

topping a bush, or one lasting poem out of a lifetime of verses, a solitary egg. This pair alone among their brethren, some with mere twists of grass, had the synoptic view of life; they saw it whole in one sweep from the experience of memory to the prevision of inference; what tides have done before, spoke the tight logic of stick upon stick, tides may do again. Only the lovely treasure of the redshank,* with its background of yellow or grey or both (lighter than the lapwing's), and its rich daubs of purples and browns, is concealed in the heart of the tussock, where long grasses play their shadows over it, the fingers of the wind's caress.

Past the sheld-duck on the water, gowned so comely and so bizarre both, with her ducklings in their white down banded twice with Vandyke lines, and over on the mainland, the shelf between inland and outer sea, was an oyster-catcher's nest with the rare number of four eggs (streaked and printed grey-brown on a yellowish-grey ground color), walled with pebbles in a shingle depression. One was double-yolked and twice the size of the others, an oddity to make itch the thievish hand of the collector. Once an egg of this same pair rolled out of its hollow nearer the water, and they swung round and round the watcher's head, wailfully *kleep-kleeping*, until he went to the nest and restored the egg. As I walked over the island the gulls hung screaming low over my head, a roof woven of white wings with the azure one of the world streaming through it. Here were three skies, and I marooned on a cloud in the lowest; but only the middle one lived with me, and that was all life, broken not only into a mosaic of moving lights but into full a thousand entities of brain and heart and nerve, and among them how many originals like that pair of gulls and oyster-catchers? The city was on one side of the bank, its corporate life on the other, for eggs and nests were safe in fancy-freedom by a common purpose of watch and ward which kept the peace within the ranks of the divers peoples (the gulls, as I was assured and could see for myself, did not touch the terns', redshanks' or plovers' eggs), and every enemy except man and the elements without.

If there is no more individual shore-bird than the redshank, there is none so personable as the ringed plover. In social flight, when the flock becomes an individual and the birds its several organic parts like the words of a lyric, they resemble sanderling, little stint, and dunlin; they nest among the terns and gulls, as their fellow-waders (except the redshank) never do, and their charming little pear-shaped eggs, three and sometimes four, are similar, but for shape and position with their narrower ends together in the middle of the nest, to the little terns'. They are not quite so variable in their markings, but I found one nest of four eggs with one pair pigmented to type and the other, cream-colored, without markings of any kind. The sides of the cupped nest are usually embossed with pebbles and broken shells, but I have seen a few nests among the gulls wound with grass bents. They are true to the volatile expression of their homes, impinged upon by the restless sea, suffused and rarefied by the elements, and they twinkle over their native shore with a run which seems another phase of flight, but always more waywardly than other small shore-birds, while their plumper and squatter build gives them an inexplicable pathos. Thus they maintain a fellowship of habit with their various associates and yet preserve an essence, unique and particular, of their own.

There is an infallible method of finding out whether ringed plover have eggs or young. If the former, they content themselves with flying in circles round the intruder, with their soft plaints—*peep, peep*, and *toolee, toolee*, the dissyllable being the nuptial call modulated into a quavering trill, when the male weaves his flight-mazes or slides along the ground with humped back and dragging wing. But if the latter, then the female becomes a Lyceum tragic actress in the convulsions of death. Actually she mimics the throes, creeping along in painful spasms with one wing flapping in the air, the other lolling as though broken, and then, with head half buried in the shingle, rolls over from side to side and, with a last shudder, agonises

* All of which I was offered for a gift, so hated among the gunners is the bird which alone of its family makes the interests of others its own, and with its clamor rouses the whole of the population in its neighborhood, each and every tribe, against their common foe.

into a lifeless, tumbled heap. I am a stoat; my craving for blood is whetted, and I bare my teeth as I pad after her. A last paroxysm of life spurts up in her and carries her writhing and floundering another 20 yards. A bestial possession foams the blood through my arteries, and I go bounding after her, my snout dilated at the anticipated scent of her blood—and there she is flashing her silver wings over my head with a hey-nony-toolee, and "Keep you low, my child, till I entice him this way and that way, far out of yours." The crouching infant, three or four hours old in down of fawn and grey, rucks its nape feathers over the telling black collar and shams stone, but stones do not pulsate, nor, when picked up, wave stumps of wings and set off on long shanks to tumble head over ears over a rather bigger member of their order. The nest a few yards off has still one egg but no broken shells, which are carried off the nesting ground to give the younglings, one supposes, room and warmth under the parent's breast at night.

The little "dotterels," as they are called locally, are, further, much more circumspect in going on to their eggs than the terns, who come home down the chimney, so to speak. The female returns in a series of runs and pauses, retreats, approaches, goes off at a tangent, sidles nearer, swerves away again, and finally makes a dash for it and settles deeply in with a sigh rippling all over her body.

The eye leaves her, jumps over the waving beds of sea-campion, threads its way among the hulks of the seals basking on the sandspit, and launches out to sea, swinging over the pale bar of the horizon into the immensity of space. The loneliness of the human mind is behind it, and it travels further than any winged citizen of this busy township, contented in the fulfilment of its single and commingled lives. And in space that mind is at home, building it with cities of its own workmanship, where all our quest is ended, our frustrations undone, and as these birds know a matchless freedom of body here, so we there an equal freedom of the mind.

G. K. Chesterton's Obit Dicta

Evil always takes advantage of ambiguity.

Evil always wins through the strength of its splendid dupes.

There has in all ages been a disastrous alliance between abnormal innocence and abnormal sin.

A silent anarchy is eating out our society.

The State has suddenly and quickly gone mad. It is talking nonsense, and it can't stop.

The fairy tales knew what the modern mystics don't—that one should not let loose either the supernatural or the natural.

The Eugenists are as passive in their statements as they are active in their experiments.

Modern scientists will not say that George III. in his lucid intervals should settle who is mad; or that the aristocracy that introduced gout shall supervise diet.

The newspaper of to-day—which every day can be delivered earlier and earlier—every day is less worth delivering at all.

The age we live in is something more than an age of superstition—it is an age of innumerable superstitions.

The thing that really is trying to tyrannise through government is science.

The doctor of science actually boasts that he will always abandon a hypothesis; and yet he persecutes for the hypothesis.

The Eugenists mean that the public is to be given up, not as a heathen land for conversion, but simply as a pabulum for experiment.

There is no reason in Eugenics but there is plenty of motive.

The epoch for which it is almost impossible to find a form of words is our own.

The half-starved English proletarian is not only nearly a skeleton, but he is a skeleton in a cupboard.

Our sins (of the past) have become our secrets.

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