

**GREYBEARDS AT PLAY:  
LITERATURE AND ART  
FOR OLD GENTLEMEN.  
RHYMES AND SKETCHES**

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Greybeards at Play: Literature and Art for Old Gentlemen. Rhymes and Sketches by Gilbert Chesterton

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**GILBERT CHESTERTON**

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**RHYMES AND SKETCHES  
BY GILBERT CHESTERTON**

**LONDON : R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON  
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## A DEDICATION

TO E.C.B.

HE was, through boyhood's storm and  
shower,  
My best, my nearest friend ;  
We wore one hat, smoked one cigar,  
One standing at each end.

We were two hearts with single hope,  
Two faces in one hood ;  
I knew the secrets of his youth ;  
I watched his every mood.

The little things that none but I  
Saw were beyond his wont,  
The streaming hair, the tie behind,  
The coat tails worn in front.

I marked the absent-minded scream,  
    The little nervous trick  
Of rolling in the grate, with eyes  
    By friendship's light made quick.

But youth's black storms are gone and  
    past,  
    Bare is each aged brow ;  
And, since with age we're growing bald,  
    Let us be babies now.

Learning we knew ; but still to-day,  
    With spelling-book devotion,  
Words of one syllable we seek  
    In moments of emotion.



Riches we knew ; and well dressed  
dolls—

Dolls living—who expressed  
No filial thoughts, however much  
You thumped them in the chest.

Old happiness is grey as we,  
And we may still outstrip her ;  
If we be slippered pantaloons,  
Oh let us hunt the slipper !

The old world glows with colours clear ;  
And if, as saith the saint,  
The world is but a painted show,  
Oh let us lick the paint !

Far, far behind are morbid hours,  
    And lonely hearts that bleed.  
Far, far behind us are the days,  
    When we were old indeed.

Leave we the child : he is immersed  
    With scientists and mystics :  
With deep prophetic voice he cries  
    Canadian food statistics.

But now I know how few and small,  
    The things we crave need be—  
Toys and the universe and you—  
    A little friend to tea.

Behold the simple sum of things,  
Where, in one splendour spun,  
The stars go round the Mulberry Bush,  
The Burning Bush, the Sun.

Now we are old and wise and grey,  
And shaky at the knees ;  
Now is the true time to delight  
In picture books like these.

Hoary and bent I dance one hour :  
What though I die at morn ?  
There is a shout among the stars,  
" To-night a child is born."