTS

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Gladstonian ghosts by Cecil Chesterton

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CECIL CHESTERTON

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DEDICATION
TO
EDGAR JEPSON.

DEDICATION.

My dear Jepson,

If (with your permission) I dedicate this essay in political criticism to you, it is because I know that, though you parade it less, your interest in the science of politics is fully as keen as my own. In point of fact there is no one whose judgment in these matters I would trust more readily than yours. You are a philosopher ; and the philosopher's outlook in politics is always clear, practical and realistic as contrasted with the thoroughly romantic illusions of the typical party man. That, by the way, is why Mr. Balfour, the philosopher, has in the domain of parliamentary and electoral strategy

hopelessly outwitted Mr. Chamberlain, the "man of business and busy man"—to quote his own characteristically poetic phrase.

As a philosopher you are able to see what no "practical statesman" on either side of the House seems likely to perceive—that social and economic politics are the only kind of politics that really matter, and that the "chicken-in-the-pot" ideal of Henri Quatre is after all the primary aim of all statesmanship. Three centuries of anarchic commercialism have left us a legacy of pauperism, disease, famine, physical degeneracy and spiritual demoralization, which in another century will infallibly destroy us altogether if we cannot in the mean time destroy them. And I think you share my impatience when our Radical friends insist on discussing Irish Home Rule, Church Disestablishment and the abolition of the House of Lords, as if such frivolities could really satisfy

the human conscience faced with the appalling realities of the slums.

When therefore I speak of your interest in politics I am not thinking of that rather exciting parlour game which they play at Westminster during the spring months. In this you probably take less interest than I; for I must confess (not altogether without shame) that the sporting aspect of politics has always fascinated me. You, on the other hand, have *Bridge* to amuse you; and, when you are brought to the bar of the Nonconformist Conscience on this count, you may fairly plead that any man who played *Bridge* with the peculiar mixture of ignorance, stupidity, criminal laziness and flagrant dishonesty with which the Front Benches play the game of politics, would infallibly be turned out of his club and probably cut by all his acquaintances.

It may seem surprising that, taking this view of contemporary party warfare,