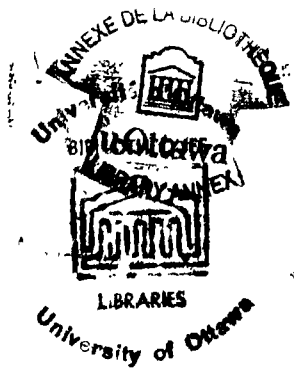


LITERARY TENDENCIES  
OF THE  
CATHOLIC POETS  
OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY.





LITERARY TENDENCIES OF THE  
CATHOLIC POETS OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY.

A Thesis presented  
to the Department of  
English of the  
Ottawa University  
by  
Sister M. Margaret  
St. Joseph's Academy  
Renfrew  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts.

April, 1942.

UMI Number: EC55610

### INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform EC55610  
Copyright 2011 by ProQuest LLC  
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	<u>Introduction</u>	1
	1. A Century of Development of Catholic Literature.	
	2. Dominant Note of Catholic Literature.	
	3. Three Stages of Development.	
	4. Dilemmas at the Opening and Close of the Period.	
	5. Solutions: Now and then.	
	6. J. H. Newman--the Pioneer.	
	7. His Successors--Their Influence.	
I	<u>John Henry Newman</u>	5
	1. Newman--A Searcher of Spiritual Truth.	
	2. Newman--A Student at Oxford.	
	A Fellow of Oriel.	
	A Tractarian.	
	A Vanquished Leader.	
	A Catholic Priest.	
	3. Newman's Troubles and Disappointments.	
	His Apologia.	
	Further Disappointments.	
	Final Triumph.	
	4. Newman--A Man of Letters.	
	His Prose.	
	His Verse.	
	The Dream of Gerontius--An Analysis.	
II	<u>Aubrey De Vere</u>	19
	1. Early Environment.	
	2. De Vere and the Religious Revival of the 19th Century.	
	3. De Vere's Poetic Task.	
	4. De Vere's Works.	
	5. De Vere's Poems--Gentle Vesper Lamps.	
	6. De Vere--One of Ireland's Most Amiable Poets.	
III	<u>Coventry Patmore</u>	29
	1. Catholic Literature of the 19th Century.	
	2. Patmore's Early Environment.	
	3. His Quest for Reality.	
	4. Mysticism.	
	Definitions	
	The Mystics of the Ages.	
	5. Patmore, the Mystic.	
	6. The First Period of his Poetry.	
	7. Emily Patmore's Death.	
	8. Patmore's Visit to Rome.	
	9. His Second Marriage.	
	10. His Triumph as a Literary Artist.	
	11. Tributes paid by Contemporaries.	

1. Hopkins' Place in the Catholic Revival.
2. An Unrecognized Poet of the 19th Century.
3. Education.
  - (a) At Home.
  - (b) At Hampstead.
  - (c) At Highgate.
4. Early Poetry.
5. Oxford.
6. A Convert.
7. A Religious.
8. A New Diction.
9. Spiritual Suffering.
10. Spiritual and Literary Triumphs.

1. The Meynells "At Home" to the Literati of the 19th Century.
2. Alice Meynell, the Central Figure of the Second Phase of the Catholic Revival.
3. Her Childhood and Youth.
4. Literary Influences.
5. Tributes of Appreciation.
  - Tennyson, Patmore Ruskin, Thompson and Noyes.

1. His Ideal.
2. His Conversion to Catholicity.
3. His Pen Picture by Le Gallienne.
4. Characteristics of his Writings.
  - Dignity, Reverence, Spirituality, Loyalty.
5. A Light of English and of Irish Literature.
6. His Epitaph.

1. His Place in the Catholic Revival.
2. His Youth.
3. His Education.
  - (a) Ushaw College.
  - (b) Owens College.
4. A Homeless Wanderer.
5. His Adoption by the Meynells.
6. His Poems.
7. An Appreciation of His Poetry.
  - The Heir of the Ages of Song.
  - The Mediaeval Artist.
  - The Religious Poet.
  - The Liturgical Poet.

Literary Tendencies of the Catholic Poets  
of the Nineteenth Century

However widely the writings of the Catholic Poets of the Nineteenth Century may vary in wealth of imagery, melody of diction, simplicity or complexity of metrical design, one characteristic dominates in all, a characteristic, crystallized in the pithy phrase that shall be, as it were, the theme-song of this thesis--"Back to the Supernatural".

In order to understand why that was the key-note, it will be necessary to consider, even briefly, the development of Catholic Literature during the last hundred years. There are three definite stages in that development, marked by three critical dates--first, the middle years of the Nineteenth Century, then the 1890's and finally the World War. These phases correspond rather accurately with three generations of Catholic authors, and with three stages in the cultural history of Europe, in as much as the downward movement of that culture is reflected in the non-Catholic literature of English-speaking countries. The numerous changes brought about in what we may call the non-Catholic would determine the characteristics of the Catholic literature of the three stages mentioned above. This thesis is concerned only with the first two divisions of the period, but the problems of the first phase are so similar to those of the third that we are going to focus our attention for a few moments on the third so-called Post-War phase. What has been the dominant characteristic of the non-Catholic Intellectual World during the past thirty years? Skepticism. Why should this be the melancholy truth? Some have tried to explain it as a heritage of the Great War. This is not a correct analysis. It is not a heritage; on the contrary it is the nostalgia resulting from the realization of being wholly without a heritage. It is the climax reached by the col-

lapse of the "old world", that is the world that began with the Renaissance four centuries ago--the humanistic world, the world that had such splendid confidence in the ability of the spirit of the natural man to rule the world and to enrich it. The culture that the Renaissance had inherited, and from which it separated itself was humanistic too but its humanism was that of the Christ-man and not that of the natural man. It was a supernatural culture, it drew its strength from the fact of the Redemption. Catholic art raised every structure worth looking at; it wrote the "Divina Commedia" and the Morte D'Arthur; it erected a social order in which the art of living was possible. No workman in whom the Catholic spirit breathed would have admitted that religion can be excluded from life and art. Christianity had sent thousands of its representatives to death for a Roman holiday; it had extended its merciful ministrations to the plague stricken and to the galley slave; it was everywhere alarmingly reckless of life but it tried to make that life worth living. And from one end of Christianity to the other, we are told, the Miserere ended in a chorus of laughter. Gradually that spirit died out. Post-Renaissance history has witnessed the attempt to carry forward this culture but without its supernatural foundation. As a consequence the natural man after having squandered the cultural capital of the supernatural man of the ages of faith stands now on the summit of the modern period weak and exhausted. The failure of the society of the modern world is unmistakably the failure of the natural man. The thorough-going skeptic of to-day has lost his faith not in any particular culture or civilization but in man himself, in the natural man which Europe has worshipped for the last four centuries. "The choice of the modern man of the "new world" which philosophers and

critics of culture see emerging from the obscure chrysalis of history" says Middleton Murry, "lies between Communism and Catholicism." He chooses Communism. The Russian Nicholas Berdyaev sees it as between a militant Catholicism and a militant Atheism, between Christ and anti-Christ; Evelyn Waugh announced when he was received into the Church that the artist must choose between Rome and Moscow. The dilemma, as the modern man sees it, is between the supernatural order of the Catholic Church and the mechanical cultureless order that now faces the natural man at the conclusion of his journey from the Renaissance. This was exactly the dilemma that John Henry Newman saw almost a hundred years ago. He saw it; he chose the Catholic Church. He was forced to the conclusion that the tendency of unaided human reason, especially on matters of religion, was towards simple unbelief, negation and intellectual suicide. He was equally convinced of the futility of the various substitutes for reason tried out by the Romantics of his day, the "inner light", "the flight to the past ages." He realized that a divine solution was required, an elevation of human nature to a higher level than the natural. Convinced himself that to find truth we must go to the Author of truth, to God, he consecrated every faculty of his great soul, every stroke of his facile pen to the task of disseminating the wealth of his tremendous find. Although one of the foremost litterateurs of the nineteenth century, Newman did not consciously form a new literary movement. That was the work of those who followed in the path he pioneered-- Patmore, De Vere, Father Gerard Hopkins. They applied the inner meaning of Newman's decision to letters, especially to poetry. The very first effect of the vision of truth granted these poets, together with the courage to proclaim it was their severance from the

official Romanticism of the day. Precisely because of this the new movement was able to preserve and perfect what was really valuable in the artistic program of the early Romantic artists. Above all they fixed a tradition in modern verse that has persisted until the present day. The watchword was "Back to the Supernatural". Derided and contradicted in its Victorian day, it will at length stand forth clearly as the one and only path of deliverance from the desert in which the literary artist will find himself at the end of four centuries of too great a trust in the natural man.

"COR AD COR LOQUITUR"

John Henry Newman

1801 - 1890

--John Henry Newman--

"Ex Umbfis et Imaginibus in Veritatem."

That ferment of unrest and nostalgia which produced in the Nineteenth Century so many forms of religious enquiry produced in John Henry Newman its most inspired searcher after spiritual truth. It was a time when religious ideals were kept before men's minds through the medium of literature. First place among the religious writers of the age belongs unquestionably to Newman.

Three things stand out clearly in Newman's life: first his unshaken faith in the divine companionship and guidance--his conviction that the "two unfailing entities in the universe were God and his own soul"; this it was that gave the rare and beautiful spiritual quality that embellishes all his writings; second, his desire to find the truth of revealed religion, and to pass it on to his hearers or readers--hence his frequent doctrinal and controversial essays; and third, his search for an authoritative standard of faith, and this quest led to his conversion to the Catholic Church which he served so faithfully for the remaining forty-five years of his life.

At the age of fifteen he had already begun his profound study of theological subjects. Even at this early age he displayed an extraordinary intellectual restlessness combined with a rare literary instinct. He is said to have known the Bible by heart. He had a great love for the works of Sir Walter Scott and thus his imagination was provided with a background of medieval sympathies. He was first educated at the school in Ealing, then at Oxford, taking his degree in the latter place in 1820. At this time all Europe was feeling the profound stirrings of renovating forces which seemed to promise much not only for the renewal of the arts but for the revival of religion. A reaction

had set in against the Rationalism of the previous century. The transition from destructive criticism of religion to the positive assertion of belief in the supernatural, and the momentary eclipse of the classical ideal in the arts in favour of the medieval was bringing into the Church notable intellectual and literary converts. The stirrings of the medieval movement were already beginning at Oxford when Newman became a fellow of Oriel College. It is difficult for us to appreciate what Oxford stood for a hundred years ago. The solemn complacency of the University Dons who had been satisfied with "the best of sinecures in the best of worlds" was disturbed by the brilliant young Fellows of Oriel. Newman who had already been sharpened by Dr. Whately came under the domination of Hurrell Froude. It was a short spell but a decisive one and it turned both his imagination and logic "like twin steeds" in the direction of all that was Catholic. But it must not be concluded that the flight to the Middle Ages meant to the average Romantic a return to Catholicism. It meant the effort to revive the shrivelled culture of the non-Catholic world by contact with a Catholic culture without any disposition to re-affirm belief in the supernatural principle that had produced that culture. For a moment, but only for a moment, Romanticism succeeded. There was a revival of religion and a revival of poetry. But it could not last on so insecure a basis. Moreover a new intellectual atmosphere was in process of preparation which would be hostile to Romanticism. The religious middle class of England attempted to freeze out Romanticism by entering into an alliance with the scientific Rationalists. Newman was a product of this religious middle class and was at first powerfully drawn to the side of the Rationalists. But once he joined hands with the group which were presently to begin the Oxford Movement--with Froude, Keble and Pusey--he placed himself definitely on the Romantic side. He tells

us that this Movement was not an isolated phenomenon but really a part of the Romantic Revival--a late echo of it, a last brave attempt to realize for religion and art some of the early promises of the revival. It was definitely opposed to "Liberalism", a name given to all those efforts to whittle down the revealed truths of Christianity until only pure naturalism was left. It wanted the return of those truths of Christian revelation which along could satisfy the "spiritual wants" that lay at the bottom of the Romantic disquiet. It was an effort on the part of a group of earnest educated Anglicans to reclaim the Church of England from the lethargy into which it had fallen and to get back to the spirit of primitive Christianity. A feeling of almost unbearable homesickness filled the souls of these Oxford scholars when they contrasted the religion and life of the Middle Ages and the Primitive Church with that of Nineteenth Century England. It was their conviction that all these glories might be brought forward to enrich the starved state of religion. They were right in the realization that the Nineteenth Century soul was starving for want of the genuine supernatural but wrong in imagining that the supernatural could be extracted like nectar from the flowers of past epochs. They had lost contact with the source of the Supernatural. They had to re-establish that contact. But they did not realize this at the time. The purpose of the so-called Oxford Movement was to reclaim the Church of England from the torpor and deadness into which it had fallen, to give it once more the poetry, the mystic symbolism, the spiritual power, and the beauty of architecture, ritual and service which had characterized the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, and to defend it against the interference of the state, which was disposed to curtail its power and revenues. Recognizing the power of the press, the leaders of the Move-

ment chose literature as their instrument of reform and from their "Tracts for the Times" they became known as Tractarians. Their belief might be summed up in one article--"I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church." The outburst of these famous Tracts could be compared in the theological and intellectual world to the Gold Rushes in Klondyke or in California. Nuggets of doctrine were being discovered under the dry Creeds. The exquisite refiner was Newman. Around him were grouped the choice spirits of Oxford: the Wilberforces, the Froudes and scores of writers, poets and pioneers who were to swell the historical Oxford Movement.

Before the Movement was launched Newman took a long voyage to the coasts of North Africa, Italy, Western Greece and Sicily. It was on this journey that he committed to paper no fewer than eighty-five poems (afterwards collected in the *Lyra Apostolica*), poems expressing his thoughts on the life within, the Saints of the Old Testament and the hopes, fears, and resolves which clustering round the Church and its fortunes impelled him on his future career. During his visit to Italy where he saw the Roman church at the centre of its power and splendour, he lost many of his prejudices. He attributed his enlargement of spiritual horizon in part at least to his friend, Hurrell Froude. Rome laid a spell on him never to be undone. "And now what can I say of Rome," he exclaimed, "but that it is the first of cities; all that I ever saw are but as dust (even dear Oxford) compared with its majesty and glory." He felt more and more called to some high mission. From Rome he went back to Sicily, to Palermo where he was stricken with fever and nearly died. But during his illness he kept exclaiming "I shall not die, I have a work to do." Recovering, he was detained and desolate. Soothed by his visits to the sanctuaries of which Sicily has so many, he wrote, "O that thy creed were sound, thou Church of

Rome." He sailed at last in an orange boat, and as a calm held him one whole week in the Straits of Bonfacio, his heart breathed out its deepest aspirations in the tender verses of "Lead Kindly Light" deservedly treasured by all English speaking races. Careful reading of these lines reveals the beginning of the mental struggle which ended in Newman's conversion to the Catholic Church. This most touching of pilgrim songs may be termed the "Marching Song of the Tractarian Host" of which Newman was the recognized leader. He returned to Oxford on the very day that Keble preached the Assize Sermon in St. Mary's foreboding "National Apostasy". That was the birthday of the Oxford Movement. Before the year was over the Tracts--short pamphlets of which Newman himself wrote twenty-nine--had commenced. They carried the Church of England by storm. From 1833 until 1839 the Tractarian leader held his line of defence without a misgiving. He wrote so much that his hand almost failed him. He won victory after victory but was finally defeated by his own weapons. In seeking to establish the continuity of the English church he gradually convinced himself of the authenticity of the Catholic Church. He was not yet aware of the approaching position of his own mind when he examined the subject of Apostolic Succession in his famous "Tract 90". This Tract vanquished its author and he retired a broken champion to Littlemore. In his own language he had seen a ghost--the shadow of Rome overclouding his Anglican compromise. He saw that the revival of religion in England was not primarily a matter of renewed contact with the past but was first and foremost a matter of re-establishing contact with the authentic source of the supernatural in the present. After he became convinced that the English Church had no real connection with the supernatural society that Christ had founded, it was impossible for him to remain an Anglican. He and his more ardent followers withdrew from Oxford to a semi-monastic establishment at Little-

more whence in 1845 he was received into the Catholic Church. A year later he joined the community of St. Philip Neri, and was ordained a Catholic priest. The Oxford Movement practically ended when Newman entered the Catholic Church. This step separating him as it did from many of his friends and co-workers is beautifully and poignantly commemorated in his Sermon, "The Parting of Friends." His conversion created a profound sensation throughout England, but Newman preserved his calm. His entrance into the Catholic Church was, he tells us. "like coming into port after a rough sea". Years of prayer, study and reflection preceded this momentous event. Nearly half his life had been spent at Oxford, as student, as professor, as inspirer, and now literally and figuratively he went to Rome. Shortly after his Ordination he returned to England and for twenty years devoted himself to the duties of a Catholic Priest among the people of his adopted faith. Many of his earlier associates were convinced that he had been a traitor in the service of Rome undermining the Established Church. Finally came his restoration not by a friend, but by an undreamt-of enemy. In the meantime, however, English Catholic literature had gained a persuasive voice and a classic dignity of which hitherto there had been no example. "When Newman made up his mind to join the Church of Rome," observes R. H. Hutton, "his genius bloomed with a force and freedom such as it never displayed in the Anglican communion."

Many troubles and disappointments attended Dr. Newman during the first twenty years after he became a Catholic. His description of Lacordaire in which he speaks of his "unselfish aims, thwarted projects, unrequited toils, and grand and tender resignation" might aptly be applied to himself. His life became a litany of disappointments. The disciple, the reader, the biographer of Newman must make up his

mind that he will meet tears and rebuffs and sorrows in reading the Catholic life of Newman. Apart from the fragrance of prose which every fresh disappointment produced, and the great virtue of humility which was more and more developed, the life of Newman was the slowly forming basis upon which the intellectual defences of the Church have since been built. In fact the Church passes into no intellectual or philosophical controversy within itself without Newman being invoked by both sides.

In 1864 a supreme opportunity came to Dr. Newman to address himself from a point of advantage to the public that had remembered him only as the traitor of 1841 and '45. Charles Kingsley in a review of Fraude's History of England accused Father Newman of having justified the principle of dishonesty in the Catholic priesthood. A correspondence ensued which proved beyond all doubt that Kingsley had not one shred of evidence on which to convict Newman, much less to hold him up as a liar on principle and in theory,--Newman who more than anyone else of his generation had suffered in the cause of truth,--for what could have persuaded him to sacrifice position and future prospects except his fearless acceptance of what he was convinced constituted truth? The nation's attention was drawn and a chance given to Newman to break through the clouds. He could now present to the English world the logic of his religious development and this he did in the white-hot classic which thrilled the intellectual public. The "Apologia pro Vita Sua" is the most soul-stirring autobiography ever penned by an English author. No finer triumph of talent in the service of conscience has been put on record. In this masterpiece of English prose Newman traced the workings of his mind in search of truth from the time when he was the Anglican of Anglicans until the rainy night when at the knees of Father Dominic, an Italian Passionist at Littlemore he made

his profession of faith and his general confession. The Apologia was given to the world in pamphlet form in consecutive Thursdays between April twenty-first and June second. It was written so naturally with such singleness of purpose, such simple good faith, such urbanity and candour that it captured the imagination of the English world. England stood and listened to a prose, the like of which, for delicacy and precision, had rarely, perhaps never, fallen on English ears. The whole nation became a sympathetic, and before long a convinced audience. To those who had shared the Oxford Movement it was the drama of their own life. To those, who had been contemporaries in Church or State, here was an opening of the books so sincere that Judgment Day seemed forestalled. What echoes it must have rung on the memories of every Oxford man and of every Anglican or Catholic who had passed through the religious troubles that made the Victorian age an age of controversy! The Apologia was read in clubs, in drawing rooms, by clerks on the top of omnibuses, in railway trains, almost in pulpits, for everywhere its author was discussed, his pathetic or striking sentences quoted, his peerless English more than ever admired. It fixed Newman's place, not only in the hearts of his countrymen but also in the national literature. Well was he justified in choosing for his epitaph, "Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem."

At a stroke he had won back his old position and his triumph reverberated throughout the world. The battle was over, the victory won.

To the present day reader the Apologia is largely incomprehensible. It is only as an autobiography, as a logical defence, as an Example of piercing English style that it survives.

Dr. Newman's disappointments did not come to an end with the publication of the Apologia. He had already withdrawn from the Dublin

campaign which he hoped would inaugurate and leave a completely functioning Catholic University in Dublin. The episode produced intellectual works more than Halls and Academies. His University Lectures were an addition to English prose rather than to Irish Culture. To the lasting disappointment of English Catholics Newman was prevented by authority from opening a house of the Oratory at Oxford. Finally the mighty controversy of the question of the "Infallibility" was reaching a climax. Here again he met with disappointment. The rest of the seventies however were to prove a reaction in his favour culminating in the Cardinalate itself from the hands of Pope Leo XIII.

The sunset of his career was as bright as the dawn, and at his death in 1890 the thought of all England might well be expressed by his own lines.

I had a dream. Yes, someone softly said  
 "He's gone," and then a sigh went round the room;  
 And then I surely heard a priestly voice  
 Cry Subvenite; and they knelt in prayer.

Over half a century has passed since Newman's death. The sorrows, frustrations and disappointments of his life are forgotten. But Newman's monument is in himself. To posterity he has become what he was to Oxford over a hundred years ago--an apostle--the one radiant, discerning, unageing apostle to all who seek Catholic truths in English speech. Great generals, leaders, pioneers, and men of action can be quickly and finally described, analysed, pigeon-holed, but not so men of thought. Newman's philosophical and intellectual life has not ceased. His legacy remains a living fountain. As a writer of English prose he stands for the perfect embodiment of his beloved Oxford. His style is the most classically perfect of the nineteenth century. He writes with precise choice of word--mathematician that he was--and

delicate rhythm of sentence--skilled musician that he was--and at times with a sustained and sonorous eloquence. His style is a <sup>mixture</sup> of his character in its high seriousness and grave beauty--and yet it would have been very unwelcome to Newman to have himself described as a man of letters, in spite of his forty volumes of prose and poetry. He wrote absolutely nothing for writing's sake. Everything he wrote was concerned with the direct purpose of advancing God's kingdom on earth. If to him as a writer we apply his essay on St. John Chrysostom, as an orator we come as close to the correct interpretation of his writings as we may hope to. He says--"His oratorical power was but the instrument, by which he readily, gracefully, adequately expressed,--expressed without effort and with felicity-- the keen feelings, the living ideas, the earnest practical lessons which he had to communicate to his hearers. He spoke because his heart, his head, were brimful of things to speak about. His unrivalled charm lies in his singleness of purpose, his fixed grasp of his aim, his noble earnestness."

With Newman, writing was but a fixing in words, the crystallization of the image, the vision, the emotion floating in his mind. "A man's style", he says, "is his shadow." In his sketch of Cicero he unconsciously described himself when he said. . . ."Cicero rather made a language than a style, yet not so much by the invention as by the combination of words. His great art lies in the application of existing materials, in converting the very disadvantages of the language into beauties, in enriching it with circumlocution and metaphors, in pruning it of harsh and uncouth expressions, in systematizing the structures of sentences. This is that copia dicendi which gained Cicero the high testimony of Caesar to his inventive powers, and which,

we may add, constitutes him the greatest master of composition that the world has seen."

One of the most outstanding characteristics of Newman's style is its unobtrusiveness. In reading his works we forget about Newman and think only about the subject he is discussing. He becomes his own panegyrist in his definition of a great author, each phrase of which he has fulfilled beyond all writers of the Nineteenth Century and possibly beyond the writers of all other Centuries. Surely "his aim is to give forth what he has within him; and from his very earnestness it comes to pass that whatever be the splendour of his diction or the harmony of his periods, he has with him the charm of an incomunicable simplicity. Whatever be his subject he treats it suitably for its own sake. His page is the lucid <sup>m i n d</sup> <sup>o f</sup> <sup>h i s</sup> <sup>m i n d</sup> and life. He writes passionately because he feels keenly; forcibly because he conceives vividly; he sees too clearly to be vague; he is too serious to be otiose; he can analyze his subject, and therefore he is rich; he embraces it as a whole and in its parts and therefore he is consistent; he has a firm hold on it and therefore he is luminous. When his imagination wells up, it overflows in ornament; when his heart is touched it thrills along his verse. He always has the right word for the right idea, and never a word too much. If he is brief it is because few words suffice; when he is lavish of them, still each word has its mark, and aids, not embarrasses the vigorous march of his elocution. He expresses what all feel, but all cannot say; and his sayings pass into proverbs among his people, and his phrases become household words and idioms of their daily speech, which is tessellated with the rich fragments of his language as we see in foreign lands the marbles of Roman grandeur worked into the walls and pavements of modern palaces."

Was Newman a poet? By nature, yes, certainly. but zeal for the Glory of God turned him into a philosopher, a preacher, an apologist, and a controversialist, using his poetical talent for purposes other than poetry. The majority of his early verses were not intended to be poems,--some of them might be called spiritual war-songs. Newman was writing not as a poet but as an ecclesiastic and he had the feeling that if his work was smoothed and polished it would look less sincere and earnest and would, consequently, effect less good. The difference of "Lead Kindly Light" from Newman's earlier poems was so noticeable that Isaac Williams, a poet of the time thought it was Keble's. No one can question the lyric quality and the dramatic imagination of Callista's verses

I wander by that river's brink  
Which circles Pluto's drear domain,  
I feel the chill night breeze, and think  
Of joys which ne'er shall be again.

I count the weeds that fringe the shore  
Each sluggish wave that rolls and rolls;  
I hear the ever-splashing oar  
Of Charon, ferryman of souls.

Poetry too there is in many a prose paragraph, for example

"O beautiful divine light," she continued, "what a loss!"

O that I could find Him! On the right and on the left I grope, but touch Him not. Why dost Thou fight against me?--and why dost Thou scare and perplex me, O First and Only Fair? I have Thee not, and I need Thee."

"The Dream of Gerontius" is of course Newman's masterpiece in

verse in difficult metre and of considerable length. It is a poetic rendering of the lofty ritual which encompasses the faithful soul from the death bed to Judgment Throne. It pierces the veil, but in strict accordance with what every Catholic holds to be there. It has no local habitation but is where the soul is. Alone that spirit utters its beliefs; alone but within hearing of the litanies and absolution and the parting injunction "Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul." And then that strange experience, that severance, that silence that pours a solitariness into the very essence of soul, and the deep rest, so soothing, so sweet, and yet has something too of sternness and of pain. The Guardian Angel tells Gerontius that he is now in a world of signs and types, the presentation of most holy truths, living and strong-- but by condescendence merely "lest so stern a load should load and break thy being." The Angel chants a hymn of triumph and a fierce hubbub warns that a demon-throng are hovering round the Judgment Seat. The tumult, terrible though it is, is heard but as far-off thunder. More joyful strains are borne in upon it as the soul draws near to the House of Judgment. One choir of Angels opens the symphony. another replies. Nothing material here but

Cornice or frieze or balustrade or stair  
 The very pavement is made up of life--  
 Of holy, blessed and immortal beings  
 Who hymn their Maker's praise continually.

They sing of the Creation, the Fall, Redemption and the soul's approaching agony which shall smite it with that "keen and subtle pain". Having gained the stairs which rise towards the Presence Chamber, the Angels of those Sacred Stairs are heard and then a fourth and then a fifth

choir of Angelicals. Before the Throne stands the Angel of the Agony pleading, "Jesu, by the shuddering dread which fell on Thee"--and then all in a moment the soul "flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel". But ere it reach them the keen sanctity has seized and scorch'd and shrivell-ed it and now it lies passive and still and breathes forth its touch-ing prayer--

"Take me away, and in the lowest deep

There let me be

And there in hope the lone night-watches keep

Told out for me.

Now the golden prison swings back its doors and the dearly-ransomed soul takes its rapid flight through the flood, sinking deep, and deeper into the dim distance.

Farewell, but not for ever!

Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here. .

And I will come and wake thee on the morrow!

"GREAT THOUGHTS, GRAVE THOUGHTS,  
THOUGHTS LASTING TO THE END."

Aubrey De Vere

1814 - 1902.

---Aubrey De Vere---

Aubrey De Vere, a native of the land of the imaginative Celts-- of Limerick where the River Shannon flows--was the son of a poet, Sir Aubrey De Vere. The younger De Vere was brought up among surroundings well calculated to foster his inborn poetic temperament. His life at Curragh had few distractions and literature seems to have been its chief form of entertainment. His mind was concentrated on it and on Nature. "Each year," he says, "we watched the succession of flowers, and if the bluebell or the cowslip came a little before or after its proper time, we felt as much aggrieved as the child who misses the word he is accustomed to, in the story heard a hundred times before."

De Vere was educated in Trinity College and at Oxford; in youth he became a disciple of Wordsworth and remained faithful to him to the last. He was a gentleman of the rarest personal charm. "A tall slender figure, unbent by age, he brought an atmosphere of genial light and gladness with him," are the words of an admirer. All through life he retained his youthful spirit. This fact and his air of the fastidious aristocrat, combined with his sweet simplicity of mind, made him an outstanding personality of his time.

One likes to remember De Vere as the author of "Caedmon, First English Poet". Who does not recall the lovely legend told by Venerable Bede of the swineherd "songless and disconsolate" whom an angel had commanded to sing of God and of Creation? English Poets had lost the meaning of this legend when De Vere took up his pen. He devoted a large part of his beautiful life to its restoration. He did not know whether the poets had lost it because they had wandered from the Church which had given inspiration to the first English poet, but he was thoroughly convinced that its meaning had to be recovered if the

departing artistic soul of England was to be stayed. Poetry was dying, because religion was dying, and materialism and secularism was triumphing:--

Roll on, blind world, upon thy track

Until thy wheels catch fire.

For that is gone which comes not back

To seller or to buyer.

Very early in life, De Vere realized that the great struggle of the age was <sup>between the cold materialism which was</sup> crushing out art and religion among the millstones of skepticism, and the Romantic resurgence. "Benthamite or Coleridgian was the alternate description of every thinking youth." De Vere chose Coleridge. It is true he never met Coleridge for the latter was dead before De Vere left Trinity College but he had learned his message from his friend and teacher, Sir William Hamilton, and later from Wordsworth, from Sara Coleridge and from others whom he met at Rydal. Sara Coleridge said of De Vere that she had never met a more "entire" poet, one more a poet in his whole mind and temperament. Perhaps this accounts for his more accurate diagnosis than that of the greater artists like Wordsworth, of what ailed the early Nineteenth <sup>Century</sup> poetry. He was able to take the torch of poetic inspiration from the hands of those representing the sunset of Romantic poetry and place it where Caedmon had found it.

De Vere's life was largely one of study and yet the picture of its social side presented by his diaries and correspondence is singularly attractive. He held intercourse, and for some weeks in the year constant intercourse, with some of the choicest spirits of the age, including Wordsworth, Carlyle and Tennyson. The great theme that possessed the most thoughtful minds of the time was the religious re-

vival which succeeded the indifferentism of the eighteenth century. The one romance of De Vere's life was his religious history which culminated in his joining the Catholic Church. He was an assiduous reader and a student. He made himself thoroughly acquainted with the various aspects of religious thought represented by the great schools of the day. To Maurice and his circle at Cambridge, he went; to Newman and the Tractarians at Oxford he went; to Hallam in London and then back again to the Lake Country where he paced beside Wordsworth, his master and his hero, and treasured every word that fell from that venerable poet's lips.

The solutions offered by these various minds were so different that it would not have been surprising if De Vere had been left with the impression that there was no solution. But such was not the case. He had a singular gift for separating and fastening upon the purely spiritual elements in many divers systems, and so his path was illuminated by single beams that shone from each of these sources and converged upon truth. Thus he slowly built up the reasonable foundation that his faith finally rested on; From Coleridge he learned to distrust sectarianism "the outcome of self-confident private judgment." Yet he saw that Coleridge himself had tried to erect a man-made system on what was left of eighteenth century Protestantism. De Vere rejected Sectarianism, "time's revenge for private judgment" for he saw that private judgment had broken up the ancient Christian Church in England. The very word "Religio" means "to bind", "And how," asks De Vere, "can you bind except by Doctrines, reduced to their Orthodox forms, and by Duties, explained, applied and enforced?" It was this same appeal of authority and sacredness of tradition that lay at the root of Newman's philosophy, and from the day that De Vere joined the

Oxford movement, it was only a question of time and study and prayer until he should join the Church. This he did on November 15, 1851 at the age of thirty-seven. Convinced that spiritual insight can be gained only by the childlike humility of faith, he had already written:

Ye who would build the Churches of the Lord  
 See that ye make the western portals law  
 Let no one enter who disdains to bow,  
 High truths profanely gazed at, unadored  
 Will be abused at first, at last abhorred  
 and many a learned, many a lofty brow  
 Hath rested pillowed on a humbler vow  
 Than keen logicians notice or record.  
 O stainless peace of blest humility!  
 Of all who fain would enter, few alas  
 Catch the true meaning of that keen sad eye;  
 While thou, God's portress stationed at the door  
 Dost stretch thy cross, so near the marble floor  
 That children only without bending pass.

De Vere is one of the few of the early revivalists whose conversion occasioned no permanent severance of his long established ties of friendship. This was due in some measure to his perennial sweetness of disposition. But while the friendships were not severed, nevertheless Newman's motto could have been De Vere's also. "Je mourrai seul". His friends remained outside the One Fold.

De Vere's greatest work as a poet was to recapture the spirit of the Christian past and that part of the pagan past which the Church had made her own. His narrative poems on Ireland's heroic age and its

Christian periods such as "The Foray of Quene Maeve, Legends of St. Patrick and "Innisfail" must be reckoned among the earliest beginnings of the Celtic revival; while his Legends of Saxon Saints, his drama "St. Thomas of Canterbury" and his Medieval Records and Sonnets did much to repair "the spiritual deprivation to the northern imagination" brought about by the so-called Reformation.

One might make the mistake of thinking that De Vere was trying to renew the artistic mind of his day by merely filling it with vivid pictures taken from the ages of faith. This was not his intention. What he sought to make live again was not the Middle Ages or the early ages of the Church but the supernatural principle that had produced the glories of these days. Beneath the colour and romance, the heroism, the sanctity and the art, De Vere saw only the Incarnation of Christ, God's own remedy for the broken humanity of all ages.

Shortly after his conversion he was asked by Pope Pius IX to write hymns to Our Lady whose Immaculate Conception was shortly to be defined. The result was a volume called May Carols in the preface to which may be found De Vere's technique for renewing the artistic imagination. This Preface is one of the most important critical documents of the century. It holds up to the artist, the Incarnation as the primal font of the renewed poetry, and shows him how he may best reach and understand the artistic significance of the Word Made Flesh. For De Vere's advice to the poet is not that he deal directly with sublime theological truths of the Incarnation but that he approach these truths as did the early Christian artists, through "the lesser elevation" of the divine motherhood of Mary.

O thou whose light is in thy heart  
 Reverence, love's mother! without thee

Science may soar awhile, but Art  
 Drifts barren o'er a shoreless sea.

His plans, then, for the renewal of the arts was Mary, whom his friend Wordsworth had called "our tainted nature's solitary boast." And so it turned out. The revival of Catholic Art in the nineteenth century was everywhere accompanied by a revival of devotion to the Mother of God, but most notably in England--"Our Lady's Dowry". Thus Newman returning from Rome to England after his ordination went out of his way to pay a visit of devotion to the shrine at Loretto. Robert Stephen Hawker, while still an Anglican wore always about his neck a medal of the Immaculate Conception; Coventry Patmore at the age of Fifty-four experienced a complete renewal of poetic inspiration as a result of a visit to Lourdes; Francis Thompson's first published poem was "The Passion of Mary". And so on. There is no artist in the revival who has not left us in prose or verse some record of his literary debt to the Mother of God.

"Your place" says Paul Claudel to the somewhat skeptical Jacques Riviere, "is marked out along with Patmore, with Chesterton, and if I may say so, with me, among those whose role it is to create a Catholic imagination and a Catholic sensitivity which for centuries has been withering away." Here is the modern echo of the doctrine contained in the Preface to the May Carols. It is De Vere's specific and permanent gift to the Catholic Revival--Mary as the way to the Incarnation, and the Incarnation, "as a living Power, reigning among the Humanities and renewing the affections and imagination of man."

The quality of De Vere's verse is strong and vigorous, musical and remarkably spiritual. A critic in the "Quarterly Review" says of

its poetry, that next to Browning's it shows the fullest vitality, resumes the largest sphere of ideas, covers the broadest intellectual field since the poetry of Wordsworth. In his old Irish lays, heroic in subject and spiritual in significance, and in his poems which enshrine the traditions of the Mediaeval Church, De Vere is most at home in spirit and perhaps at his best. Here he strikes a note which seems to breathe the very air of that old world of unconscious saintliness and glad romance.

De Vere never strove for ornate effect in his poetry, which is marked by sublime and serious conviction as he traces the progress of spiritual thought in the development of the nations, notably Ireland, in the "Legend of St. Patrick" and of Spain in his portrayal of the Cid. "The Children of Lir" is one of the most exquisite lyrics in the language. His classic knowledge, his richness of imagination, his combined grace and dignity of thought are revealed in his "Search after Proserpine". In his "Alexander the Great" and "Saint Thomas of Canterbury" he reveals himself as a dramatist, unequalled in his century, except by Sir Henry Taylor, Browning and his own father, the elder De Vere.

The Sonnet is the verse form in which he was perhaps most genuinely at home. Of this verse form he was truly a master. His poems have been likened to gentle vesper lamps lighted with splendid sympathy for all things and thoughts, touched with spiritual refinement. Truly his were "Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end." "In everything that he has written", says Coventry Patmore, "his aim has been high and grave. He has never been sectarian even when Catholic". Yet thorough Catholic he was. Throughout his life he haunted the shrines where God had manifested himself, and studied reverently

the images of His Majesty. While he may not have been able to bring the world to its knees at the Feet of a God Made Man, there can be no doubt that Aubrey De Vere himself was kneeling in adoration. He felt certain that

Some presence veiled in fields and groves  
That mingles rapture with remorse;  
Some buried joy beside us moves  
And thrills the soul with such discourse  
As they, perchance, that wandering pair  
Who to Emmaus bent their way  
Hearing, heard not. Like them our prayer  
We make: The night is near us . . . . Stay!"

Aubrey De Vere may well be described as one of the most amiable of Ireland's poets. His traditional love for Ireland is reflected in his kin. His mother was the Honourable Mary Spring Rice a sister of the first Lord Monteagle. The names of Spring Rice and Monteagle are written large and gloriously in the last century of Irish history. The sufferings of the Irish in the ghastly year of 1847 wrung De Vere's gentle heart. In 1848 he published a book on Irish and English relations; he knew both countries well; he had kinship with both. His book was recognized as of real value by so practical a philosopher as John Stuart Mill and even by the choleric Carlyle. De Vere had sojourned at Oxford, Cambridge and Rome, and had, as we have noted before, come under the influence of Cardinal Newman who himself looked to a glorious future for Ireland. De Vere had mystic visions that the little Black Rose which symbolised Ireland would blossom forth again. She had had her March winds of suffering when the little rose seemed black and withered but she would have June days too.

The little Black Rose shall be red at last,  
 What made it black but the March winds dry,  
 And the tear of the widow that fell on it fast:  
 It shall redden the hills when June is high.

Describing his early youth in Ireland, De Vere says "When at Mount Trenchard, the residence of my maternal grandmother, on the banks of the Shannon, many a day was spent sailing in a little open boat; now by the wild cliff and fair wooded shores of Cahercon, now among the islands at the mouth of the River Fergus, now beneath the heathy hills that overhang Foynes".

He lived near the lovable Gerald Griffin whose great ambition was to become the Irish Burns. He quotes a remark of Sir Edward O'Brien, a chief of Thomond and direct descendant of Brian the Great, King of All-Ireland, on the Creator in the wheat fields of Eire: "I never feel so devout as when I hear a ripening cornfield murmur in the wind; it makes me say to myself: God is preparing bread for His people." De Vere has given us a delightful pen-sketch of the great Daniel O'Connell; his summary of the great tribune runs thus: "O'Connell was a very wonderful man--one with a nature so large that it seemed as if he was not a man, but an epitome of many men."

Speaking of the destiny of Ireland, De Vere says: "One of the lessons taught us by Irish history is this: that to the different nations different vocations are assigned by Providence; to one an imperial vocation, to another a commercial one; to Greece an artistic one; to Ireland, as to Israel, a spiritual one."

De Vere dearly wished that his poetry, much of which illustrated the history and religion of the Gaelic people, should reach the "Irish

of the Dispersion" in America, the land which had extended its hospitality to them. The caricaturist easily mistakes the Irish character. Poetry deals with what is beneath the surface. "She makes her study of the hillside chapel, and of the cottage hearth and the lip-worn rosary. William Yeats observed that De Vere walked on such sacred soil that one almost needs a Dominican habit and a breviary to appreciate him fully. He did, indeed, sum up in one line the age of Ireland's cultural greatness which all scholars have recognized when he addressed Ireland as:

Lamp of the North when half the World was Night.

De Vere lived and thought the Faith even more strongly than he wrote it, and so we cherish the picture of that great Catholic, poet and scholar, sinking slowly to his grave in beautiful Adare, saying his Breviary, fingering his Rosary, and meditating and studying at the venerable age of eighty-eight.

"I LOVE MY GOD BEST."

Coventry Patmore

1823 - 1896.

--Coventry Patmore--

Catholic Literature of the Nineteenth Century is a literature of protest against the course being followed by European society of its day. Its writers were not very numerous, nor did the typical Victorian see any particular significance in their opposition to the various institutions of a social order that seemed firmly established and likely to endure. The criticism advanced by Ruskin and Carlyle against the mechanization of life might be understood and even accepted because it came from a philosophy that was a part of the world that it ventured to criticize but when Newman and Patmore denounced the Liberalism, the anti-intellectual Romantic aesthetic and scientific naturalism then holding sway, little or no attention was paid to them. The age was not ready for their message. Catholic literature was dwarfed into insignificance by the prosperity and confidence of the world against which it rebelled. It is only to-day that the importance of a writer such as Coventry Patmore who was unquestionably a major poet is becoming generally recognized justifying what he once wrote--" I have respected posterity, and should there be a posterity that cares for me, I dare to hope it will respect me."

Patmore was born in Woodford, Essex in 1823. Throughout his childhood and youth he was greatly aided in his literary pursuits by his father, Mr. Peter George Patmore, himself a man of letters, who recognized the dormant genius in his son. Patmore's grandmother, on his father's side showed unusual devotion to him, her eldest grandchild. She was a woman of extraordinary intelligence. Excellent raconteur that she was, she would regale the young grandson for hours with highly romantic tales. These were a delight to him. An artistic strain which later showed itself in his efforts in art and in his appreciation of worth while works may be traced to a great uncle,--a Mr. Robert Stevens

who besides being an artist was also a naturalist and a traveler. Coventry's appreciation of nature and keen powers of observation were the result of close companionship with this Uncle. His mother was a woman of strong determination--cold and unsympathetic. Having no appreciation for literature, she had little sympathy with her husband's efforts to further Coventry's literary talents. She resented the devotion of father and son, and the affection bestowed by the paternal grandmother and by the great uncle. Moreover her word was law in the Patmore home. No doubt it was from her that Coventry inherited his indomitable will-power and deep religious fervour. She was a staunch Presbyterian. Her husband was an agnostic--and so raised Coventry, but she saw to it that the children were brought into frequent communication with her family. At the early age of eleven while reading a book the thought struck Coventry with tremendous force "what an exceedingly fine thing it would be if there really was a God." He had just finished what he describes as "an exhaustive study of Shakespeare" and had reached the conclusion that if tragedy is to be a just foundation for the highest kind of poetry, it ought to present the solution of the evils and disasters of life, rather than just the termination of them by death. This set him enquiring if there were such a solution, and once again he is brought face to face with the Eternal verities. He speaks, too, of "illuminations" during his youth, "the earth lighted up with a light not of this earth," showing him that sin was an infinite evil, and love an infinite good. More remarkable was the light that came to him on the Incarnation of God made man, and the possibilities of intimate communion with Him. This idea, he describes as being henceforth, "the only reality worth seriously caring for." What is this but the very definition of Mysticism--"a religious tendency and desire of the human soul towards an intimate union with the Divinity--a union of the human soul with Divinity through contemplation and

Now two diverse tendencies of the century were mysticism and the scientific spirit. It is Coventry Patmore's achievement that he reconciled the two tendencies by rejecting both in their current acceptation--the Romantic mysticism which was illusory and the Victorian compromise with scientific liberalism because it was unreasonable. Thus, thanks to a kind Providence, a Poet and Mystic was saved from quack mysticism on one hand and an equally futile materialism on the other.

If it is the mystic note that has raised Patmore's poetry to such ethereal heights that a modern critic has said that "Thou who are braced to the highest levels of the art (of poetry) will find in the best of the Odes, (Patmore's) a fund of inspired poetry for which they would willingly sacrifice the whole baggage of the Victorian legacy in general", it will be worth while to consider at greater length than a mere definition just what mysticism is. A recent writer says "Mysticism is a soul-experience of a human being, as yet a way-farer on earth, actually tasting and seeing that God is sweet." The smallest prayer, if sincerely heart-felt, is a mystical act because it is a reaching out to the unseen God. Love and love alone can unite the soul to God. But love cannot exist without sacrifice and suffering, so that mystical union can be attained only by self-sacrifice and renunciation. Mystical life is a union between the Loving God and the loving soul. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God!" cried out Saint Augustine, "and restless are our hearts, until they rest in Thee."

The quest of God by the soul of man has inspired many an ecstatic, and so has the converse of the theme. Francis Thompson is the poet of the "Good Shepherd in search of His sheep."

Strange, piteous, futile thing

Wherefore should any set thee love apart

Seeing none but I make much of naught  
 Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee  
 Save Me, save only Me.

The song of the mystic comes down to us through all the ages.

Listen to St. Paul, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor height, nor depth can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, Our Lord". Every century has its mystic lover of God breathing forth inspired accents from a Citeaux, a Paray-le Monial, a Lisieux, from a St. Teresa of Spain, a St. John of the Cross, a St. Francis of Sales, and from the Seraph of Assisi. Limiting our inspired verse to singers from England, Mary's Dower, we have Crashaw in the seventeenth century, a fore runner of Francis Thompson and Coventry Patmore. A mystic tendency is found in the writings of some not of the faith--Blake in the eighteenth Century, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley in the Nineteenth. The root of Wordsworth's theory is close to Pantheism--but Nature was his medium and delight. How easily he could transform this world into "an unsubstantial faery place" and etherealize the simplest things by "The light that never was on sea or land. The Consecration and the poet's dream." Of Shelley, Thompson said--"The universe is his box of toys. He dabbles in the sunset. He is gold-dusty with stumbling amid the stars. He dances in and out of the gates of heaven. To Francis Thompson it was given to see

"Christ walking on the water

Not of Gennesareth, but Thames"

To Patmore the one great reality of life was the love of God to which all other loves are tributary. He went from the love that is a sacrament to the Love which is beyond vision. Patmore's poetic rendering of

his philosophy of love is contained in two cycles of poems, "The Angel in the House" and "The Unknown Eros". The first, written in simple eight-syllable iambs consists of four parts: The Betrothal, The Espousal, Faithful Forever and Victories of Love." The Unknown Eros" is a series of odes distinguished for their "suave and simple loveliness. A third series "Sponsa Dei", he burned. Perhaps he feared that what Newman called "mixing up amorousness and religion would be considered too daring. His theme throughout the whole series is nuptial love considered as a symbol of divine love; as man and woman are united in marriage, so God and the soul are united in religion. Human love becomes in Patmore's view a beautiful avenue of approach to eternal happiness. In the language of modern psychology, the key idea of his theory is "sublimation".

In September 1847 he married Emily Augusta Andrews, a woman of great beauty and charm. She became the Angel in the House, the heroine of Patmore's epic of married life. The poem appeared in 1858 and was immensely popular. Over half a million copies were sold. Unfortunately the greater number of the purchasers were just charmed with the story but missed the philosophy. To them it was a tale of domestic happiness told in rhymed octosyllabic quatrains. The cathedral close, the white-haired dean, a stolen glove, tea and all the conventional accessories of a Victorian afternoon which Patmore had intended to serve merely as a vehicle for what he considered the philosophy of marriage caused many to see in the book just a charming celebration of Nineteenth-century respectability. Even the modern reader of this narrative of the love of Honoria and Vaughan must be warned that there is something more substantial than this in the tale. It contains high seriousness and a doctrine on marriage that is original. Marriage, he considered, the consecration of the highest human virtue, the prelude to the perfect love of God which is

the supreme end of man on earth. Says Vaughan of Honoria,

"I loved her in the name of God  
And for the ray she was of Him."

Emily Patmore died in 1862 leaving her husband heartbroken. He has recorded her "Departure" in lines of deepest sorrow.

"It was not like your great and gracious ways!  
Do you, that have naught other to lament  
Never, my love, lament  
Of how that July afternoon  
You went.  
But all at once to leave me at the last,  
More at the wonder than the loss aghast  
With sudden unintelligible phrase  
And frightened eye  
And go your journey of all days  
With not a kiss or good-by  
And the only loveless look the look with which you passed:  
'Twas all unlike your great and gracious ways:

In the mellow light of exquisite happiness Coventry Patmore had passed the fifteen years of married life. There was but one source of possible division between him and his wife and that was religion. Coventry, a mystic in the very essence of his nature, was more and more irresistibly drawn in the direction of the transcendent and the supernatural. There was no discussion of religious difficulties, simply because, in the advance of her malady, Emily could not endure it. Coventry did not admit, and was not indeed aware of any leaning to Rome,

but his wife detected it. Her death, occurring at such a psychological moment, disturbed almost as much as it grieved him. He was not merely bowed down with sorrow, but assailed by poignant doubts. Was there any necessity of his changing his religion? Emily Patmore had been so perfect, so serene, so exquisite, and so satisfied with her religion. Her death brings to a close the first period in Patmore's poetic career. To him it must have seemed also the end of his career as a poet. She was his "angel" and his inspiration. He found himself alone, and the incompetent father of six children. But yet another romance was awaiting this "consecrated laureate of wedded love." But in the meantime he developed a sort of austere inaccessibility which was quite new to him. He drew aside into loneliness, with his children's cares and wants alone to distract him. He was rewarded by an accession of mystical rapture of which he has given this account:-

"For many months after my wife's death, I found myself apparently elevated into a higher spiritual region and the recipient of powers which I had always sought, but never more abidingly obtained. As far as I could see, God had suddenly conferred on me that quiet personal apprehension and love of Him and entire submission to His Will which I had so long prayed for in vain; and the argument against my change of religion which I had before drawn from my wife's state, I now drew from my own--concluding that this faith could not be wrong which bore such good fruits. But I discovered, as the sense of her spiritual presence with me gradually faded, that I was mistaking the tree which was producing these fruits. It was not that of supernatural grace in me, but the natural love of the beauty of supernatural grace as I recalled it in her; and, at the end of a year, I found myself greatly advanced indeed towards that inviolable fidelity to God which He requires, but still un-

mistakably short of its attainment.

Two years after his wife's death we find him on his way to Rome with Aubrey de Vere. What he saw of Catholicism in the Eternal City brought his meditations to a practical turn. But while still in a state of undecision he met and fell in love with Miss Marianne Byles. Patmore placed himself under the regular instruction of a Jesuit, Father Cordella. Patmore tells us that all his intellectual objections were confuted, and that his will was more and more powerfully attracted, so that finally he made his submission in May 1864. Patmore lived thirty-two years after this event, and no shadow of religious doubt ever crossed his understanding or his conscience again, and we have to regard him from this time forward as having come completely into harmony with the dogmas and traditions of the Catholic Church. Two months later he married Marianne Caroline Byles, the marriage being celebrated by Cardinal Manning, at the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, Bayswater. The second Mrs. Patmore was a woman of deep spirituality. One with her husband in ideal, she encouraged him to greater literary effort, and as a result his best work in verse and prose, as well as the complete finding of his own soul were accomplished during his life with her.

In 1865 weakness of the lungs obliged him to give up his work in the Museum and seek retirement. The following year he purchased two adjoining estates in Sussex. These he converted into a famous beauty spot naming the new home "Heron's Ghyll". When in the early seventies, agricultural depression set in this estate became too expensive to keep up, so Patmore sold it to the Duke of Norfolk and then purchased Milford Mansion at Hastings. His seventeen years of residence here, enlivened by visits from his friends, were among the serenest of the poet's life.

First Heron's Ghyll, and now beautiful sea-girt Hastings afforded

Patmore time for intensive study of documents of mystical theology, those of St. Bernard, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa and St. Thomas Aquinas. Like many other devout thinkers he withdrew periodically to Pontypool or Pantasaph in the prayerful atmosphere and seclusion of a Franciscan monastery or to the Jesuit's Residence at Manresa, Roehampton, where he would spend several days in spiritual retreat. This habit of spiritual quiet assisted and sanctified by divine grace fitted him for his sublime vocation as a poet of transcendent mysticism. Consequently Patmore now entered the second and greatest stage of his poetic career. Not that his subject changed. It was still the same--love. But his manner of writing was altered. He became mystical and difficult. His doctrine was deepening for he had caught glimpses of great and awful truths. This was to be the period of his greatest triumph as an artist.

The simple narrative measure of his earlier work he abandoned for the ode, but a curious and difficult form of the ode, the essential feature of which, some critics have traced to the Canzonieri of Petrarch but which Patmore thought was an original discovery. "I have hit upon the finest metre that ever was invented and the finest mine of wholly unworked material that ever fell to the lot of an English poet," he declared while preparing "The Unknown Eros". The "mine" was Catholic mystical theology especially the idea, so dear to mystics, of setting forth the intimate union of the soul of the individual with Christ in the language of the most exalted type of earthly union--the soul as the spouse of Christ. But how express the secrets of the saints to the crowd? How teach them what love meant and what the Word made Flesh implied? He saw, as the one great reality of life, the love of God, to which all other loves are tributary. He saw that this idea had fled from England.

O season strange for song!  
 And yet some timely power persuades my lips  
 Is it England's parting soul that nerves my tongue?

So he would,

Notes few and strong and fine  
 Gilt with sweet day's decline  
 And sad with promise of a different sun.

This strangely tender scholar, poet and mystic rose amid the rich chaos of Victorian literature,--"a minor poet of major importance"--with Tennyson and the Brownings, Arnold, Carlyle, Ruskin Mill and Darwin. Many of these were frequent visitors at his home. Patmore divided his friends into two classes of which one was Tennyson, and the other "the rest". He regarded his friendship with Tennyson as one of the rare privileges of his life. In the early days of our poet's married life, in London, Tennyson lived in lodgings nearby. in Hampstead Road. He held Emily Patmore in high esteem, and she assisted him in procuring for him material for his "Idylls of the King". Tennyson encouraged, admired and criticized Patmore's work, and the latter's regard for his elder, both as man and as poet, was somewhat akin to worship. He placed his friendship for Tennyson on a plane far above that of any other, and the eventual "rift within the lute" was a source of deep grief to so sensitive a nature. This estrangement evolved through a misinterpretation on Patmore's part of Tennyson's well-meant effort to help his friend financially. following the death of Emily Patmore in 1862. A fund was started without Patmore's sanction, for the purpose of assisting the latter through the stress of circumstances consequent upon the prolonged illness of his wife. At the instigation of his friend, Woolner, Patmore made an effort to heal the breach by writing Tennyson but the reply was

lacking in tenderness and this to Patmore seemed evidence of his friend's cooling affections. Tennyson regretted the loss of comradeship, and till his death spoke of Patmore, and continued to hold him in high esteem.

Ruskin, too, regarded Patmore as a friend of sterling worth, and his letters to the latter covered a period of thirty years. Aubrey de Vere was another of his friends and correspondents. An excerpt from one of the many letters that passed between them reveals the favour with which de Vere viewed the Poem "The Angel in the House". "I do not flatter you in saying that it is (so far as I may venture to judge) one of the most beautiful of modern poems". These friendships were a source of great comfort to Patmore when in the early eighties, one bereavement followed another. Marianne Patmore died in 1880, Emily Honoria (Sister Mary Christina) in 1862 and Henry, Patmore's third son and no mean writer of verse in 1883. This decade is also marked by the publication in "St. James Gazette" of upwards of one hundred and twenty prose essays. These articles touch on art, literature, architecture, politics, economics, philosophy and religion. Classified and in book form they appeared later as "Principle in Art" (1889) *Religio Poetae* (1893) and "Rod, Root and Flower" (1895).

In 1881 Patmore married Miss Harriet Robson, and of this marriage a son was born in 1883. The family left Hastings in 1891 and established themselves at "The Lodge", Lymington, Hampshire. Lymington days were treasured for their associations with Mrs. Meynell, a woman of rare genius and marvellous personality. A community of tastes, of ideals and of literary and spiritual aspirations enhanced this friendship. It was at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Meynell that Patmore met Francis Thompson. They became fast friends. In fact we are told that Coventry Patmore was the person whose intellectual influence upon Thompson was at that time the most important. It was he who had introduced Thompson to the Tran-

scendental ideas behind the Church's liturgy and had thus supplied him with philosophical and theological bases of the mystical sections of his "New Poems". Those who in modern times are daily discovering for the first time the transcendent reality behind what is called liturgy do indeed find that it appears, as Patmore said, "almost like a New Dispensation".

The last four years of our poet's life were years of bodily suffering borne with great resolution. His fatal complaint, angina pectoris, gave him many warnings. The final attack came on November 24, 1896 and on the 26th, he passed away. His last words were "I love my God best." He was buried like Dante in the rough habit of the Franciscans in the Lymington Cemetery. On the poet's death Thompson wrote in part to Mrs. Meynell. "There has passed away the greatest genius of the century and from me a friend whose like I shall not see again. The irrevocableness of such a grief is mocked by many words; these few words least wrong it. My friend is dead and I had but one such friend."

Patmore's compelling personality, his vivid self-conscious manhood and spiritual penetration made him a fit subject for Mr. John Sargent's choice for a model of the prophet Ezekiel. This portrait and all his portraits show a man of impetuous spirit and alert intellect. Usually a good listener he could be strangely silent and proudly aloof in a crowd, but was correspondingly confidential and fascinating in private conversation. Those who were privileged to be received into the inner circle of his friendship were always richer for the moral stimulation and spiritual exhilaration communicated by this "strong sad soul of sovereign song."

In conclusion we may say that the one important thing that Coventry Patmore attempted was the elevation of dogma to song. The Incarnation

was to be the great font of poetry. "The Incarnation", he said, "is still only a dogma. It has never got beyond mere thoughts. Perhaps it will take thousands of years to work itself into feelings, as it must do, before religion can become a matter of poetry." He viewed it as an almost impossible work amid the unbelief of his Victorian surroundings. "But impossibilities" as his friend De Vere once remarked, "will never get done if no one attempted them, and the attempt usually brings a good reward, be the failure ever so great."

Theodore Maynard has called Patmore the most considerable Catholic poet since Dante. He stands to our age much in the same way as Dante stood to his. He has not only pointed out the way for the regeneration of poetry, but has taken us a considerable way along the road of achievement.

"Wherever a critic of faithful conscience", remarks Mr. Read, already quoted, "recalls the poets of this period--Tennyson, Arnold, Clough, Patmore, Browning, Rossetti--it is on the name of Patmore that he lingers with a still lively sense of wonder. The rest have been fully estimated and their influence, if not exhausted, is predictable. Patmore is still potential. . . .".

"I AM SO HAPPY, I AM SO HAPPY."

Gerard Manley Hopkins, S. J.

1844 - 1889.

--Gerard Manley Hopkins--

The spirit of Newman still hung like a shield over the gray walls of Oxford when Gerard Hopkins presented himself as a student there in the sixties. Newman had preached a doctrine which was a fundamental one in the renovation of the arts. The renewal must begin in the artist himself. "If you want to produce a christian work, be a Christian . . . . do not adopt a Christian pose. A Christian work would have the artist, as artist, free,--as man, a saint.

Gerard Manley Hopkins put this doctrine into practice in a way more radical than any of the earlier revivalists and so the renovation of his art was the most complete. His work crowns the best efforts of the first phase of the Revival and marks its transition to the second.

Although Hopkins wrote supreme lyric poetry in the 19th century, it was neither recognized as such, nor published until after the Great War, and even then the lines which Robert Bridges his literary executor wrote in dedication are full of misgiving.

Our generation already is overpast  
 And thy lov'd legacy, Gerard, hath lain  
 Coy in my home; as once thy heart was fain  
 Of shelter, when God's terror held thee fast.

Yet love of Christ will win man's love at last  
 Hell wars without: but, dear, the while my hands  
 Gathered thy book, I heard, this winter day  
 Thy spirit thank me in his young delight  
 Stepping again upon the yellow sands.

Go forth! amidst our chaffinch flock display  
 Thy plumage of far wonder and heavenward flight.

Fortunately the Poet Laureate's misgivings proved to be without foundation. The "chaffinch flock"--the exponents of modern poetry--hailed Hopkin's verses with delight, as belonging to a new era, and as capable of giving intelligent direction to the search for a new technique.. Mr. Herbert Read has recently said that "when the history of the last decade of English poetry comes to be written, no influence will rank in importance with that of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

This poet was born at Stratford, Essex in 1844. His father, Manley Hopkins, was Consul General of the Hawaiian Islands to Great Britain. He combined a practical efficiency with a poet's vision. Manley Hopkin's wife, the eldest daughter of Samuel Smith, a well-known doctor of the early twenties in London, was an unusually well-educated woman, a keen student of philosophy, history and politics. Her sisters, too, were talented, but as artists and musicians. This artistic strain in her family, and the poetical in her husbands, took deep root in the mind of their son. When Gerard was but five or six years old, his character and education were being formed at home, in a real though unprofessional way. A sister of his father was living with the family at that time, and being both a musician and a landscape painter, she found Gerard an unusually promising pupil, and accordingly coached the small boy in music and in painting. His correct ear and clear sweet voice made him an easy master of the traditional airs. His love for music never left him, and years after in the Society of Jesus, he often entertained the Community with songs that he himself composed and put to music.

In the autumn of 1852 Gerard was sent to a day-school in Hampstead, and two years later he was transferred to Sir Robert Cholmondley's Grammar School at Highgate, a place formerly associated with such illus-

trious names as Lamb, Keats and Coleridge. Here Gerard made many friends among whom were Ernest Hartley Coleridge, a grandson of the poet, and Marcus Clarke who subsequently enjoyed such brilliant fame in Australian journalism and letters.

Mr. Cyril Hopkins relates two incidents of Gerard's school life which illustrate another phase of his character. Once he went without drinking for a week because he noticed that his school-fellows usually drank too much; and he fainted at drill. Cyril well remembered the old drill sergeant's astonishment when informed of the cause of Gerard's indisposition. On another occasion he passed a week without taking any salt because he discovered that everyone ate too much salt at their meals.

The early poetry of Gerard is of extraordinary interest. In one of his earliest poems "Spring and Death" he recounts a dream and his youthful reflections linger around the sad transiency of beauty. This poem led to a more ambitious one 'The Escorial' written when he was fifteen years old. It is a poem of one hundred and thirty-five lines, in Spenserian stanzas and manifests an amazing knowledge of art and architecture. It won him his first prize.

No finish'd proof was this of Gothic grace  
 With flowery tracery engemming rays  
 Of colour in high casements face to face;  
 And foliaged crownals (pointing how the ways  
 Of art best follow nature) in a maze  
 Of finished diapers, that fills the eye  
 And scarcely traces where one beauty strays  
 And melts amid another; ciel'd on high  
 With blazon'd grains, and crowned with hues of majesty.

In 1862 Gerard wrote 'A Vision of Mermaids' which won him another school prize. It breathes of Spenser, and at times of Keats.

And it was at the setting of the day  
 Plum-purple was the west; but spikes of light  
 Spear'd open lustrous gashes, crimson-white;

Beginning in 1857, Gerard made several tours on the Continent. Besides winning school prizes at Highgate, he won a scholarship, and in 1862 the whole course of his life was changed by his winning an exhibition for Balliol College, Oxford. He went up for the Christmas Term.

Oxford, "Towery city and branchy between towers;  
 Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmed, lark-charmed,  
 rook-racked, river-rounded,"

was to determine the issue of Gerard's characteristics. Here he underwent, through contact with undergraduates and teachers, the several streams of thought which reflected rather accurately the intellectual make-up of the England of his day. German rationalism which had seeped through the intellectual strata of England and of Oxford in the days of Coleridge was still at high tide; Various creeds of Christianity were arranged as a bulwark against it. There were great protagonists on both sides. Hopkins came under the spell of many of the most brilliant of the intelligentsia of the period. Jowett was impressed with the young man's proficiency in Greek, referred to him as the "Star of Balliol" and one of the first scholars of the college. Henry Parry Liddon, who combined with his writings a loving and lovable personality was Gerard's first confessor, and Gerard used to say that he never exceeded the contrition with which his first confession was made.

James Riddel, Pusey, Robert Bridges, William Addic and Digby Dolben were numbered among his many friends. Dr. Bridges' friendship survived the shock of Hopkin's embracing Catholicism and continued through the latter's brief span of years. It was the staunch love and the highest literary appreciation of him that prevented Dr. Bridges from flooding an unappreciative and uncomprehending literary public with Hopkin's poetry so that he bided his time and after almost thirty years of patient waiting published the slender volume of poems, with the prefatory sonnet already quoted.

Our generation already is overpast  
 And thy lov'd legacy, Gerard, hath lain  
 Coy in my home:

This literary friendship deepened with the passing years, ceasing only at the poet's death.

Gerard Hopkins underwent not only much intellectual change during his undergraduate days, but also a religious upheaval so great that at the end of August 1866 after returning home from a visit with Robert Bridges, he wrote to Newman, asking for an interview, and telling him of his determination to become a Catholic. How often they met in the next few weeks is difficult to say but Hopkin's letter of October 15, seems to manifest a friendship deepened by acquaintance. Newman's diary records: Oct. 21. Mr. Hopkins came from Oxford and was received. Many letters passed between these two great converts, great priests and great writers until the last one written by Newman on February 24, 1868, a lithographed acknowledgment signed with the wavering hand of an old man of eighty-seven. It was after this that Cardinal Newman laid aside the mighty pen that had given such glorious service to his Church and to English letters.

In May 1868 Gerard Hopkins made up his mind to become a religious, a Jesuit, and accordingly entered the Novitiate at Rochampton in the following September.

An interesting pen-portrait written by Rev. W. Lechmere appeared in the Oxford and Cambridge Review, May 1912, and reads in part "At this moment looking back over forty years, I seem to be gazing, upon some great portrait of a face, rather than upon a face. What high serenity, what chastened intellectual power, what firm and resigned purpose, and withal what tranquil sadness or perhaps seriousness suffusing the features rather than casting a shadow upon them! I have no likeness to assist me, but I continue to see the face. Of all I met at Oxford, there was not one whose superfineness of mind and character was more expressed in his entire bearing."

Such then was Gerard Hopkins when he submitted himself to the yoke of the Church and of the Society of Jesus. That he included with the holocaust of himself the ashes of his poems manifests the courageous realization he had of his calling. Indeed no superior had ever hinted at this immolation of the poetic instinct, and a few years after his Rector asked him to write again. It was then that he emerged with a new diction, a new prosody, a new inspiration. Literary history has few instances of so complete an alteration in style to record. One has only to compare one of his early poems "The Habit of Perfection", say, with "The Wreck of the Deutschland" to see the amazing character of the changes in his own verse. The enormity and suddenness of the changes have but one literary parallel example--that of "The Angel in the House" and "The Unknown Eros".

There are difficulties in reading Hopkins' verse. The obscurity which besets his artistry springs from two causes; the one from the

difficulty in attaining the almost unattainable ideal of his craftsmanship; for he accomplished in the 19th Century what many writers with less poetic insight have been attempting in the 20th; he made poetry assume the patterns of music; the second cause arises from the nature of the thought to be expressed. He had seen a vision so ineffably full and new that the traditional machinery of expression was inadequate for its expression, and he must needs invent a new one. With him the vision came first and the technique later. To use a striking phrase of Mr. Middleton Murry, his was "not so much a triumph of language as a triumph over language". Then again Hopkins had a nature that took delight in "all things counter, original, spare, strange"--as he says in one of his sonnets:

Glory be to God for dappled things  
 For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;  
 For rose-moles all in stiple upon trout that swim  
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings  
 Landscape plotted and pierced--fold fallow and plough  
 And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.  
 All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how)  
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change  
 Praise him.

But more important still in explaining the strangeness of his diction must be the fresh vision he had obtained of the "uncreated light." His knowledge of the supernatural extended very close to that of the mystics.

There are some who think that Hopkins would have been a greater poet had he dropped the new technique. Yet it is the same technique

which has caused others to place him among the first poets in the English language. There is some danger that he will become known to-day as only a great technical inventor. Lahey contends that a sort of ascetic aestheticism is necessary to appreciate his poetry. He admits that there are difficulties, but that after they have been overcome "what before seemed masses of impractical quartz may now become a jewel-case marvelously wrought, and lovely to behold, a monstrosity, as it were, for a Living Flame."

Father Hopkins took religious life quite seriously. His robust mind delighted in the Exercises of St. Ignatius, a military hand book of sanctity. From accounts given by his contemporaries in the Society there is little justification for the theory that he suffered much from isolation and loneliness. He took an active part in various community celebrations, sometimes, as we have already noted, setting his lyrics to music and playing them. He found the companionship neither monotonous nor intellectually beneath him. And why should he? Why he was living among men who might have been found among the dons of any of the Oxford or Cambridge colleges of the day. There was the rector, Monsignor Malloy who was continuing Newman's ideals of making an Irish Oxford in Dublin. Associated with him were Casey, Ormsby, Stewart and Thomas Arnold, son of Arnold of Rugby, The dean of studies Father Joseph Darlington had been his fellow undergraduate at Oxford. Dr. Delaney was President of University College and Senator of the Royal University. It was into this assemblage of choice spirits that Hopkins came as a worthy complement. Writers have depicted him an exiled Englishman slowly dying of loneliness, drudgery, and despair. Nothing could be more foreign to the sincere and candid accounts of those who lived with him.

Yet he did suffer. His were spiritual sufferings and aridity which

the mystics speak of as "the dark night of the soul." Hopkins, smiling and joyful with his friends, was at the same time on the bleak heights of spiritual night. With the fine uncompromising courage of his initial conversion he pursued his never-ending quest after spiritual conversion.

In his sonnet "The Windhover" ("the best thing I ever wrote") we catch a glimpse not only of the beauty, the fruitfulness and the effort expended in this task of mastering himself but also of the deep, divine source of his energy. It is dedicated to "Christ, Our Lord."

I caught this morning morning's minion King-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon  
in his riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:  

the hurl and gliding

Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
Stirred for a bird,--the achieve of, the mastery of the thing.  
Brute beauty and valor and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here  
Buckle! and the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion  
Times told lonelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier  
No wonder of it; sheer plod makes plough down sillion.  
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah, my dear  
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold vermillion.

Providence did not allow Father Hopkin's heroic abstention from publication and readiness to sacrifice fame to be without their reward. It is surely remarkable that poetry so hidden from the world, so fated appa-

rently to die, should be praised wherever the English language is understood. Personally he thought his spiritual life a failure, but amongst his last poems there is one in which he had a glimpse of his worth in the sight of God which he was too humble to apply to himself. In the sonnet on the saintly, obscure lay brother, Alphonsus Rodriguez, Hopkins compares the glory which is flashed off exploits all the world can acclaim with a hidden martyrdom. "But be the war within, the brand we wield unseen, the heroic breast not outward-steeled, earth hears no hurtle then from unseen fray." The last lines of the poem, were, though he knew it not, prophetic.

"God (that hews mountains and continent, earth all out;  
Who with trickling increment, veins violets and tall  
trees makes more and more) could crown career with conquest."

Hopkins' career was crowned with conquest. His last words were "I am so happy, I am so happy." His literary triumph is perhaps best summarized in the words of Mr. F. R. Leavis who has recently said that Gerard Manley Hopkins "was one of the most remarkable technical inventors, who ever wrote, and he was a major poet. He is likely to prove for our time, and the future, the only influential poet of the Victorian Age and he seems to me the greatest."

"You never attained to Him." "If to attain  
Be to abide, then that may be."

"Endless the way, followed with how much pain!"

"The way was He."

Alice Meynell

1850 - 1922.

ALICE MEYNELL

Strange, is it not, that the Catholic literature of the last hundred years has been largely the work of Converts? Yet it is true. Dean Inge announced some years ago, with the air of one who had discovered a plot, that instead of the contempt felt <sup>for</sup> from the Roman Church in England a hundred years ago, it was now the fashion for men of letters to become Romanists. We have only to conjure up the names of Alfred Noyes, Ronald Knox, Christopher Dawson and many others to realize the truth of his observation. Changed times from the day when Cardinal Newman embraced the Faith.

The intellectual position of the Catholic Church to-day is stronger than at any time since the Middle Ages, and is so because of its many distinguished writers.

Quite the most celebrated of the literary cenacles of the 1890's where the literati of the period gathered was presided over by the subject of our sketch--Alice Meynell. She was the centre around which the lights of the world of letters revolved and she was singularly fitted for this role. She was already a well-known poetess, and a master of exquisitely finished prose. She was young, beautiful, a brilliant conversationalist. She was admired and her friendship prized not only by those who belonged to the generation that was passing such as Browning, Patmore, Rossetti, Aubrey De Vere and George Meredith, but her presence was also sought by the younger spirits who were to lay the foundation of the literary temper of the twentieth century. An evening spent at the Meynell's home--Palace Court--might easily mean an introduction to Francis Thompson, Lionel Johnson, "too pale and delicate even for speech", Katherine Tynan a life-long friend of Mrs. Meynell's and the representative of the Celtic Revival, Agnes Tobin, the poetess from

America and others who were privileged to feel "at home" in the marvelous family. Thus it was that under the direction of Alice Meynell, ~~that~~ the Catholic Literary Revival first took on the form of a movement. She not only brought together all the then existing forces of the Revival but she succeeded in impressing upon them as a group several valuable characteristics which the movement has never lost.

The Circle of hers was always a double one. There was the outer ring composed of acquaintances and visitors, and then there was the inner group, those namely who were working for the return to English literature of the essential Catholic Spirit. In her vision the Catholic tradition stood not apart, but in the centre of things in intimate contact with the glories of the European past and the really valuable tendencies of the present, and engaged in the work of carrying forward the main stream of English letters. "Let us be of the centre," she used to say, "not of the province".

To appreciate the marvellous influence that this exquisitely refined, frail little woman exercised on the choicest literary spirits of the age, by her own personal sanctity--which she knew was the foundation of all real art--charming individuality and intellectual energy, we shall go back through the years and meet her when with her sister Elizabeth--"Mimi" in the family circle, and afterwards Lady Butler--she accompanied her gifted parents Mr. and Mrs. T. S. Thompson on their travels on the Continent and especially in Italy. A large portion of the future poetess' girlhood was spent in this sunny land--years always dear to her heart, and although it was not the way of the grown-up Alice to talk of her own life, the rare reminiscences of childhood were always of this time. Her magic pen evokes bright pictures of the Mediterranean under the first perceptible touch of the moon, the calm southern sea in the full blossom of summer, the early spring everywhere, the Tuscan hills,

the pier at Genoa where amid "the brown porters, the apple women, the ships,<sup>and</sup> chaos of the port," Agostino the cook awaited the return of the Thompson family.--Can't you see them stepping off the boat?--Mr. Thompson tall and stately, his beautiful wife with her robes of music, "Mimi" and her beginnings of sketches, and the ethereal little Alice. How glad they all were to be back in Italy--no smoke, no fogs but sunshine and blue skies and verdant hills and flowers everywhere--and dear old unforgettable Agostino--Agostino "who would go to town with the doll whose head was to be renewed, and who would match the type of beauty, grave and intent, without condescension". In that land of smiling summers lay the garden of her childhood facing the Blue sea across olives and oleanders on the happy Ligurian coast. Over that garden at night could be heard her mother's music. Once Elizabeth cried her heart out when she heard her mother's light soprano drowned by the strong tenor of some Italian friend in a duet. To her it seemed typical of her mother's extinction. Alice remembered the same night thought and crystallized it in the poem:--

It knows but will not tell.

Awake, alone, it counts its father's years--

How few are left--its mother's. Ah, how well

It knows of death, in tears.

If any of the three--

Parents and child--believe they have prevailed

To keep the secret of mortality,

I know that two have failed.

The third, the lonely, keeps

One secret--a child's knowledge. When they come

At night to ask wherefore the sweet one weeps

Those hidden lips are dumb.

Alice's father, Mr. T. S. Thompson, to whom she owed much of her early literary education was a man of wide culture and refinement. He was accused of a dilettante existence and must have given the impression of making a languid use of life. Alice did not think so. In a short essay called "A Remembrance", she records what <sup>her</sup> his childhood and youth had taught her of her father. How touching is her reflection that his silences seemed better worth interpreting than the speech of many another-- a man "not inarticulate, but only silent". He had an exquisite style from which to restrain. In fact the things he abstained from were all exquisite. Things ignoble never approached near enough for his refusal. The reticent graces were his in an heroic degree. Were Alice Meynell asked to equip an author she would arm and invest him with precisely the riches renounced by her father. It is not difficult to glean how deep an influence such a personality would have on one so exquisitely capable of appreciating as was his gifted daughter. If it was "his finest distinction to desire no difference, no remembrance, but loss among the innumerable forgotten", we can form some idea of the reverence with which his memory was folded away in sacred silence. Only once for a moment in after life did something escape from her habitual reserve when she was found by one of her children weeping in contrition for a day long ago when her father had wanted her company for a walk and she had refused him. Little wonder that one not even of the inner circle of her friends could write "The touch of exquisite asceticism about her seemed but to accent the sensitive sympathy of her manner, the manner of one quite humanly and simply in the world, with all its varied interests, and yet not of it. There was the charm of a beautiful abbess about her, and the added esprit of intellectual sophistication." For the best expression of her impression upon her associates we turn to the lines written of her by Francis Thompson.

Ah! let the sweet birds of the Lord  
 With earth's waters make accord.  
 Teach how the crucifix may be  
 Carven from the laurel-tree,  
 Fruit of the Hesperides.  
 Burnish take on Eden-trees,  
 The Muses' sacred grove be wet  
 With the red dew of Olivet,  
 And Sappho lay her burning brows  
 In white Cecelia's lap of snows.

Elizabeth's successful career necessitated London headquarters, so a home was established in South Kensington, and there social intercourse broadened for both girls. Catholic society had Lady Herbert of Lea for one of its hostesses and at her house Alice met Aubrey de Vere, whose advice after further meetings elsewhere she ventured to ask. Her poems in manuscript were sent to him and by 1874 he was encouraging her with words of approval drawn from Tennyson, Sir Henry Taylor and Coventry Patmore. Elizabeth's diary contains a description of Ruskin's first visit during which, we are told, Alice was quaking because of the verdict he had already passed on one of her earliest poems. "It is very pretty, and may be helpful to many". But on the occasion of this visit she must have been placated by his more attentive remarks and when her poems were published in 1875 under the name of "Preludes" it was from Ruskin that Alice received real praise. On reading the book he wrote--"The Letter from a Girl to Her Own Old Age," "San Lorenzo" and the sonnet "To a Daisy" have done me more good than I can well thank you for. Writing to her mother a little later, he expressed the opinion that the last verse of that Song

"The one who now thy faded features guesses  
 With filial fingers thy grey hair caresses,

With morning tears thy mournful twilight blesses."

the whole of the poem San Lorenzo and the end of the daisy sonnet

"O daisy mine, what will it be to look

From God's side even of such a simple thing?"

were the finest things he had met in modern verse. Because in her maturity, Alice liked in her work only what had more compact thought in it, her repudiation of the "Preludes" was so thorough that probably only "Renouncement" would have been preserved if she had had her way. That she wished to bring more mature treatment to bear on that early work and to change and improve it is evident from a masterly letter written by Francis Thompson to her imploring her to meddle as little as possible with the text of the Preludes. This first volume of verse published when its author was only twenty won high praise from Ruskin, Rosetti, Francis Thompson and Coventry Patmore.

Alice Thompson at an early age was not at all pleased with the place the Victorians had allotted to woman in the social scheme. An entry in her diary when she was seventeen reads--"Of all crying evils in this depraved earth, . . . . the greatest is the miserable selfishness of men that keeps women from work. O my Shelley; if you were alive you would help me to fulfill my golden dreams. . . . I must try to cultivate that rhyming faculty which I used to have, if it is not quite gone from me. But whatever I write will be melancholy and self-conscious, as are all women's poems." And so she writes of autumn and rain and roaring winds. This little rebellion was not a passing thing with Alice Thompson. She carried the conviction on which it was based into her later and Catholic days. Indeed it was when she was within the Church that her golden dream became a reality. She was able to call upon the Mother of God and the saints to witness the justice of her cause, as she did when one de-

signated "Strephon" insisted "that a woman must lean or she should not have her chivalry". It was then she wrote,

"The light young man who was to die  
 Stopped in his frolic by the State,  
 Aghast, beheld the world go by;  
 But Catherine crossed the dungeon gate.

commemorative of the occasion when St. Catherine of Siena comforted the young noble on the scaffold concluding with

And will the man of modern years  
 --Stern on the Vote--withhold from thee,  
 Thou prop, thou cross, erect, in tears,  
 Catherine, the service of his knee?

With her into the Church she carried her girlhood admiration for Shelley. She credited Shelley with having in some way or other brought her to Rome. "The Calvinist God Shelley rejected was not God". There was very little of the emotional about her conversion. Both her parents entered the Church and so did her sister, Elizabeth. The solemnity of the act was by no means lost on her. The Sonnet "The Young Neophyte", one of her very best lyrics shows what were her thoughts and feelings at that time.

Who knows what days I answer for to-day?  
 Giving the bud, I give the flower, I bow  
 This yet unfaded and a faded brow:  
 Bending these knees, and feeble knees I pray.

Thoughts yet unripe in me, I bend one way.  
 Give one repose to pain I know not how,  
 One check to joy that comes, I guess not how,  
 I dedicate my fields when Spring is grey.

Oh rash (I smile) to pledge my hidden wheat

I fold to-day at altars far apart  
 Hands trembling with what toils? In their retreat  
 I seal my love to be, my folded art.  
 I light the tapers at my head and feet  
 And lay the crucifix on this silent heart.

Some of the "hidden wheat" appeared in the poems "The Preludes" already referred to, after whose publication she was a recognized poet.

But Alice was not to pass her life merely inditing beautiful verse for the world to admire. She was to have her share of work, hard exterior work. In 1877 she married Wilfrid Meynell, an energetic young journalist who had reviewed her "Preludes" in the Pall Mall Gazette so understandingly that Alice asked to meet him. The first paper established by Wilfrid Meynell after his marriage was "The Pen", followed by "The Weekly Register" in 1881 at the request of Cardinal Manning and then in 1883 by "Merrie England", a journal which in the twelve years of its existence was to exercise an important influence on Catholic social and political ideas.

During eighteen years of journalism Mrs. Meynell was her overworked husband's constant helper in the weekly round of "pot-boiling". Naturally this consumed time which might have been spent in writing more poetry than she was able to write under these conditions. At all events she has given to English literature a volume of poetry of a little more than a hundred pages but each poem a masterpiece.

Her poetry, it is true, must be read with the "very marrow of the mind" but it repays the effort and shows that her mysticism is distinctly practical. Her Christ lived in the world.

Thou art the way,  
 Hadst Thou been nothing but the goal  
 I cannot say

If Thou hadst ever met my soul.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century there was among Catholics a fuller consciousness of Christ's presence in the world. Francis Thompson in his poem "The Kingdom of God" beheld Jacob's ladder pitched between heaven and Charing Cross and Christ

walking on the water

Not of Gennesareth but of Thames.

Alice Meynell busily engaged as a journalist in restoring the "Kingdom of God" was familiar with the intellectual and spiritual forces that were bringing it about. National Christianity was yielding place to the idea of the Church as a super-national body, with the Pope, as Christ's representative at its head and all Christians as members. The doctrine of the Church on the Mystical Body of Christ was beginning to be stressed and understood as it had not been for centuries. Our "Theme-Song"--"Back to the Supernatural" is heard again. At a time when outside the Church, the spirit of nationalism was on the increase, and class-consciousness because of the great differences in wealth was rife, Catholics were beginning to see that all men might be one in Christ. That Holy Communion unites us to Christ and unites us to one another finds expression in Alice Meynell's Eucharistic Poetry.

One of the crowd went up

And knelt before the Paten and the Cup

Received the Lord, returned in peace, and prayed

Close to my side; then in my heart I said;

O Christ in this man's life--

This stranger who is Thine--in all his strife

All his felicity, his good and ill.

In the assaulted stronghold of his will,

I do confess Thee here,  
 Alive within his life; I know Thee near  
 Within this lonely conscience, closed away  
 Within this brother's solitary way.

Christ in his unknown heart  
 His intellect unknown--this love, this art  
 This battle and this peace, this destiny  
 That I shall never know, look upon me!

Christ in his numbered breath,  
 Christ in his beating heart and in his death,  
 Christ in his mystery! From that secret place  
 And from that separate dwelling, give me grace.

Consider the insistence on the same idea in

"I saw the throng, so deeply separate,  
 Fed at one only board--  
 The devout people, moved, intent, elate  
 And the devoted Lord.

. . . . .

A thousand single central daisies they,  
 A thousand of the one;  
 For each, the entire monopoly of the day;  
 For each, the whole of the devoted sun.

Towards the end of the eighties Mrs. Meynell was beginning to be recognized a writer of aristocratic prose. In fact by 1889 she had shown that the art of essay writing was hers in virtue of her mastery of it. Her essays were sent as they were written to W. E. Henley, "the Viking Chief of letters." It must have been agreeable to get

from him constant appeals for articles. "If you have any more "Rhythm of Life" (Essays) I shall be proud indeed to take them, one of the best things it has so far been my privilege to print." Those Essays collected and published in book form are best described by the author's own description of James Russel Lowell--the subject of one of them, "scholarly, linguistic, with a studiousness full of heart". Her son, Everard, refers to one of these Essays, "Domus Augusta" in his notes concerning his memory of his mother in his childhood. The "narrow house" of her essay is the being whose capacity is too small for the fate of life and death, the inadequate dull person--an easy subject for the gay injustice of laughter from whom, however, such laughter may draw a look of involuntary appeal. And Alice adds in the Essay, "Far from me and from my friends be the misfortune of meeting such looks in reply to pain of our inflicting." Everard concludes that it must have been a rule his mother lived by, and one difficult of observance in the Meynell family where the children linked by a common sense of the ridiculous, found some visitors irresistibly comic. Just as fear would have seized them unanimously in the presence of a rough intruder, so would they be convulsed in suppressed laughter at an absurd one. Then later they would go over the comic scene to relish it again and would try to inveigle their mother into enjoying it too. But in vain! "Laugh, mother, laugh!" was a refrain that floated down the years from many a forgotten jest. The children were left to discover for themselves that pain is not amusing. In making its appearance "The Rhythm of Life" was accompanied by the second edition of "Poems". The two books made Alice Meynell famous in the literary world--and put her name "among the imperishable names" in English Literature. Her own mother writes to her--  
"My sweetest Alice--I am sorry to have obliged thee to write. Thou must

be heartily weary of holding the pen--but the world is not weary. She had become the first prose writer of the day. Francis Thompson writes to her "Never again meditate the suppression of your gloomy passages--it is a most false epithet for anything you ever wrote. How can you call "gloomy" what so nobly and resignedly faces the terror it evokes?" Francis Thompson's first book of Poems was inspired by her. Pacing the library floor or in Kensington Gardens this volume and Sister Songs were composed--"pencilled", Everard says, "into penny exercise books". His reiterated "It's a penny exercise book" was remembered by every member of the Meynell household set to search for the mislaid draft.

Coventry Patmore, writing to Wilfrid Meynell, said "Your wife's prose is the finest that was ever written." He advocated her appointment as laureate in 1895. The thought of their mother as Poet Laureate caused the children much excitement and called forth from Francis the announcement "We are well off for famousness, Darling". "The Wares of Autolycus" was the heading of a column published in the Pall Mall Gazette written each day by a different hand. Alice's was first the Friday and later the Wednesday hand. Distinction is perhaps the word which most truthfully describes her prose. How she managed to preserve it both in her poetry and prose is difficult to explain. For in addition to her busy work of journalism there were many other necessary duties. Not the least were her duties as the mother of eight children who "sidled" into the literary activities of their parents and accommodated themselves to these activities. Evidence upon evidence there is of how tremendously they loved their "pencilling Mamma". It was at this time too that Mrs. Meynell was presiding over the brilliant gatherings of literary London and was preserving the continuity of the Catholic Literary Revival by uniting the writers of the first and her own generation. At the

beginning of the new century Belloc, Chesterton, Joyce Kilmer, and amongst others Shane Leslie, Theodore Maynard, and Alfred Noyes came under her sway. in all of whom she inspired the same enthusiastic admiration as she had from the days of Newman. "In her lifetime," says Noyes, "she was a tower of intellectual and spiritual strength, lifting through the mists one of the very few steadfast lights.

Those who were honoured with her friendship find it difficult to imagine the future without that sustaining power. The memory is not one that can fade; and through her work, the living voice will speak.

"Ah, see the fair chivalry come, the companions of Christ!

White horsemen, who ride on white horses, the

Knights of God!

They, for their Lord and their Lover Who sacrificed

All, save the sweetness of treading, where

He first trod!

They ride where the Rivers of Paradise flash and flow

White horsemen, with Christ their Captain."

Lionel Johnson

1867 - 1920.

--Lionel Johnson--

Two opposing forces were vigorously at work in the last decade of the 19th Century--Catholicism and Paganism. In the world of letters, Catholicism was championed by Alice Meynell and her associates in the Catholic Revival; Paganism, by Walter Pater, <sup>it's</sup> itself appointed high-priest at Oxford. There is perhaps no better way to realize the intellectual ferment that was going on outside the Church than the study of the character and career of Lionel Johnson, "the most definite personality of the 'nineties." Nothing escaped his intellectual awareness. In an excerpt from a letter written by him from Winchester in 1884, when he was seventeen years old we get a cross-section of nearly all the enthusiasms, artistic, social and religious of the day, except Catholicism and the Celtic Revival. It reads:

"I want the mass of my brothers to feel that they are one in Christ or Shelley or Buddha or Hugo. . . . Words, mere words, till I find a means; hence I look around me and I see an ancient Church, professing Christ as the Head, with a certain practical government and articulated faith; with Shelley as polestar and Whitman as pilot, I accept Bishop's tithes (a hard stumbling block), 39 articles, even Lord Penzance. . . . I have one monotone to which I will intone my life "I will be a priest'. I hope to be ordained deacon in the year 1888 or '89. . . fellowship at Oxford for a few years and then to have a 'cure of souls'. I long for an unsophisticated parish by the dear sea. . . To live in seclusion, writing for my bread. . . infusing beauty and the simplicity of love, the ideals of Christ and Shelley into minds fresh from God and the dear sea. After that, twenty years of such work, I should wish to come in more contact with the masses of hereditary misery and want; to wear out the best of my life in our great

towns. What ambition . . . and, Oh, to realize it."

At Oxford he naturally came under the spell of the intellectual influences predominant there, liberal theology, agnosticism and what remained of the Oxford Movement. The Oxford Movement turned out to be the strongest influence, and he entered the Catholic Church. Whether his accession to Rome arose from the conviction that the religion proposed by Shelley, Pater and the rest was founded on a philosophy no less materialistic than that of Bentham<sup>d</sup> and Hum<sup>x</sup>ley, which he hated, or whether he saw in the religion of the Catholic Church something that satisfied his highest artistic and moral ideals, or, whether he saw at Oxford what Newman and Gerard Hopkins had seen, that it was not any religion that would save the arts and civilization but only an authentic one, is difficult to say. At any rate he entered the Church. His conversion swung him to the side of the Catholic Revival, and he wielded his pen like a rapier to kill the paganism which he believed would eventually not only destroy beauty in art and literature but also stain the souls of men. And so we find this wealthy and aristocratic young Oxford graduate who had dedicated himself to the "priesthood" of his art of writing, resolved that "in the pursuit of the best he would never count cost, never lower a pinion, never bow the knee to Baal".

There was a fearlessness about the frail little journalist with "the dark expressive eyes and the pale intellectual face" that belied his appearance. Richard Le Gallienne gives us a very definite picture of him on the occasion of their first meeting after he left the University. Three or four of Le Gallienne's friends of the Rhymers' Club had dropped into the house of Mr. G. A. Greene and were standing about discussing some knotty question of the poetic arts, when a boy of fifteen or so leaning against the fireplace suddenly struck into the con-

versation with a mature authority and an unmistakable Oxford accent, and continued to talk with an array of learning that silenced the rest. His little, almost tiny figure was so frail that it reminded one of the old Greek philosopher who was so light of weight that he filled his pockets with stones lest the wind might blow him away. It was astonishing that such profound knowledge and such intellectual force could be housed in so delicate and boyish a frame. Beneath his ascetic intensity and behind that battery of learning there was a deep and warm and very companionable humanity.

After Lionel Johnson's conversion in 1891, he practised his religion conscientiously and became very solicitous about the spiritual welfare of his associates. Of his earlier intention to become a priest he makes no mention. He did state, however, that he thought he was best fitted to be a journalist with the mission of a priest. He joined the comparatively small group who were working with Alice Meynell to temper the rampant spirit of the times, to bring back sanity, and to uphold high and lofty ideals in life and literature. To him writing was an exacting profession. It demanded a strict discipline of mind and heart, a high regard for the sanctities of life and a strict adherence to the moral code. He brought to his work a dignity, a moral earnestness, a reverence, a spirituality--characteristics that set him apart from his age.

Joyce Kilmer wrote of the times:

"And it is unquestionably true that one of the real values of the cult of peacocks and green carnations, of artificial paganism and sophisticated loneliness, is that it furnishes a splendidly contrasting background for the white genius of Lionel Johnson."

During the years that bridged his short career, he won a dis-

tinguished mark in literary criticism and poetry. Besides the many critical essays which he contributed to periodicals, he wrote three books: *The Art of Thomas Hardy* (1894), *Poems* (1895), and *Ireland with Other Poems* (1897).

That Newman had a pronounced influence on Johnson as a writer is gathered from his reference to the riches in the forty volumes of the Cardinal's writings.

"To him I turn for the truest estimate of Byron and Cicero; for the best theory of portrait painting; for the subtlest description of musical emotion. Newman was, emphatically, a man of social habit, and his books are more than Thackeray's of worldly knowledge. And all this wealth of matter and thought is conveyed in a style of singular charm, of most strange and haunting beauty."

Of Lionel Johnson it has been said that he is one of the finest religious poets in England since the 17th Century. Yet he has never received his due and his admirers come upon him quite by chance. His diction and state of mind are distinctly classical. He wrote on occasion exquisite poems in Latin and the flavour of Latinity is strong even in his English verse.

There is present in his poetry a pronounced sense of pain, of interior struggles that wrought spiritual suffering. Much of this was natural to the high-strung, sensitive soul in a body, frail and delicate, usually overworked. Absinthe gave temporary, sometimes prolonged relief, followed by periods of remorse. In "Dark Angel", his most popular poem he tells the sad story of temptation, and how he fought the enemy of his soul with the Holy Name. What made the fight more bitter was the realization that on the side of the "dark Paraclete" were his romantic forbears and not a few of his contemporaries and friends.

Like Hopkins he fought out the lost battles of Shelley, Byron and Rossetti.

“Do what thou wilt, thou shalt not so,  
 Dark Angel! triumph over me,  
 Lonely, unto the Lone, I go:  
 Divine to the Divinity.

In a triumph such as that of Johnson's not one but many artists triumphed. He brought much exquisite culture and a deep spirituality to his expression of Catholic poetry. Several of his poems should be ranked with the finest Catholic verse in the English language. Our Lady of the Snows, Our Lady of the May are beautiful poems. "Te Martyrium Candidatus" pictorially portrays the white processional of the blessed. The words are so arranged as to represent the hoof-beats of white horses carrying white riders to battle for God.

Ah, see the fair chivalry come, the companions of Christ!  
 White horsemen, who ride on white horses, the Knights of God!  
 They, for their Lord and their Lover Who sacrificed  
 All, save the sweetness of treading, where He first trod!  
 They ride where the Rivers of Paradise flash and flow,  
 White horsemen, with Christ their Captain. . . . .

"De Profundis" contains lines that remind one of Francis Thompson's poem "Little Jesus"

My broken music wanders in the night,  
 Faints and finds no delight;  
 White angels! take of it one piteous tone,  
 And mix it with your own!  
 Then, as He feels your chanting flow less clear,

He will but say: I hear  
The sorrow of My child on earth!"

"Cadgwith" is a lyric that rivals "The Dark Angel" in fame. The first movement reveals Johnson's exact observation of Nature, the third is a prayer to Mary, Star of the Sea, in behalf of poor fisher-folk, and the second, the most beautiful, is as follows:-

My windows open to the Autumn night;  
In vain I watched for sleep to visit me;  
How should sleep dull mine ears and dim my sight  
Who saw the stars and listened to the sea?  
  
Ah, how the City of Our God is fair!  
If without sea, and starless though it be,  
For joy of thy majestic beauty there  
Men shall not miss the stars, nor mourn the sea.

Johnson knew the value of words, their beauty, their colour and their power. Note his apostrophe to the sun in Gwynedd:

From dawn of day,  
We watch the trailing shadows of the waste;  
The waste moors on the ever-mourning sea.  
What, though in speedy splendor thou hast raced  
Over the heather, or wild wave, a ray  
Of travelling glory and swift bloom? Still thou  
Inhabitest the mighty morning's brow;  
And hast thy flaming and celestial way,  
Afar from our sad beauties, in thy haste.

Distant vistas, rain-drenched moors, "the crawling gray clouds", the lovely valleys brooding in silence, the bleak promontory from which the sea gulls sweep the blue with "a snowstorm of white wings"--these were the scenes that his poetic imagination fashioned into poetry.

One quality which was especially characteristic of Lionel Johnson was his loyalty. He was loyal to the Faith, once he found it; he was loyal to Winchester and Oxford and he was superbly loyal to his friends. He had the pleasant habit of dedicating his verses to these friends and was sure to give the right poems to the right people: thus, "A Descant upon the Litany of Loretto" is to Alice Meynell, "De Profundis" to Louise Imogen Guiney, "Cadywith" to Lawrence Bunyan, "Sursum Corda" to Francis Thompson, "Poems"--a collection consisting of the long poem "De Amicitia", and short selections, shows how he delighted in celebrating the beauties of friendship. Very practically he applies to the patron saints and guardian angels of his friends, beseeching them to obtain the salvation of their proteges. Sometime after Johnson's death, while Le Gallienne was browsing in a second hand book shop he found a copy of "The Religion of Literary Men" (it had been Johnson's copy of one of Le Gallienne's early works.) Paging through it he found this prayer in his behalf, written in Johnson's own peculiar handwriting: "Sancta Thomas Aquinas, per orationes tuas in ecclesiam Christi, trahe scriptorem amicum meum".

Lionel Johnson enjoys the fame of being claimed at once as a light of English Literature and also of Irish Literature, even though an admiring American critic, Louise Imogen Guiney, says that only by courtesy can he be called an Irishman." Yeats and Johnson were friends in the Rhymers' Club in London; in their friendship the patriotic Irish Protestantism of Yeats and the intellectual English Catholicism

of Johnson blended exaltedly in a literary love for Ireland. Maurice Leahy tells us that Johnson's love of Ireland and Our Lady fused into something white and burning--so burningly pure that it might have been the glowing coal which would cleanse the lips of the Prophet Isaiah. "Oh Mary, weary in the snow", writes Johnson, "remember Ireland's woe."

When Johnson threw himself into the cause of Ireland it was not to sit down by the waters of Babylon and weep amid doleful harps and lonely willows. He bade Ireland awake and arise and look to the future. A poet of a previous generation who greeted "the glory of Grattan and the genius of Moore" had bidden Ireland awake to her ancestral dignity; Shelley who visited Ireland poured out lyrical love for Robert Emmett; Ireland and Liberty continued to breathe Emmett's name. Francis Thompson hailed James Clarence Mangan as a brother in song. Johnson who was rated a scholarly critic, has written a magnificent appreciation of Mangan who translated Gaelic Literature into English with such successful results that Johnson considers "Dark Rosaleen" the greatest lyric in the English language. Johnson wrote to Dr. Douglas Hyde to extol the Gaelic tongue

"Irish--the speech that wakes the soul in withered faces  
And wakes remembrance of great things gone by"

He addressed poems to warriors like O'Leary and O'Mahoney, but to Ireland he seemed to be forever speaking:

"Ireland -----  
Still the ancient voices ring  
Faith they bring and fear repel,  
Time shall tell thy triumphing  
Victress and invincible.

On platforms in Dublin appeared Johnson, the classical scholar from Oxford, descended from a long line of British generals, to become one with the Irish people; like Cardinal Newman and Chesterton he came under the spell of Irish scenery, so he wrote like "An Exile from Erin" when he was absent from Ireland:

I turn with tears  
 Of Love and longing far away  
 To where the heathered Hill of Howth  
 Stands guardian with the Golden Spears  
 Above the blue of Dublin Bay.

Johnson dedicated a poem to Alice Milligan, brave poetic Protestant daughter of Northern Ireland who is still living. He wrote his "Christmas and Ireland" for her.

"O Joseph, sad for Mary's sake  
 Look on our earthly mother too,  
 Let not the heart of Ireland break  
 With agony the ages through:  
 For Mary's love, love also thou  
 Ireland, and save her now".

Johnson's twin themes, his unflinching loves were Ireland and the Blessed Mother. He put Ireland on a cultural throne, away from the uncouth gibe or the tiresome commonplace joke. He yearned to express his thought with the spirit of a Clarence Mangan, whose hauntingly beautiful poem already referred to, "Dark Rosaleen", revealed the soul of Ireland and "the chivalry of a nation's faith struck on a sudden into the immortality of music."

What Johnson might have written had he lived beyond his thirty-five years we can only conjecture. What cherished dreams he had, what masterpieces teemed in his mind, waiting to be expressed can never be known. What he has left us is precious heritage, keeping alive the memory of a Catholic who gloried in the Church of his adoption, and of a man of letters who realized his duty as a writer not to debase the sanctities of life but to uphold them with the power of his pen. He fulfilled his pledge--never to lower a pinion, never to bend the knee to Baal.

Had he lived longer undoubtedly he would have cast his lot with writers like Chesterton and Belloc in a determined effort to stem the tide of rationalism and paganism that has since engulfed modern literature.

To the pen of Miss Louise Imogen Guiney we are indebted for a beautiful epitaph to his memory:

"Neither vanity, ambition nor envy so much as breathed upon him, and, scholar that he was, he had none of the limitations common to scholars, for he was without fear and without prejudice."

"All which I took from thee I did but take  
Not for thy harms,  
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.  
All which thy child's mistake  
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;  
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Francis Thompson

1859 - 1907.

--Francis Thompson--

"Look for me in the nurseries of heaven."

If Alice Meynell is the central figure of the Catholic Revival in its middle phase, Francis Thompson is its greatest. He belongs to the 1890's. All of his greatest work was either accomplished in, or published during this last decade of the century. His poetic formation he owed to those most intimately connected with the Catholic literary resurgence of the time, Wilfred Meynell, first, then his wife Alice, and lastly Coventry Patmore.

Francis Thompson's parents, Dr. and Mrs. Thompson were both converts from Anglicanism--being among the early fruits of the Oxford Movement. Shortly after Francis' birth at Preston in 1859, the family moved to a suburb of Manchester where his youth was spent among the forest of smoking tunnels of England's great industrial centre. It is doubtful whether either father or mother understood their strange solitary child. At all events they destined him for the priesthood, so in 1870 he was sent to Ushaw College. Here, however, his superiors decided that he had not a vocation. He was indolent, constitutionally forgetful, a dreamer. With the best of good will, he could not succeed in getting up on time in the morning. He made resolutions, threatened himself with heavy judgments, such as are to be found written in his note books of this period. "Thou wilt not lie abed when the last trumpet blows. Thy sleep with the worms will be long enough." But what he thought was the "rising-bell" turned out not infrequently to be the dinner-bell.

He returned to Manchester, much to the disappointment of his parents, much more so to his own. His father's decision that he should be a doctor, he accepted in silence but with an inward sense of de-

feat and frustration. "A man less fitted for wielding the pestle never lived." However, he entered Owens College in 1877 and began the study of medicine. It was here that he had his first encounter with an education and an atmosphere that was not wholly Catholic. It did not please him. While he would never have been attracted to the exact side of chemistry and biology there are vast concepts in the physical sciences that might have appealed to him had they not been distorted by the materialistic cosmology of Spencer, Huxley and Darwin. Although his attendance at lectures was irregular, he did manage to pick up scraps of scientific jargon, a little precision, perhaps, and a very definite attitude towards the large claims of these preachers of the scientific evangel, that in it the world might be renewed. Especially intolerable to him was their arrogating to themselves the right of speaking dogmatically on questions outside their field. They forgot or never knew that Science was only

The eyeless worm, that boring, works the soil,

Making it capable for the crops of God.

In 1879, after two years at Owens College Francis had a serious spell of sickness during which, so it seems laudanum was administered to him. This alone, however, would not explain his continued use of the narcotic after his return to whatever little normal health was his. Shortly before this time his mother had given him a copy of De Quincey's "The Confessions of an Opium-Eater". Everard Meynell says that "without the mighty initiation of that masterly prose, the gateways into the strange and tortuous land of dreams can hardly be forced, nor half the thickets and valleys of the poet's intellectual history conquered". Not only was Francis Thompson delighted with De Quincey's

prose; he found in him a brother, another Manchester youth who had spent hours poring over books in the Manchester library and who belonged to that race of geniuses to whom the word "escape", escape from the bludgeoning of a hated environment, had a thrill unexperienced by others.

His six years at Owens College ended in his failure in his final examinations in 1884. Events then moved quickly to a crisis. His Mother was dead, his father was exceedingly annoyed at this second failure. Francis was put to work with a manufacturer of surgical instruments. Two weeks of this sufficed. Hot words passed between him and his father. He left home, sold his belongings and went to London. There he became a homeless wanderer, gaunt and pale and ragged, a copy of Blake in one pocket and of Aeschylus in the other, a hapless victim of consumption and the opium habit, earning a few pence as a news vendor, a boot-black, a sandwich man, a carriage-caller before the theatres and restaurants--even sometimes an ordinary beggar. In point of time this went on for three years but for a lifetime as far as his memory was concerned. He slept where he could, in the cheap lodging house of the homeless when he had the price and more frequently, towards the end of the period, in an archway or on the Embankment, standing or huddled against the protecting stones. He might well have called this period of his life "a season of Hell", years of suffering without support except what he got from his religion. His narcotics gave him at times a blessed numbness and forgetfulness but when the wakeful hours returned it was his faith, its prayers and its examples of heroic suffering and endurance that supported him. Among his papers, found after his death, was a poem "The Kingdom of God" which must have been written at this time.

O world invisible we view thee.  
 O world intangible we touch thee.  
 O world unknowable we know thee.  
 Inapprehensible, we clutch thee.

The angels keep their ancient places:  
 Turn but a stone and start a wing  
 'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces  
 That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)  
 Cry:- and upon thy so sore loss  
 Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder  
 Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,  
 Cry:- clinging Heaven by the hems:  
 And lo, Christ walking on the water  
 Not of Gennesareth, but Thames.

At this time a magazine entitled "Merrie England" was being edited by Wilfrid Meynell. It bore the interesting device, "We shall try to revive in our own hearts and in the hearts of others, the enthusiasm of the Christian Faith." Its author was fundamentally what he claimed to be, a revivalist concerned with the problem of spiritual restoration. In February 1888 Francis Thompson arranged on some odds and ends of paper an essay he was writing, Paganism, Old and New, two poems, Passion of Mary and Dream Tryst and sent them to Wilfrid Meynell with instructions to "send the rejection to Charing Cross Post Office." The greasy manuscripts lay on, or got pigeon-holed in the Meynell desk

and escaped observation for weeks maybe for months; then they were discovered, read, re-read and admired by both Wilfrid and Alice Meynell, and a fruitless attempt was made to reach the author through the Charing Cross Post Office. In the meantime a "flood-tide of misfortune had rolled" over poor Thompson. We are told that his utter destitution drove him to such a degree of despair that he attempted suicide. However he was saved from that and shortly afterwards a merciful Providence brought to his hands a Copy of "Merrie England" in which his poem, The Passion of Mary, was published. He saw it, wrote, and finally tiptoed into the office of the editor.

A new period began for Francis. Although a doctor's decision was that he had not long to live and that any attempt to cut down his allowance of opium would hasten his death,~~(but)~~ Wilfrid Meynell thought otherwise. He sent him first to a private Hospital and later to the Storrington Priory in Sussex. In the monastery he at length found himself, renounced narcotics and commemorated his victory by writing "Ode to the Setting Sun". His biographer tells us "it was the first conclusive sign of the splendour of his genius". It is perhaps a little too splendid for the average reader, but then Thompson was a poet's poet and except for his simplest odes--which happily are pronounced his best, and are almost Wordsworthian in their simplicity, most of his lyrics are a little too splendid for the average reader. The poem is more a hymn to the Cross than to the Sun. It was begun, his memorandum tells us "in the field of the Cross at Storrington, and under the shadow of the Cross at sunset". He had endured many deaths in the effort to free himself from the opium habit. This evening he felt that the battle had been won. The previous dyings and now the victory! The Sun sinking only to rise again was the symbol of all this.

Thompson goes beyond this natural symbolism of the sun as the life giver and life destroyer and announced that he will sing of that other Son Who came that "we might have life and have it more abundantly".

If with exultant tread  
 Thou foot the Eastern sea  
 Or like a golden bee  
 Sting the West to angry red,  
 Thou dost image, thou dost follow  
 That King-Maker of Creation,  
 Who ere Hellas hailed Apollo  
 Gave thee, angel-god, thy station;

The "After-Strain" which completes the ode, gives expression to the thought that since the poet is not to die, but is to live, he must be prepared to bear the Cross, and of this the Storrington cross which receives the red light of the setting Sun is the "presaged dole".

Even so O Cross! thine is the victory.  
 Thy roots are fast within our fairest fields,  
 Brightness may emanate in Heaven from thee  
 Here thy dread symbol only shadow yields.  
 Of reaped joys thou art the heavy sheaf  
 Which must be lifted, though the reaper groan;  
 Yea, we may cry till Heaven's great ear be deaf,  
 But we must bear thee, and must bear alone.

Bear it, he will but not without first addressing a prayer to Heaven's queen.

Therefore, O tender Lady, Queen Mary,

Thou gentleness that dost enmoss and drape  
 The Cross's rigorous austerity  
 Wipe thou the blood from wounds that needs must gape.

'Lo, though suns rise and set, but crosses stay,  
 I leave thee ever,' saith she, 'light of cheer'.  
 'Tis so; you sky still thinks upon the day,  
 And showers aerial blossoms on his bier.

In February, 1890, Thompson left Storrington where

The hills look over on the South,  
 And southward dreams the sea:

and returned to London. He spent much time with the Meynells and their children at the Palace Court House where pacing the Library floor he composed "Love in Dian's Lap" which he dedicated to Mrs. Meynell. "Sister Songs" was written in 1891--scribbled in a penny exercise. "It's a penny exercise book; it's a penny exercise book", the refrain that rang so long in Everard Meynell's ears. The "Hound of Heaven" of which more will be said later, belongs to this time.

After a four years stay with the Meynells in London he went to the Capuchin Monastery in Pantasaph Wales. Here he met Coventry Patmore for the first time, and during his two years' residence at the Monastery, it was Patmore and the monks who introduced him to the transcendental ideas behind the Church's liturgy and supplied him with the theological bases of the mystical sections of "New Poems" published in 1897.

When Francis Thompson was living and writing, an understanding few treasured the gems of poetry with which he was so generous, but of the fact that a great force was working in their midst, the general

reading public was completely unaware. Then he died and behold it was suddenly discovered that one of the greatest of English poets had passed away. Singing for some ten years to a very small audience, then almost silent for another ten and then eternal silence! To their great astonishment the English people found that a prophet had been in their midst, a prophet who had written one of the masterpieces of prophetic song--a poet who had sung

"the songs of Sion

By the streams of Babylon."

No more stalwart crusader had ever ridden for a Christian cause than did this troubadour in his "Enthusiasm for the Christian Faith". The singer was eager for the song and had at his command the imagery of the Elizabethan poets, the Catholic outlook and the magnificent ritual of the Church. His sensitive ear had caught the floating harmonies of every age of song. He is most often compared with Crashaw and Herbert, but is also of the school of Shakespeare, is in sympathy with the Lake Poets and a companion spirit of Shelley's. The writer nearest to his own time with whom he had affinity was Coventry Patmore, and a wealth of inspiration came from the verse of Alice Meynell. He has been called the Catholic Shelley and the poetic heir of Patmore. Now for both these poets, Thompson had a deep regard, but he is greater than either of them. He is the heir of Patmore in the sense that he mastered his master in range of thought and sweep of emotion and he added to a technical gift the equal of Shelley's a buoyant faith, poor Shelley never knew. He is the Catholic Shelley in the sense that he wrote the kind of poetry Shelley might have written had he been impregnated with <sup>the</sup> rich and beautiful spirit of the Catholic faith. He has all

Shelley's power of magnificence of imagery and more than Patmore's word artistry and religious spirit. The setting of the sun which moved him more deeply than all other sights of nature is the true symbol of Thompson's life and poetry. Just as the sunset gathers up in a final pageant the day's light and glory, so Thompson reveals in his unrivalled verse the undying beauties of the poetic utterances in the past.

For the large audience which has neither the scholarship nor the taste to hear the music not only of a poet's poet but a poet's teacher, Thompson will live chiefly as a religious voice. He has wrapped most of his utterance in a diction which sets it apart from the narrower range of appreciation. The language of Milton is not further removed from the ordinary speech of the day. In all but a few ballads and lyrics--"Daisy"--"Little Jesus", he adheres to his chosen vocabulary, the vocabulary of a man whose muse was nursed by a bygone literature.

Note

"--ere the frail fingers featly  
Of twilight, violet-cassocked acolyte  
His sacerdotal stoles unvest--"

He uses words archaic, words obsolete, words coined from classical mints:--

"Up vistaed hopes I sped  
And shot precipitated  
adown Titantic glooms of chasmed fears."

His jewelled verse is like some old poem in stone, a Gothic temple. It sweeps to airy pinnacles, even to "the gold gateways of the stars." There it is crowned with the exhaustless imagery as of crowded friezes and finally enclosed in the firm mastery of outline which impresses

all this otherwise inchoate symbolism into the service of a religious idea. The ode structure of his great poems is considered a sign of artistic mastery as baffling as is Shakespeare's in the Elizabethan blank verse. And yet in spite of Francis Thompson's recapture and embellishment of past excellencies his interests lay in the present and the future. He even took the trouble to state that "the spirit of such poems as 'The Making of Viola' and the 'Judgment in Heaven', is no mediaeval imitation but the natural temper of my training in a simple provincial home." Nevertheless the Gothic spirit is in his poems and perhaps the explanation is, that while he did not imitate the mediaeval artist, he was that artist, reborn in verse.

The main region of Thompson's poetry is the inexhaustible mine of Catholic philosophy. It is only natural therefore that one of the outstanding qualities of his writings should be its deep religious spirit. "To be the poet of the return to nature is something", he had said, "But I would rather be the poet of the return to God." This he becomes in the Ode, the "Hound of Heaven", unquestionably one of the greatest, if not the greatest, religious odes in the English language. Its theme is the Divine pursuit of the sinner and the long struggle before the resisting soul acknowledges its final defeat. The Everlasting Arms are around the fugitive from start to finish but the latter's human instinct of resistance and obstinate independence has kept him in an attitude of reluctance and refusal of God's great mercies. The superior realism of this conception--a soul's breathless flight from God,

"To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;  
Clung to the whistling main of every wind."--

as contrasted with "A Quest of God", a favourite theme of English poets

from Spencer to Tennyson, is apparent in the light of European man's four centuries of futile flittings from one philosophy to another, from one religion to another, from one glittering substitute for God to another--but all in vain.

"Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me."

Not only have numbers found in the poem the record of their own bootless flight from God, but they have discovered that the surrender of their soul to God meant not the loss of all things they loved, but their complete restoration:

"All which I took from thee I did but take  
 Not for thy harms,  
 But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.  
 All which thy child's mistake  
 Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;  
 Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Here surely was one of the imperishable masterpieces of prophetic song. Soon all the English speaking world was clamouring for a copy of it. Many a young poet like Walter de la Mare or Richard de Gallienne walked the streets, oblivious of everything except its haunting stanzas. Oscar Wilde, on hearing the poem read for the first time declared that it was the ode he wanted to write. Eugene O'Neill has recently used its central theme in his modern drama "Days Without End."

Another feature underlying all of Thompson's poetry is the intuition that the beauty of earth is in some way the reflection of the beauty of heaven--earth's beauty, fragile and soon to decay is the

material for the constant synthesis of birth and death. The Cross is the presage of the Resurrection.

Thou art of Him a type memorial  
 Like Him thou hang'st in dreadful pomp of blood  
 Upon thy Western Rood;  
 And His stained brow did veil like thine to night,  
 Yet lift once more Its light,  
 And risen, again departed from our ball  
 But when It set on earth arose in Heaven.

Again in the comparison drawn in the "Orient Ode" between day and the Benediction service, there is a poet's attempt to grasp with nature's help the mystery of the Incarnation.

"O Salutaris Hostia  
 Quae coeli pandis ostium,  
 Through breached ramparts, a  
 Divine assaulter, are Thou come"--

Here surely is justification for saying that Francis Thompson was the mediaeval artist reborn in verse. By means of a highly intricate coordination the builder of the Gothic Cathedral brought all nature round the table of Divine sacrifice. The mighty pillars with their commingling of arches and the leaf-like forms of their delicate galleries--a forest rendered mute and motionless for the sheltering of the Host. Flaming windows, crowded with figures reproduced all the colours of the sky and ocean illumined by the sun, as these Saints had been inspired by their Sun. Outside were marvellous groups of statuary, virgins, heroes, children and labourers, flowers and fruits

under the protecting shadows of majestic spires, themselves embellished with symbolic forms. Under all, in the midst of all was the Cross, and upon it the Corporal Presence for whose sake the edifice had been raised.

The "Sister Songs" are radiant façades driving up graceful pinnacles into the sky, but though reaching far, never quite attempting the audacity of a spire. The poet himself says:

I faint, I sicken, darkens all my sight,  
 As poised upon this unprevisioned height  
 I lift into its place  
 The upmost aery traceried pinnacle.  
 So: it is builded, the high tenement,  
 --God grant!--to mine intent:  
 Most like a palace of the Occident,  
 Upthrusting, toppling maze on maze,  
 Its mounted blaze  
 And washed by the sunset's rosy waves  
 Whose sea drinks rarer hue from  
 Those rare walls it laves.

Thompson is also brother of the mediaeval artist by reason of his use of imagery. Long ago Alice Meynell pointed out that one of the secrets of his power lay in his likening great things to small ones. For example:

"The sun which lit that garden wholly  
 Low and vibrant visible,  
 Tempered glory woke;  
 And it seemed solely  
 Like a silver thurible

Solemnly swung, slowly,  
 Fuming clouds of golden fire,  
 For a cloud of incense smoke."

Edmund Gardner, a distinguished Dante-scholar, writing of Thompson in 1898 predicted that "he would stand out in the history of modern thought as the epic poet of modern Catholicity." If so, it will be chiefly because he displays himself in the "New Poems" as the poet of the liturgy. It is not because he makes use of metaphors such as "silver thurible", "blanch-amiced clouds", "twilight violet-cassocked acolyte", and the like, borrowed from the ritual that he deserves the title of "a liturgical poet". In spite of his love of exotic imagery, he did not apply the language of the liturgy to nature because it was exotic but because it was native. He had grasped the reality behind the symbolism of the ritual, he had seen how Christ the Pontifex, the bridg-builder between heaven and earth had raised up that which was cast down, and had united things long disparate.

It was Coventry Patmore and the Capuchin Monks at Pantasaph that introduced Francis Thompson to the transcendental ideas behind the Church's liturgy. Patmore in his "Religio Poetae" had said: "I think it must be manifest to fitly qualified observers, that religion which to timid onlookers appears to be on a fair way to total extinction is actually. . . . in the initial stage of a new development, of which the note will be real apprehension whereby Christianity will acquire such a power of appeal as will cause it to appear almost like a New Dispensation. Those who in modern times are daily discovering the transcendent reality behind the liturgy do indeed find that it appears "almost like a New Dispensation". This was Thompson's experience at Pantasaph.

Of the "New Poems", the one which best expresses the new apprehension is the "Orient Ode". This, as also in the case of the "Ode to the Setting Sun" is not a song to the sun but to Christ Who in the language of the Church is frequently called the "Oriens", the one rising in the east like the sun. "As a matter of fact", says Thompson in a letter to Coventry Patmore, "it was written soon after Easter, and was suggested by passages in the liturgy of Holy Saturday."

Lo in the sanctuaried East,  
 Day, a dedicated priest  
 In all his robes pontifical exprest  
 Lifteth slowly, lifteth sweetly  
 From out its Orient tabernacle drawn  
 Yon orb'd sacrament confest  
 Which sprinkles benediction through the dawn:"

Although, at first sight, it may appear that the language of the liturgy is being used to glorify the sun, it is the reverse that is true. The chief idea developed is that of Christ's likeness to the sun in that He gives life--natural life--as Creator, but as Redeemer he gives the "incredible" supernatural life of grace by which men are made participators in the divine life.

Yet thy clear warrantry above  
 Augurs the wings of death too must  
 Occult reverberations stir of love  
 Crescent and life incredible.

This new life affects not man alone but the whole of nature. Ever since sin entered into the terrestrial order, Thompson says that the

world has been "leashed with terror, leashed with longing" for the advent of Him Who would restore all things "to a perfect state". Christ in making bread and wine to participate in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood has raised inanimate nature to a new plane.

To thine own shape  
 Thou round'st the chrysolite of the grape  
 Bind'st Thy gold lightning in his veins:  
 Thou storest the white garnerers of the rains.  
 Destroyer and preserver, thou  
 Who medicinest sickness, and to health  
 Art the unthanked marrow of its wealth:  
 . . . . .  
 Thou for the life of all that life  
 The victim daily born and sacrificed:  
 To whom the pinion of this longing verse  
 Beats but with fire which first thyself didst give  
 To thee, O Sun--or is't perchance to Christ?

It is, of course, to Christ, that Thompson had attempted to give poetic expression of his vision of a universe elevated to incredible heights of perfection. He was not entirely satisfied with his effort. He was afraid it lay open to unorthodox interpretations, not because of its mystical note, but because it was too scientific. "The Orient Ode on its scientific side," he said, "must wait at least fifty years for understanding."

The science he spoke of was the science he confidently envisioned for the future, when cataclysmic world events such as the world is witnessing to-day, would blast away the last shreds of the materialistic scientisme of his day, and men should find a new cosmology hidden

away in the bosom of the Church.

O Lily of the King! low lies thy silver wing  
 And long has been the hour of thine unqueening; sighs  
 And thy scent of Paradise on the night-wind spills it  
 Nor any take the secret of its meaning

O Lily of the King! I speak a heavy thing

O patience, most sorrowful of daughters?

Lo, the hour is at hand for the troubling of the land  
 And red shall be the breaking of the waters.

O Lily of the King! I shall not see, that sing

I shall not see the hour of thy queening!

But my song shall see, and wake like a flower

that dawnwinds shake

and sigh with joy the odours of its meaning.

O Lily of the King! remember then the thing

That this dead mouth sang: and thy daughters,

As they dance before His way, sing there on the Day

What I sang when the Night was on the waters!

It is still too soon to be certain that Francis Thompson's poetry will "un-edge the scythe of time, and last with stateliest rhyme", but his heart-cry to the Queen of Heaven, so poignant and so simple "Remember me, poor thief of song", ought to call forth remembrance from all who call themselves the children of this great Queen. Most truly can it be said that he essayed to bring a modern unbelieving world back to the Faith--back to the Supernatural.

For richness of imagination, for metrical skill and sublimity of

thought, he is surpassed only by the great master poets, and even among them we may venture to say that few have known as he did "to teach how the Crucifix may be carven from the laurel tree".

Francis Thompson's poetry sprang from his love and contemplation of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Cross and Passion; from his devotion to his beloved Queen of Heaven, and from his filial affection for Holy Church--the Lily of the King. Catholicism which built the lofty Cathedrals of Mediaeval Europe, which guided the chisel of Angelo, which gave sweep to the stroke of Raphael, "which animated the prophetic soul of Dante was the sacred fire which burned in the heart of Francis Thompson, and, at the very close of an age of unbelief and doubt and materialism touched English poetry with aspiring flame".