



The Flying Inn

G.K. Chesterton

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An exuberant man as well as a prolific and gifted writer, G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) was a man with very strong opinions — and extremely capable of defending them. In this hilarious, satirical romp, Chesterton demonstrates his intense distrust of power and "progressives," railing against Prohibition, vegetarianism, theosophy, and other "dreary and oppressive" forces of modernity.

In a spirited response to the government's attempt to curtail alcohol sales, Humphrey Pump (called Hump) — a pub owner in the fishing village of Pebblewick — takes to the road in a donkey cart. Accompanied by Captain Patrick Dalroy, a crimson-haired giant with a tendency to burst into song, Hump provisions the cart with a cask of good rum, a giant round of cheese, and the signpost from his pub, The Flying Inn. Together, the two men extend good cheer to an increasingly restless populace as they attempt to evade Prohibition. In a journey that becomes a rollicking madcap adventure, the two travel round England, encountering revolution, romance, and a cast of memorable characters.

Sure to receive an enthusiastic welcome from Chesterton fans, this new edition of an old classic will also appeal to anyone who enjoys a humorous, well-crafted tale.

The Flying Inn Details

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Author : G.K. Chesterton

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From Reader Review The Flying Inn for online ebook

Audrey says

For some moments Joan appeared to be in a blacker state of brooding than usual; then she said, in a candid and friendly tone, which somehow contrasted with her knit and swarthy brows— "No, really. At least I think I've only found out two things; and they are only things about myself. I've discovered that I do like heroism, but I don't like hero worship."

"Surely," said Miss Browning, in the Girton manner, "the one always flows from the other."

"I hope not," said Joan.

"But what else can you do with the hero?" asked Mrs. Mackintosh, still without looking up from her writing, "except worship him?"

"You might crucify him," said Joan, with a sudden return of savage restlessness, as she rose from her chair. "Things seem to happen then."

Christopher says

I saw this book on a friend's GoodReads list and decided that since I like Chesterton I'd give it a try. As a bonus, since Chesterton's works are in the public domain, I was able to get the book free of charge (and you can too!). So there really is no excuse for not cozying up with a little G. K. Chesterton.

To add to my bonus, I scored an audiobook from LibriVox. If you are ... Please finish reading this review on my website: <http://www.wetalkofholythings.com/201...>

Daniel Griliopoulos says

Like *Atlas Shrugged*, this is a polemical piece intended to show the rightness of Chesterton's philosophy, through a parodic, dystopian view of his beloved country. Unlike Rand though, Chesterton makes his antagonist initially believable and clever and his protagonist preternaturally witty and wise - and suffuses the entire book with his delicacy of language and humour. For that reason, the sections that are great - his poetry and songs about England, the romps across Southern England, the short dystopian end section - are only undermined slightly by his stereotyping (which sometimes borders into racism) and petty nationalism. These regrettable latter elements make the book more like a Tom Sharpe farce than any of his other, clever and dark, fiction.

Matthew says

The Flying Inn may well count as Britain's first modern Islamophobic book. Of course there has been

historical hostility to Muslims before G K Chesterton wrote this book, but this was of a very different nature. Chesterton's Islamophobia contains the seeds of today's Islamophobia.

Previous dislike of Muslim was based on a sense of otherness, and often held by people who had never met a Muslim in their life. Muslims were the hordes of barbarians over-running the holy city of Jerusalem, but this hatred of them was an abstract one since few of the writers who spoke about Muslims had ever been on a crusade.

Later on the British Empire put Britons in charge of countries containing Muslims. However while colonialist writings may have been prejudiced, the authors felt no worse about Muslims than any other religion or race. They were merely members of a lower order of people who could hopefully be civilised by Christian Europeans.

What marks a change in *The Flying Inn* is that Chesterton's fears are no longer about Muslims over there, but Islam over here. In common with the English National League and other bigots, Chesterton is concerned with a threat on his own doorstep. It is no longer a matter of worrying about uncivilised foreigners in the east. It is about having those barbarians over here threatening our way of life.

There are subtle differences between Chesterton's views and those of the modern Islamophobe. Nowadays the fear is as much about the people. In Chesterton's day, there had been very little immigration from Muslim countries, so his fear is more about Islamic ideas taking root in England. Indeed he imagines the upper classes of Britain becoming so fascinated with Orientalism that they begin to impose their ideas on the decent ordinary people of the nation.

This is not to say that there is no racism in *The Flying Inn*. Chesterton frequently mocks the little Islamic prophet who mispronounces words, and who draws up all kinds of absurd ideas suggesting that the origins of most of English life lie in Islam. The prophet is from Turkey, so perhaps Chesterton did not feel confident giving an Asian character a prominent role in the book.

While the prophet's ideas are daft, they are probably no sillier than the beliefs that Chesterton adhered to. Indeed some of Chesterton's mockery falls flat. We are supposed to derive much mirth from the fact that the prophet thinks it makes more sense to take our feet off when entering a house than to take our hat off. Yet on this point the prophet's arguments make sense, and Chesterton seems to think that the prophet's views are laughable for no other reason than because we do it differently.

The real threat is not the foolish prophet, but the aristocrat, Lord Ivywood, an appropriate name for someone seeking to choke the life out of his country. Enthused with Oriental ideas, Ivywood introduces legislation to ban alcohol, and begins to move towards Islamification of the country – its police force, and perhaps eventually a shift in the direction of polygamy.

This move is opposed by the book's heroes, tavern owner Humphrey Pump, and Irish adventurer, Captain Dalroy. Taking advantage of a loophole in the law, they carry the sign from Pump's tavern with them and dispense alcohol to a grateful populace, while having occasional clashes with Ivywood's men.

Dalroy and Pump are clearly intended to defend a certain idea of Britishness. I say Britishness, not Englishness, since Dalroy is Irish (he meets all the stereotypes, being fiery and romantic). This is another respect in which Chesterton differs from the average bigot of today. To ask someone today why they oppose Islam is to hear that they feel it threatens the British way of life, but they would be hard pressed to say what that meant if you asked them. They only know what it is not. It is not burkhas and Sharia law and halal meat

and mosques.

By contrast Chesterton does have a genuine concept of Britishness. It is an absurd one, as any attempt to impose a monocultural view of a country has to be, but he does have one. It is based around Christianity, drinking rum, rolling English roads, eating beef and robust masculinity. There is only one prominent female character in the book, but Lady Joan's role is only to wait patiently for Captain Dalroy to come for her.

By contrast the enemies of British freedom are opposed to all these things. They wish to ban drink and promote vegetarianism and make the world miserable. Never mind that these are not necessarily Muslim ideas. Chesterton merrily puts all his enemies together under one umbrella. As far as he is concerned, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and even atheism are all under one umbrella working together to undermine traditional Christianity.

This joining together of entirely separate ideas shows the dishonesty of Chesterton's stance. While there are some pseudo-liberals who condone the illiberal aspects of Islam (I am not a great fan of the religion either), there is really no question of angry atheists delivering lectures on the beach or promoting temperance. Indeed when has there ever been an Islamic temperance movement in this country, for that matter? It is actually Chesterton's fellow Christians who have most firmly banged this drum in the past.

Chesterton has no real wish to understand the motives of his enemies either. As far as he is concerned, the upper class hate alcohol and meat because the lower class love them. While it is certainly true that there is often an elitism in society that seeks to debase pleasures available to poor people, I think that Chesterton chooses to wilfully misunderstand the motives of his opponents.

To consider the temperance movement, I believe that its members were not trying to deny people pleasure. They were concerned with the damaging effects of alcohol – the violence, and the problems caused by addiction. This side does not feature in Chesterton's work at all. Alcohol is merely a pleasurable activity and a British right.

I do not support banning alcohol either, but cannot help feeling that Chesterton would benefit from showing both sides of the argument. In any case, banning alcohol does not mean forcing everyone to drink milk. Similarly nobody is trying to impose vegetarianism on everyone, and frankly a vegetarian diet need not be as dreary as Chesterton would wish us to believe it.

The Catholic church has discussed making Chesterton into a saint, and citing his tolerant views as a reason. Frankly this surprises me, as Chesterton was anything but tolerant towards those who did share his views, as any reading of his works will show. The Flying Inn is racist, anti-semitic, Islamophobic and narrow-minded in many respects.

There is much fun to be had in reading The Flying Inn however. The antics of Pump and Dalroy are amusing, and their songs are a delight to read, actually rather better than the novel itself.

The story does often drown in purple prose, and has its tedious moments. However while I deplore many of Chesterton's views, I find the book very diverting.

Stuart says

G.K. Chesterton is one of the greatest Catholic authors, not just of the 20th century, but possibly ever. He wrote drama, poetry, mysteries, and theological works. Some of his most famous works include Orthodoxy, The Everlasting Man, and my personal favorite the Father Brown series. I was recently introduced to a work of his that I had never heard of before called The Flying Inn. It was originally published in 1914 and was reprinted by Ignatius Press.

The story takes place in England, but not the England you or I know. It takes place in future England, and is a political satire. In this future England, the Temperance Movement has allowed Progressive Islam to dominate England's political, cultural, and social landscape. Two laws were passed which effectively killed local bars and pubs. The first law made pub signs illegal, and the second made it illegal to serve alcohol in a place without a sign. You see the problem for local bar owners? Pub Owner, Humphrey Pump, and Captain Patrick Dalroy aim to right this wrong and travel the countryside with a cart, a cask of rum, a wheel of cheese, and of course the sign. They wheel the cart around, setting up makeshift bars long enough to serve a round of drinks and then hightail it before they are caught by Lord Ivywood. Each chapter is a mini and zany episode that eventually will lead to a final confrontation.

The book is hilarious in nature, especially the drinking songs/poems which are scattered throughout the book. However, behind this outlandish nature of the story is some political foreshadowing that could almost be described as prophetic. Prohibition did occur in the U.S. about six years after this book was published and like in the story the rich were able to skirt the law by buying their alcohol in the pharmacy. What's even more scary is how accurate Chesterton was about Islam's pervasiveness in Europe. At the time this book was written, the Ottoman Empire (with Islam as its religion) was on the brink of extinction. Now, all of Europe has been taken over by Islam with them going so far as to claim that they are the religion of Europe. Overall, I found this to be a fun and interesting read and one that I am glad I was exposed to.

This book was provided to me for free by Ignatius Press in exchange for an honest review.

Ero says

An odd book.

Chesterton's an amazing proser, and his books are pretty much always delightful from a using-the-english-language point of view. And there's a lot to like about this book, which is sort of a love letter to alcohol and the Traditional English folk who drink it. There is much silliness and romping around with a keg of rum and a giant wheel of cheese. There are many rollicking songs to sing while rolling said keg of rum down the road. But there's also a darkness to the book, a deep anxiety and shadow that seems very timely: the fear of arabs.

In this semi-sci-fi alternate britain, 'oriental' influences have banned booze, promoted (gasp) vegetarianism, sought to replace christianity with idol-worship, and in general replaced dear old england's can-do spirit with a lurking islamic/hindu voodoo. The books reveals a bit too much xenophobia for my taste.

In times less full of fear (I just got that anti-islam propaganda DVD in the mail yesterday) this would be fine and I could ignore it and enjoy the playful parts of the book. Reading it now though was fairly unpleasant, and will make it harder for me to enjoy Father Brown in the future.

Melaszka says

Didn't really know how to rate this. There's some fantastic Chestertonian wit (the satirical account of Hibbs However's journalistic style is hilarious and still pertinent today), some lusty, loveable, eccentric characters and, whatever I think about other ideological elements in the books, it's hard not to admire, in a general sense, Chesterton's championing of individual liberties.

But...this is probably one of the most racist books I have ever read. I know Chesterton was of another age and is hardly known for his political correctness, but, while in other of his books I can gloss over the occasional racist remark, here the entire basis of the book is Islamophobic and anti-oriental.

It also meanders on aimlessly for a bit too long. I rarely get bored reading Chesterton, but with this one I did.

There's also FAR too much poetry padding it out.

Manuel AlfONSECA says

This is Chesterton at his best. In this book, one century ahead of his time, he foresees the current garrulousness about "an open and inter-religious education, rather than an exclusivist and intolerant religious indoctrination."

He also foresees correctly the attempt to introduce Islam in Europe, if not as a full-fledged religious option, at least as a weapon to attack Christianity.

But the people revolution that saves England from the post-modernist politically-correct stunt is little credible. I'm afraid I'm far less optimist than Chesterton.

Adam Marischuk says

Fun and prescient

In a world gone mad, two drunk friends decide to save the world with a keg and a barsign. The best way to fight the tyranny is with a cultural revolution, or at least a drunken spin.

The reason it is so prescient is that Chesterton foresaw the queer alliance between the political left and what he calls 'the orient' but what we would understand to be Islam and Buddhism. Written before prohibition, it is eerily prophetic. Chesterton foresaw the bizarre alliance between feminism, low-Church evangelicalism, Germanic utilitarianism and the quasi-mysticism of the orient, along with a political class too far removed from the hopes, dreams and desires of the general population.

The book is full of Chesterton's folksy wisdom and belief in common-sense. And while this is generally to be expected in any Chesterton novel, in this one it sometimes becomes too dense and exaggerated. The characters are caricatures and vehicles for Chesterton's philosophical and cultural opinions. Either you like it or you don't.

"The sun was sinking: but the river of human nonsense flowed on for ever." (p.17)

"feeding on fanatical pleasure: the pleasure his strange, cold, courageous nature could not get from food or wine or women." (p.51)

"Lord Ivywood shared the mental weakness of most men who have fed on books; he ignored, not the value but the very existence of other forms of information." (p.52)

"Country folk will forget you if you speak to them, but talk about you all day if you don't." (p.53)

"There was a faint renewal of that laughter that has slept since the Middle Ages." (p.62)

"I have long been increasingly convinced that underneath a certain mask of stiffness which the Mohammedan religion has worn through certain centuries, as a somewhat similar mask has been worn by the religion of the Jews, Islam has in it the potentialities of being the most progressive of all religions" (p.78)

"He chopped and changed his original article in such a way that it was something quite beyond the most bewildering article he had written in the past; and is still prized by those highly cultured persons who collect the worst literature of the world." (p.101)

"Then there was a weak plea for Eugenics; and a warm plea against Conscription, which was not true eugenics." (p. 102)

"All that was natural in her was still alive under all that was artificial." (p.111)

"The next best thing to really loving a fellow creature is really hating him...the desire to murder him is at least an acknowledgement that he is alive." (p.192)

"There are crowds who do not care to revolt; but there are no crowds who do not like someone else to do it for them." (p.234)

"Not seeing any rational explanation of this custom of dying, so prevalent among his fellow-citizens, he concluded that it was merely tradition." (p.235)

Feast on wine or fast on water,
And your honour shall stand sure;
God Almighty's son and daughter,
He the valiant, she the pure.
If an angel out of heaven
Brings you other things to drink,
Thank him for his kind intentions,
Go and pour them down the sink.

Tea is like the East he grows in,
A great yellow Mandarin,
With urbanity of manner,
And unconsciousness of sin;
All the women, like a harem,
At his pig-tail troop along,
And, like all the East he grows in,

He is Poison when he's strong.

Tea, although an Oriental,
Is a gentleman at least;
Cocoa is a cad and coward,
Cocoa is a vulgar beast;
Cocoa is a dull, disloyal,
Lying, crawling cad and clown,
And may very well be grateful
To the fool that takes him down.

As for all the windy waters,
They were rained like trumpets down,
When good drink had been dishonoured
By the tipplers of the town.
When red wine had brought red ruin,
And the death-dance of our times,
Heaven sent us Soda Water
As a torment for our crimes.

Lucy says

The first half dragged rather, but once they had dealt with the man who watered the milk then the book caught fire and felt typical Chesterton. And what can be better than that? There are plenty of his wonderful descriptions of skies - no-one can make you see a sunset like him. The hero Dalroy is excellently realised, the women are more differentiated than usual, and the issues raised in the fantastical plot are as relevant today.

But, I regret to say, the charges against Chesterton of anti-Semitism are given plenty of evidence here. I'm not saying they are the views of the man himself, who apparently was tolerance personified, but I still don't like the way he writes about Jews. Which is what knocks off the last star.

F.R. says

Definite mixed emotions on picking up this one: eager to read, but trembling a tad at the prospect.

Reading one hundred year old novels about the clash of cultures is something that will generally make your liberal leaning twenty-first century man (that's me, by the way) quake with nerves. The world has moved so far in the last hundred years, what's accepted in society is so different. So while reading a novel from 1914, there's the good possibility that in amongst the plot, the characters and the themes, there will be a good bit of nose holding as offensiveness levels rise. Yet there was something so tantalising about a G.K. Chesterton novel where he examines Islam in Britain that I just couldn't resist.

Looking back on the news of 1914, it's hard to believe that the threat of hard-line Muslims impinging on British society was something was high up in British people's minds. In 2015 scarcely a week (or maybe two

days; or this past terrible week, one day) goes by without a comment piece or two in the press. Yet a hundred years ago, given that a huge European war was about to ignite, it doesn't feel like it'd have been that big an issue at all. But there you go, this book somehow exists. I found myself wondering: how much of it would be pertinent and relevant today?

For all my worries of blatant intolerance just pouring off the page though, it seems like Chesterton didn't do much research into what Islam actually meant. Basically he boils the faith down to just stopping people having a drink. Yes, it's enforced abstinence which is the main thrust and driver of the book. Islam may be the face that's given to it, but really it's impossible to ignore that the Christian temperance movement was much more lively and healthy in 1914 (and would soon achieve success with prohibition in the USA). That's the real target of this book: how wrong it is – whether the impulse comes from an Islamic preacher or a wrong-headed aristocrat – to stop an Englishman indulging his God given right to have a sip of rum or wine or beer. Rather than dealing seriously with Islam, Chesterton is just taking on puritanism and dressing it up in Arabic robes for fun. Yes there are nods towards not eating pork and polygamy at points later in the book, but it's decoration with no willingness to engage beyond the narrowest viewpoint.

The plot, such as it is, sees an English Lord fall under the influence of an Islamic preacher and start to shut down pubs, while making a law that no alcohol can be sold unless there is a pub sign present. If there are no pubs though, there can't be any pub signs and so no alcohol can be sold. A couple of eccentric radicals rescue a sign, a cask of rum and a wheel of cheese and travel around the country flaunting the rules. It's a picaresque tale, one with frequent deviations which become so overwhelming that by the end Chesterton has completely lost control of his book and it splutters to a halt.

Novels are of course being written today about the relations between Islam and The West (Michel Houellebecq was on the front cover of Charlie Hedbo this week promoting his). And these books will be more challenging than 'The Flying Inn' as they'll actually engage in the subject, rather than using the garb just for dressing up. Some of them, if we're honest, will actually go out of their way to be far more offensive than this tome. As 'The Flying Inn' is merely an intermittently amusing book, one whose offensiveness comes from its Western imperialistic refusal to take other cultures remotely seriously. It doesn't address, challenge or comment on anything beyond the most narrow concerns of 1914, and so has little to say for itself today. It's a long, bawdy, drunken tale which has little of pertinence and is utterly innocuous and toothless.

In short I'm not disappointed in it because there are meaningful points in between some truly offensive and jingoistic passages which don't sit well with a 2015 audience; instead I'm disappointed with it because it never rouses itself to engage with its subject and so offends in the most blase, careless and self-righteously casual way. There's no meat, only blather.

Anna says

Fighting an evil regime with beer! Only Chesterton could do it, and so well.

Tirzah Eleora says

Not my favorite Chesterton novel, it was somewhat tedious at parts, but it's still packed with all the

philosophical riot that we know and love.

Oscar Manuel says

Bibamus edamus cras moriemur!

Stacy says

"We must not ask them to make a cross on their ballot papers; for though it seems a small thing, it may offend them. So I brought in a little bill to make it optional between the old-fashioned cross and an upward curved mark that might stand for a crescent -- and as it's rather easier to make, I believe it will be generally adopted."

And so go the various projects in this rollicking and fantastical tale of Dalroy and Pump and their "flying inn," which flies against newly-legislated temperance laws and a newly-legislated merger of Islam with hitherto Christian England.

Chesterton satirizes political correctness and wages war against the calm resignation which allows good things to slip and change and disappear without a fight. Moreover, in a story of victory, he includes a grim prophecy of the destiny of Empire: "Victory over barbarians. Employment of barbarians. Alliance with barbarians. Conquest by barbarians."

Dave/Maggie Bean says

Yep. Chesterton again. Manic-depressive bastard that I am, I love his work and Joseph Conrad's equally. Chesterton's thinking is very similar to mine when I'm hypomanic, while Conrad's is similar to mine when I endure depressive and "mixed" episodes. This book is a thoroughly enjoyable, manic romp across Chesterton's rich, ever-optimistic mental landscape.

A more mature work than The Napoleon of Notting Hill, The Flying Inn is an examination (and indictment) of authoritarianism and progressivism, and an expression of distrust for power in and of itself. Written on the eve of World War I (when the European empires' chickens first came home to roost), ...TFI proved even more prophetic than the former. Set in a UK besieged by theosophists, vegetarians, rabid xenophiles and other turn-of-the-century fruitcakes, TFI accurately presaged the modern, NuLab-dominated, post-British Britain we modern Americans have ironically (and hypocritically) come to pity.

An allegory, romance, and expression of populist defiance all at once, TFI chronicles the adventures of one Humphrey Pump (an English pub owner) and his friend, Captain Patrick Dalroy -- a truculent, red-bearded Irish giant in the service of a decaying, increasingly ridiculous and dwarfish Britain. Opposing them is a cast of silly (but sinister) villains -- villains rendered all the more sinister by their inability to perceive their own silliness.

The novel begins with one of the protagonists, Captain Patrick Dalroy (an Irishman serving in the British navy) resigning his commission at the conclusion of a ridiculous, one-sided treaty with the Turks, courtesy of

his nemesis, Lord Ivywood.

Dalroy then returns to England and renews his acquaintance with his friend, Humphrey Pump. When the Ivywood-dominated government, under the influence of a Turkish mystic and pseudo-scholar (my bone of contention, incidentally: no son of the grey or red wolf –however strident -- ever influenced the UK as profoundly as even the most transparently fraudulent cow-worshipper of the Subcontinent) prohibits the sale of alcohol, Pump and Dalroy load an immense hoop of cheese and a keg of rum into a donkey cart and hit the road, dispensing good cheer (and populist defiance) the length and breadth of the country.

I won't ruin the story, but I'll add that Ivywood is perhaps the most sinister of Chesterton's villains – all the more so because he's ridiculous without being funny. Embodying the almost mechanistic irrationality of the ideological fanatic, Ivywood is Hoffer's "true believer" – but at the opposite end of the social "food chain."

CJ Bowen says

Chesterton's writing is too big for his books as he maintains an extra storyline or two and suffuses the narrative with poems, but he remains Chesterton, and such trivial flaws are quickly forgiven. This story was particularly amusing, as inns and pubs, really any place that serves alcohol, are closed down as the Muslim religion conquers ideologically through England. A wildly Chestertonian character and a common Britisher band together to exploit a loophole in the law, bringing Christian rum across the country by means of the Flying Inn. Chesterton is unafraid to view the conflict of religions through the lens of apparently trivial liberties, and rompingly makes his case by means of a silly novel. He would, of course, consider silly novels to be the most potent kind, and I for one wouldn't mind many more such efforts replacing earnest Amish fiction everywhere.

Ellen Finan says

Had its moments, but a slog mostly

Andrew Orange says

Fine!

Dedicated to fans of the no alcohol law.

Rox says

The main summary of this book fails to mention its chief feature ! It takes place in a Britain which has become part of the Ottoman Empire. As this makes it a Muslim country, it has a certain relevance today, presumably never dreamed of by the author (who was trying to make various other points through this unlikely situation).

