

G.K. Chesterton

The Innocence of Father Brown Volume 2

THE
COMPLETE
CLASSICS

UNABRIDGED

The Wrong Shape • The Sins of Prince Saradine • The Hammer of God
The Eye of Apollo • The Sign of The Broken Sword • The Three Tools of Death

Read by **David Timson**



1	The Wrong Shape	8:13
2	The young man...	6:44
3	Exactly in their path...	8:06
4	He sank into silence...	7:21
5	Here also he found a drama...	6:10
6	The storm that had slackened...	5:55
7	Dear Father Brown...	6:02
8	The Sins of Prince Saradine	7:28
9	The boat took many such grassy corners...	7:18
10	Prince Saradine distributed...	7:17
11	The new comer had dull...	5:44
12	'I will save my master...'	6:29
13	As he sat on the steps...	5:57
14	'But Prince Saradine bore another burden...'	6:50
15	The Hammer of God	7:45
16	And with that he turned...	6:49
17	He was silent a moment...	7:12
18	The inspector seemed...	7:08
19	And with that the old little man...	8:12
20	Immediately beneath and about them...	9:13

21	The Eye of Apollo	8:07
22	She certainly had a temper...	8:05
23	At last the tall figure...	7:42
24	'Reader of the books of evil...'	7:49
25	'There is a paper over here...'	6:44
26	Miss Joan Stacey...	7:00
27	The Sign of the Broken Sword	6:18
28	They descended the precipitous path...	6:52
29	'Anyhow, the story fizzled out...'	6:57
30	'There are three more bits of evidence...'	6:23
31	'But all these levities...'	7:26
32	Flambeau seemed suddenly galvanised...	8:15
33	The warmer glow behind...	8:23
34	The Three Tools of Death	7:40
35	A window in Merton's mind...	7:09
36	At that height...	7:03
37	The next fact of which they were conscious...	6:45
38	This request forced the communicative cleric...	7:57

Total time: 4:35:00

G.K. Chesterton

The Innocence of Father Brown

Volume 2

**The Wrong Shape • The Sins of Prince Saradine • The Hammer of God
The Eye of Apollo • The Sign of The Broken Sword • The Three Tools of Death**

G.K. Chesterton's 'Father Brown' stories were written in the first great age of detective fiction when the market was flooded with imitations of that great prototype of fictional detectives, Sherlock Holmes, created by Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887.

Father Brown is, however, no pale imitation; whereas Holmes is given an imposing physique and strong facial features that reflect his unusual intellect and impress the reader with his aptness for the job of detecting, Father Brown is significantly unmemorable. Small, with no distinguishing features but a singularly blank moon-face, he is clad in the anonymous dress of the Catholic priest. No magnifying glass, deerstalker or pipe accompanies him on his adventures, just a pair of spectacles and a large, old

umbrella. Yet more by intuition than deduction, Father Brown solves the most seemingly impossible conundrums and crimes that comprise the 52 short stories in which he appears. And, in complete contrast to Holmes's procedures, he has more use for philosophy than science in his investigations.

First and foremost Brown is a priest, and it is his parochial experiences that have helped him to develop his detective skills. Listening to the secret confessions of his parishioners has given him a unique insight into the extent and diversity of human evil. This knowledge, combined with reasoning and observation, is the core of his method, and the stories always end with a rational explanation, revealed by the self-effacing priest. His ultimate belief in the spiritual power of God will not

let him accept superstitious explanations. 'Superstition is irreligious,' he says in *The Wrong Shape*. The supernatural God is, to him, the greatest reason of all. Father Brown is a philosophical detective, an educated cleric who has arrived at his faith from a rational and intellectual viewpoint, very much like his creator, G.K. Chesterton, who based the character on Father John O'Connor (1870–1952), a parish priest in Bradford who was involved in Chesterton's conversion to Catholicism in 1922.

Father Brown summed up his method in *The Secret of Father Brown* (1927): 'You see, I had murdered them all myself... I had planned out each of the crimes very carefully. I had thought out exactly how a thing like that could be done, and in what style or state of mind a man could really do it. And when I was quite sure that I felt exactly like the murderer myself, of course I knew who he was.'

The perfect vehicle for conveying Chesterton's view of the world, Father Brown is perhaps the most autobiographical of the author's characters. As a representative of the Catholic faith (to

which Chesterton converted in 1922) and a champion of Orthodoxy, Father Brown was able to wage war on the anarchy of the modern world on his creator's behalf. By imagining improbable locations in which the ubiquitous Father Brown might appear, Chesterton was using the little priest to personify the universal power of the Catholic Church.

THE WRONG SHAPE

The dull suburbs of North London are given an exotic oriental twist in this story of a murdered poet, Leonard Quinton. 'He was a man who drank and bathed in colours, who indulged his lust for colour somewhat to the neglect of form – even of good form,' writes Chesterton – who has ironic fun at the expense of the decadent poets of the 1890s, such as Wilde, Dowson and Baudelaire. In Father Brown's words 'The colours [in Eastern art] are intoxicatingly lovely; but the shapes are mean and bad', Chesterton is perhaps expressing his own reactionary opinion of the then-current fascination for anything Eastern.

THE SINS OF PRINCE SARADINE

Once again Father Brown meets an improbable situation in an unlikely environment: an Italian Prince living in exile in Norfolk in a bamboo house. 'We have taken a wrong turn and come to a wrong place', Father Brown declares to his friend Flambeau whom he has accompanied on a boating trip on the rivers and backwaters of rural Norfolk, and in so doing stumbles upon a bizarre tale of revenge and deception linked to a European vendetta worthy of the Mafia. But as Father Brown comments, 'One can sometimes do good by being the right person in the wrong place.'

Chesterton didn't have any great yearning for the country life. London and cities in general – with all their unknown possibilities – were of endless fascination for him. He once dedicated a poem to his friend Hilaire Belloc, who lived in deepest Sussex:

'You saw a moon on Sussex downs
A Sussex moon, untravelled still;
I saw a moon that was the town's –
The largest lamp on Campden Hill.'

THE HAMMER OF GOD

Chesterton's lack of desire to connect with the modern world led him often to create in his stories a fantasy world akin to the Middle Ages, a time which he idealised as being as near to a perfect world as he could imagine. He did not accept the Liberal idea that society was continually progressing and that society was therefore in a better position in the 20th century than in the 12th. Throughout his works Chesterton makes references to a time of stalwart Christian men believing in one faith, as exemplified by the Catholic Church.

The Hammer of God exists in such a world, despite its obvious references to modernity. It concerns a fanatical Catholic priest who, like a member of the Inquisition, seeks to convert his wayward brother, while the 'peasants' gather round to watch in wonder. There is even a village idiot. In the blacksmith and his wife we have Chesterton's idealised medieval man and woman, the latter usually being red-haired. (Chesterton had a fascination for red-haired women.)

THE EYE OF APOLLO

Chesterton's leaning towards orthodox religion meant that he was out-of-step with his age; he reacted strongly against 20th-century modernity. Living in the age that saw the emancipation of women, Chesterton could not accept it; he was not anti-feminist as such, but resented the idea of either sex exalting over the other. His portrait in this story of an independent career woman, Pauline Stacey, makes these views quite plainly. He describes her profile 'as of the clean-cut edge of some weapon. She seemed to cleave her way through life.' Pauline displays 'a frigid fierceness (peculiar to the modern woman),' Chesterton adds with distaste. He had a horror that women would enter politics, for which he felt they were unfitted. 'They understand everything,' he wrote in the *Illustrated London News*, 'except three things – Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.'

His other target in this story is the false prophet, the charlatan preacher Kalon, the self-styled new Priest of Apollo who uses religion and the public's susceptibility for novelty for his own ends. Although

not yet a Catholic when he wrote this story, Chesterton was showing that his sympathies lay with an Orthodox faith rather than with the new religions of Christian Science or the revival of interest in Theosophy.

THE SIGN OF THE BROKEN SWORD

'Where would a wise man hide a leaf?' asks Father Brown at the start of this story of treachery and deceit in the British Army. The priest knows that no amount of Imperial pomp and circumstance will ultimately conceal tyranny or treachery, for they are human failings, and he is an expert on the weaknesses of the human heart.

Chesterton was an avowed patriot, but no Imperialist. He would have viewed with disdain the list of General Sir Arthur St Clare's victories in India, Africa and Brazil. He considered that the pursuit of Empire tarnished the simpler impulse of patriotism. Once again he was yearning for the past, when simple virtues, like the Christian faith to which he was drawn, were unchallenged.

Chesterton's views were directly

opposed to those of his contemporary, Rudyard Kipling, whom he considered a rampant Imperialist. They were, however, great friends.

the Father Brown stories is madness, and its link to evil.

Notes by David Timson

THE THREE TOOLS OF DEATH

Why was the popular philanthropist Sir Aaron Armstrong murdered? How could anyone dislike such a jovial character? 'People like frequent laughter,' observes Father Brown, 'but I don't think they like a permanent smile.'

In this story Chesterton dwells on the darker psychology of mankind. In his youth he had been troubled with thoughts of suicide, and while studying at the Slade School he had begun to feel that the physical world might all be a figment of his imagination. It seems that his highly developed sense of humour saved him from insanity: he overcame his morbid fears, put on weight, and became 'a full-girthed giant, shaking with Gargantuan laughter'. Chesterton never entirely lost his fascination with the darker side of the human mind, however, for which we should be grateful. A constant theme of

THE LIFE OF G.K. CHESTERTON

(1874–1936)

Gilbert Keith Chesterton was a gifted and versatile writer and poet, although he always referred to himself as a mere 'rollicking journalist'.

Chesterton was born in London on 29 May 1874. He was educated at St Paul's School, where he read voraciously, impressed his teachers with his original thinking, and eschewed any athletic activity. He had a habit of drawing and doodling over his school-books, so on leaving St Paul's in 1892 he studied art at the Slade School of Art. Here he found a lack of application in draughtsmanship, but there was no sign of it when it came to writing. He had, since his schooldays, written poetry, and during his time at art school continued to write avidly, even contributing some art reviews to *The Bookman*. In 1900, turning his back on art, Chesterton took the plunge into journalism, and his consequent rise to literary fame was rapid.

In 1901 he was asked to write a monograph on Robert Browning, which was followed by a second on Charles

Dickens. Both are remarkable for the exuberance of their style and portraiture, and in the case of the Dickens did a great deal to elevate Dickens's reputation at a time when he was not yet accepted as a notable literary writer. Chesterton had a great empathy with Dickens, whose sense of fun and romance in his writing matched his own.

He married Frances Blogg in June 1900 and she was to prove a most supportive wife, in sympathy with the philosophical struggles which had troubled him as a young man. Chesterton also formed a strong attachment at this time to the writer Hilaire Belloc, who became his closest friend. They were similar in temperament and intellect, collaborating on many books. Belloc was a committed Catholic and under his influence Chesterton gradually found, in the Roman Catholic faith, the answers to the dilemmas and paradoxes he saw in life.

The Father Brown stories first appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* and the first

collection, *The Innocence of Father Brown*, was published in 1911 to great critical success.

There are very few areas of literary output that Chesterton did not explore: he wrote essays, criticisms, religious controversy, political polemic, biography, fiction, and poetry. Though sometimes criticised for being didactic, his work is, however, characterised by a vitality, humour, imagination, pugnacity, and sense of romance that constitutes a really good read.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton died on the 14 June 1936, at his home in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire.



David Timson has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of the Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed for Naxos AudioBooks four Shakespeare plays, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He reads the entire Sherlock Holmes canon for Naxos AudioBooks.

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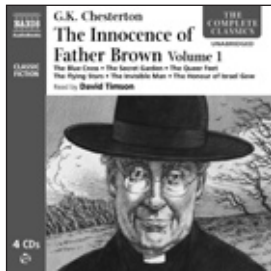
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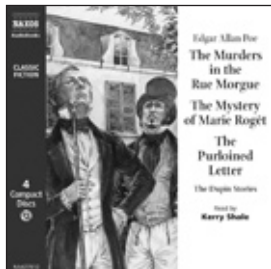
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G.K. Chesterton

The Innocence of Father Brown Volume 2

Read by **David Timson**

The unremarkable Catholic priest, Father Brown, combines intuition and a profound interest in human nature to solve more crimes that are seemingly improbable. A prophet of a new religion appears in Westminster. Why does an Italian Prince seek exile in Norfolk? Who killed a jovial old philanthropist, and why? A decadent poet is inexplicably murdered in his own home. Did God kill a priest's brother? What really happened in a British battle glorified in history?

This second volume of stories from *The Innocence of Father Brown* presents six crimes, which are at times surreal, bizarre, and always as cryptic as a crossword.



David Timson has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks, he has written *The History of the Theatre*, directed four Shakespeare plays, and read the entire Sherlock Holmes canon.

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