



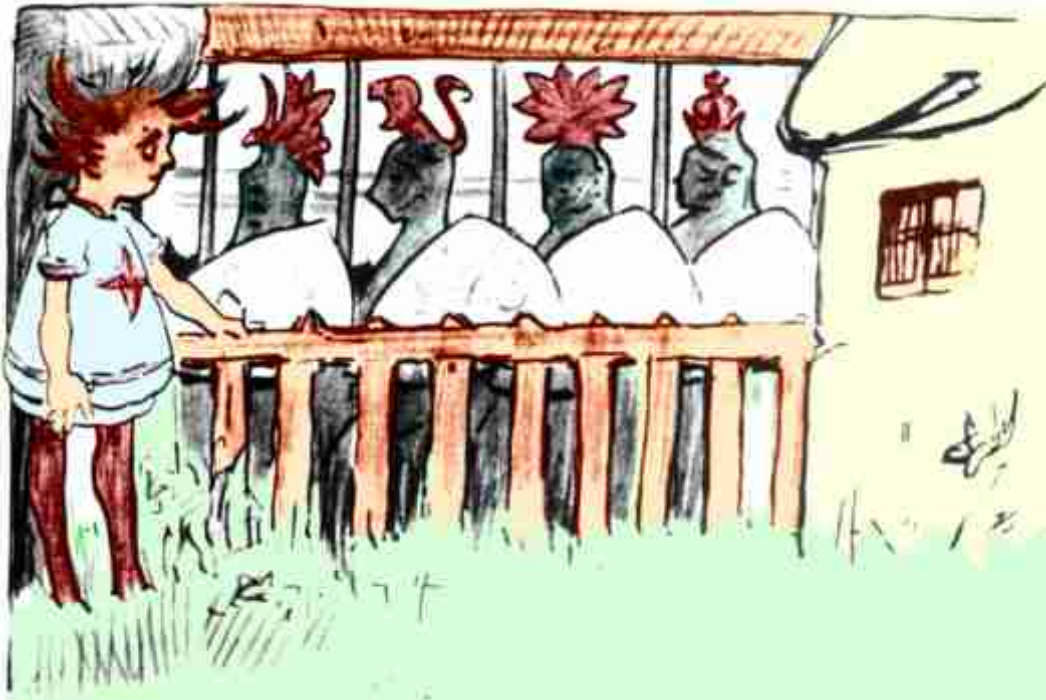
The Disadvantage of Having
TWO HEADS

A Story

by G. K. Chesterton

To Beryl Blanche DelaForce
from G. K. Chesterton

Hoping that,
should she ever be tempted
to accept the offer
of
TWO HEADS,
this brief narrative
may suffice
to dissuade her from so mistaken
a course.



A little boy once looked over the garden fence and saw four knights with enormous crests riding by. As he is now married to a Princess and moves in rather good society, he has desired me not to mention his name; so we will call him Redlegs. Being interested in such things he climbed over the fence and ran after the Knights to see where they were going. They came to a



VERY OLD MAN

who was sitting on the very sharp point of a rock, balancing himself. The Knights, seeing by his sugar-loaf hat and white beard that he was a Magician, asked him where they could find the Princess Japonica (for so the Princess, who is a relative of mine, desires to be described). “The Princess Japonica”, replied the Magician, “lives in the Castle beyond the Last Wood in the World, in the place where it is always Sunset. She cannot come and visit anyone, and no one can visit her because there are only two roads to it: and the right hand road is held by a Giant with One Head, and the left hand road by a Giant with Two Heads.” Then the first Knight said with excitement (he was Bromley. Smunk on the mother’s side and you know what they are), “I will soon clear the Giant out of the way. But I think I will confine myself to the Giant with one head. For I am a humane man and desire to cut off as few heads as possible”.



So the first Knight set out along the road to the One-headed Giant. And a little while after, the second set out, and then the third and then the fourth, all the same way. The little boy stopped behind and talked to the Magician about the Fiscal Question. Scarcely had they dismissed this brief topic, than they saw a sad string of people coming along the road from the

One-headed Giant. They were the four Knights and I am sorry to say they were rather



SMASHED.

Then Redlegs said suddenly, “I should very much like to see a Two-Headed Giant. Lend me a sword.” Then they all roared with laughter and told him how silly he was to think that he could kill the Two-Headed Giant when they couldn’t even kill the One-Headed Giant. But he went off all the same, with his head in the air, and he found the Two-Headed Giant on the great hills where it is always Sunset. And then he found out a funny thing. The Two-Headed Giant did not rush at him and tear him to pieces as he had expected. It certainly did scream and shout



and bellow and blare and with its two heads together. But the two heads were, as a matter of fact, screaming and shouting and bellowing and blaring in an odd way. They were screaming and shouting and bellowing and blaring at

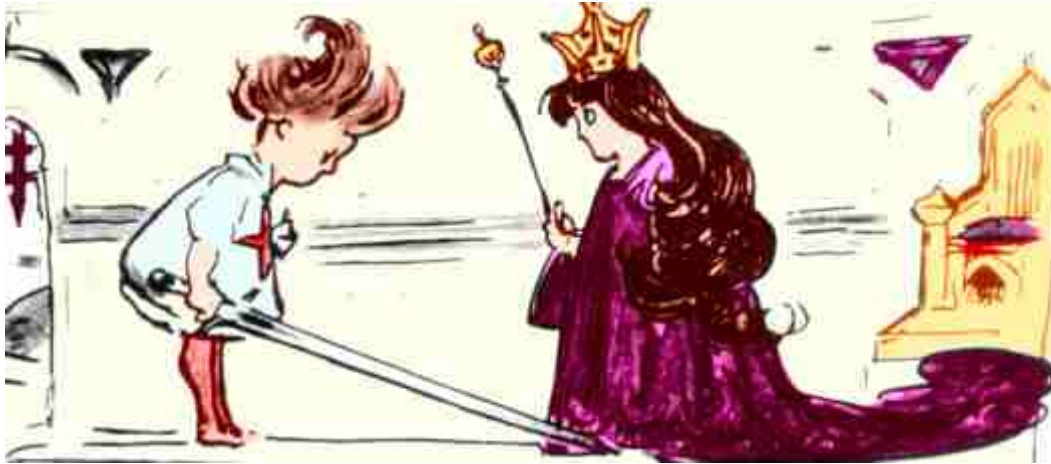


EACH OTHER.

One head said, “You are a Pro-Boer”; the other said, with bitter humour, “You’re another”; in fact, the argument might have gone on for ever, growing more savage and brilliant every moment, but it was cut short by Redlegs, who took out the great sword he had borrowed from one of the Knights and poked it sharply into the Giant and killed him. The huge creature sprawled and writhed like a



continent in an earthquake; and one wild head lifted itself for a moment in death and said to the other, "You are beneath my notice". Then it died happy. Redlegs went



on along the road that had been guarded by the Two-Headed Giant, until he came to the Castle of the Princess. After a few words of explanation, I need hardly say they were

MARRIED.



–And lived happily ever afterwards. The Magician, who gave the bride away, said after the conclusion of the ceremony the following cabalistic and totally unintelligible words, “My son, the Giant who had one head was stronger than the Giant who had two. When you grow up there will come to you other magicians who will say, ‘Γνωθε σεαυτον. Examine your soul, wretched kid. Cultivate a sense of the differentiations possible in a single psychology. Have nineteen religions suitable to different moods.’ My son, these will be wicked magicians; they will want to turn you into a two-headed Giant.” Redlegs did not know what this meant and nor do I.

