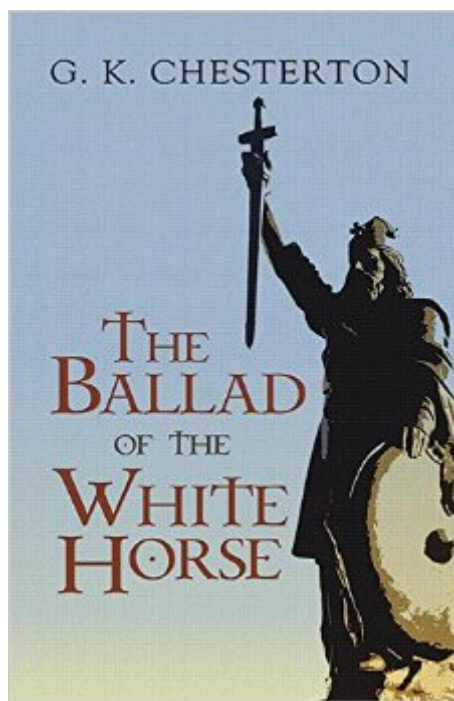


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The Ballad Of The White Horse



Synopsis

More than a thousand years ago, the ruler of a beleaguered kingdom saw a vision of the Virgin Mary that moved him to rally his chiefs and make a last stand. Alfred the Great freed his realm from Danish invaders in the year 878 with an against-all-odds triumph at the Battle of Ethandune. In this ballad, G. K. Chesterton equates Alfred's struggles with Christianity's fight against nihilism and heathenism; a battle that continues to this day. One of the last great epic poems, this tale unfolds in the Vale of the White Horse, where Alfred fought the Danes in a valley beneath an ancient equine figure etched upon the Berkshire hills. Chesterton employs the mysterious image as a symbol of the traditions that preserve humanity. His allegory of the power of faith in the face of an invasive foe was much quoted in the dark days of 1940, when Britain was under attack by Nazis. This new edition offers an authoritative, inexpensive version of Chesterton's inspiring work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm fit to judge this book neither as poetry nor as history, knowing beforehand something of only one character in the ballad - King Alfred. But next time to Oxfordshire, I now plan to visit the white horse. I also know something of Chesterton. As one of his works, Ballad of the White Horse seems both typical and unusual. It's typical in paradox, romantic Christianity, and the deft use of chalk to boldly sketch a few simple strokes that define a figure, without too much concern for detail. (The chalk in this case is the Uffington White Horse, which Chesterton cheerfully moves to Wiltshire, where the battle probably took place. A big piece of chalk to draw with, but Chesterton was a big man.) Chesterton's philosophy of white chalk, as described in an essay on the subject, (where he

also talks about drawing "the soul of a cow") may help explain this poem:"But as I sat scrawling these silly figures on the brown paper, it began to dawn on me, to my great disgust, that I had left one chalk, and that a most exquisite and essential chalk, behind. I searched all my pockets, but I could not find any white chalk. Now, those who are acquainted with all the philosophy (nay, religion) which is typified in the art of drawing on brown paper, know that white is positive and essential. I cannot avoid remarking here upon a moral significance. One of the wise and awful truths which this brown-paper art reveals, is this, that white is a color. It is not a mere absence of color; it is a shining and affirmative thing, as fierce as red, as definite as black. When, so to speak, your pencil grows red-hot, it draws roses; when it grows white-hot, it draws stars.

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