

"THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY"

Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Dedicated to Our Lady, Queen of Peace.

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of the Sisters of Charity of St. Louis
Medicine Hat, Alberta.

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THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

Chapter 1. Introduction

It would be impossible to express in any language the sentiments which Christians cherish towards the Mother of Christ who in the last hour of redemption became our Mother also. Being her children with Jesus Christ, they share in the sentiments of Christ; they love what He loved; consequently, they love Mary.

Now, love can not keep silence; it must speak, it must sing, it must pour itself out-it must give vent to its emotions, its ardors and its gratitude. And so the Christian world has always paid its homage of filial reverence and admiration to the Virgin whose heart furnished the blood by which they were redeemed

Wheresoever the sun of the Gospel has diffused its heat and its light, the sweet name of Mary shines forth beside the name of Jesus; and there is no name that has excited more enthusiasm, more sympathy, more love. Innumerable monuments serve as her crown; and solemnities, panegyrics and religious pomp proclaim her glories. The arts have exhausted their magnificence in striving to express the love and admiration of the children of Holy Church for the Virgin-Mother. Truly did the Virgin foretell her destiny when she announced that she was to be the object of the blessings of all ages, exclaiming in a divine ecstasy: "Behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed!"

And from the beginning of the Christian era poets and writers have vied to sing the praises of the simple, humble Virgin who was raised to the wonderful motherhood of God. They have exalted her as Virgin, as Mother, queen of heaven, Mother of sorrows, refuge of sinners, Lady of the Rosary, seat of wisdom, the Immaculate,

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the merciful one, the most pure. Throughout the ever-fleeting years a call to the highest spiritual hope and love has echoed in the souls of men through the poetry dedicated to the Madonna; the pathway of a troubled world has been illumined, and the souls of men strengthened. Under the uplifting influence of Marian poetry human life has been given a sweeter savor, a softer grace, a warmer atmosphere.

Poets call Mary the ideal woman, and describe her both in the order of grace and in the order of nature as the supreme exemplar of womanhood, the highest, and in her own sphere, the only type of maidenhood, of motherhood, of queenship. They describe her lost in prayer, kneeling in the little cottage of Nazareth, receiving the angelic salutation, the "Ave" which brings freedom from sin, and, like a star from heaven lights up the world after four thousand years of darkness; the "Ave", the consoling cry from heaven the cry of pardon and of reconciliation: they tell us how this softly-murmured "Ave" spoken by the angel has now become solemnly intoned throughout the whole world; and truly do they say with Paul Signeri "With the salutation to Mary salvation has begun. Likewise the angelic salutation even now brings freedom from sin; therefore, it can be called the prayer of sinners for whom it is a saving anchor".

Over and over again our poets bless in song and verse the Holy Name of Mary-Mary, who by her words of humble obedience, of heroic faith, of pitying love for men, consented to the sovereign will of God that chose her to be our Mother; though she knew the dreadful martyrdom it meant, still with the humility that drew the

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Lord of life from heaven and the courage that bared her heart to the seven sharp spears of unutterable woe, she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to Thy word".

To some, her humble duties of Nazareth are a source of inspiration: they see her with pure hands busy o'er household duties; they see her again resting after her humble household labors, or returning with a full pitcher from the well, or walking among the flowers of the fields intent on nature's beauties, that are to her a reflection of the Divine Beauty.

Mary's visit to Saint Elizabeth affords matter for delightful poetry—her lonely journey over the mountains of Judea, protected by a host of angels; Elizabeth meeting Mary on the threshold of her home, opening her arms to her and then sinking on her knees to welcome and adore the incarnate Word. "Then the song the unfathomable Magnificat, out of whose depths music has gone on streaming upon the enchanted earth ever since".

(Bethlehem-Faber, page 84)

Then we hear an uninterrupted chorus of rejoicing over the happy, young mother bending low over her Babe gazing with tender eyes and heavenly smile into His divine face while Bethlehem lies steeped in silence except for the angel choirs above. What poet has not felt his soul enraptured at the thought of the beautiful and spotless mother, sweet and mild, clasping to her breast the treasure she cherishes with ecstatic joy. Truly do poets hail her as the "radiant star of morn", the fairest lily, peerless Sharon's rose, the queen of Beauty, Full of grace etc. as absorbed in prayer she kneels by her Son, the

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thought of Him her only care; as her virgin soul thrills with heavenly bliss when the sweet Infant's kiss she first receives.

Neither do the inspired bards fail to praise Mary in her presentation of Christ in the Temple, when according to the Mosaic Law the forty days being over, the child should be presented in the Temple. As in a vision we see Mary accompanied by her Spouse walking towards the door of Nicanor, at the entrance of the priests' courts, facing the altar of oblations. With what holy joy and noble pride she offers her Child as the one true sacrifice. Without the Temple gates, sweet birds are chanting their lyrics to the dawn and doves are cooing softly to their mates, whilst enshrining the Holy Child in her arms, the Mother breathes a prayer of thanksgiving. But suddenly, a chill wind sweeps as if from the hills afar; the breath of doves and songs of birds are stilled; and in the hushed silence, a voice is heard: " behold this Child is set forth for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed" (Luke, 11, 34-35) and Simeon gives back the Babe into the Mother's arms. She returns home with a grief-laden heart, and the bard exclaims:

"Answer me, Mother, pray why dost thou weep?

Is not thy Jesus safe cradled in sleep?

Lo, how unruffled that sweet little brow

Tell me not, sorrow doth linger now!

.....

O, but the horrors of Golgotha's height

Haunted thy vision like spectre of night"

(The Eikon-February. 1927)

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Suddenly, the vision disappears and a new one is presented to us-it is again a vision of sorrow-"Take the Child and His Mother".has ordered the angel,"and fly into Egypt"(St.Mat.11,13) Herod is striking in hate at the life of the Holy Child. But,at any cost that life must be guarded. And across the desert wastes two figures are flying while invisible satellites hunt the Creator far and wide,and in the distance are heard the disconsolate cries of Rachel weeping over her children. The Virgin clasps her Son closer to her bosom; the grievous wail of terror has set the sensitive chords of her own heart vibrating with dreadful agony. On and on they walk "over the stretch of burning sand" amid the silence of the night." past the Sphinx,this glorious monument of ancient architecture. Were it endowed with life,it could truly make its own the words of Agnes Repplier in "Le Repos en Egypte":

"A halo mild

Shone from the liquid moon. Beneath her beam
 Traveled a tired young Mother and the Child.
 Within mine arms she slumbered,and alone
 I watched the Infant. At my feet her guide
 Lay stretched o'er-wearied. On my breast of stone
 Rested the Crucified".

Again the scene changes,and another bard,the Holy Pontiff, Pope Leo XIII describes for us the return from Egypt. This time, he says, "An angel leads the pilgrim band" from Egypt back to the quiet sequestered Nazareth. Away from the pagan world they breathe more freely. They settle down at Nazareth and Jesus learns His Father's trade".

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"And the Child grew in wisdom's ken
And years and grace with God and men."

Mary assumes again her humble duties. She cares for her home, for Joseph, for her Child, spreading on all who approach her, joy and happiness. There, Mary,

"You lived your endless life of love,
Your tranquil soul, your peace, O spotless dove".

Truly can the poet envisioning the sights of Nazareth cry out:

"Sweet one, you are the soul
Of every bit of beauty
The undivided whole
Of joy, and love and duty".

(Foley-Ave Maria May, 1937)

J.C. Miller in a poem entitled "Her Son That Was Lost" reveals to us the anguish of the Mother, when for three long days she was separated from her loved one. It was not so much, he says, that she missed His eager feet, His presence, but that His thoughts seemed drifting afar. She felt the keen bereavement of His obedient look of love. After three days of anguish and sorrow she found Him, and although she chided Him, she knew well that now their ways must part. Fully did Mary realize how He loved her with a love unsurpassed. His absence, she knew, but foreshadowed what must be when they should take Him from her at last, and,

"Growing troubled and dismayed,
She bowed her patient head and prayed.

Then there is the vision of the solitary days spent at Nazareth when, for years, Mary's chief occupation was prayer and

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meditation-meditation on the miracles of joy with which her youth had been filled;-prayer for strength to bear the unrivalled sorrows that awaited her. Humbled and resigned she conversed with her Son of the salvation of men, and the price that should be paid for it. But there came a day when swift shadows fell, and Mary could say:

"I heard the people talk and laugh,
I heard their footsteps sound;
I heard each whisper, saw each glance
But Christ was not around"

(Poem to Mary-F.R.Russel, Ave Maria-May 1939)

Oh yes,

"..Dolorosa's eyes are pools of sorrow;
The tragedy of life is on her lips,
Her arms remember the small, yielding body
The misty hair, beneath her finger tips"

(The Mother of Sorrows-E.H.Towner
Ave Maria September 1936)

And the vision continues, as described so pathetically in

"His Mother" by Thomas E.Burke, C.S.C.

I watched her as Christ neared the place,
The turning of the street:
Her purple lips, her ashen face,
Spoke anguish bitter-sweet.

She seemed to sense the cruel sword,
The minutes hung as years;
Then down her pallid cheeks there poured
The torrent of her tears.

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If she were young I could not tell
Nor if her brow were fair;
I only know the tears that fell
Flashed hope and not despair.

And if she were to come again
In other human guise,
I think that I should know the pain
Of slain love in her eyes.

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Chapter 2 Early Times to 1066

When writing on Marian poetry one can hardly refrain from a reference to Virgil's celebrated fourth eclogue where the Mantuan bard dwells on those elements upon which Redemption rests. What the source of his sentiments and ideas was we know not, but the thought expressed is that of the Prophets. Thus writes Virgil:

"Now hath arrived
The latest period of Cumaean song;
The order of the ages 'gins anew;
Returned is the Virgin, and the reign
Of Saturn is restored."

Then he states how a new and nobler race is sent from heaven and proceeds thus:

"Do thou, O chaste Lucina, favors show
Unto the infant Boy-through whom the age
The iron age shall end, the golden age
Rise glorious throughout the awakened world".

and Virgil treats of the destruction of our innocence, the necessity of a heavenly liberator, and the return of the reign of peace and justice. Whatever critics may say in regard to the immediate occasion of this Eclogue, could we not see in it a reference to Mary whose beauty and glory was felt even in pagan ages? We have in proof of this assumption the testimony of A. Studency C.S.B. who writes in the Ave Maria, 1936 "The tradition of the promised Woman passes also to the heathen nations. Sibyl sees the aureated Woman with a Child in her arms, sitting above an altar in the clouds which carries the legend

"Ara Coeli-Altar of Heaven"

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Pointing to the vision, the seeress says to Augustus: "Bow down, Caesar: that Child is greater than thou."

The First Angelus The prelude of the New Testament now attracts our attention the first "Angelus". Before our eyes, the vision of an obscure dwelling of humble poverty in a small rustic village whose days of historic beauty had passed away. The Lord has chosen this inglorious Nazareth for His great mystery. The world is steeped in blissful calm, the calm of falling night. While all Judea, unsuspecting of the mystery about to take place, rests from its labors under the starry sky, a beautiful maiden kneels alone immersed in prayer:

"O Lord wilt Thou my prayer deny?
Wilt Thou not deign to hear?
Wilt Thou despise Thy people's cry
In bondage now and fear?
.....
O send Him down from heaven's height!
O speed Him on His way!
O let Him bless thy handmaid's sight!
Grant this my God I pray!"

(The Virgin of Nazareth, by J. J. Rauscher, P. M.)

The Virgin's cries have pierced the vaults of heaven; Gabriel is sent as the messenger of the Most High. For an instant, he stands in awe before the maiden; she is so ravishingly fair, so bright, so beautiful; more chaste than the morning dew, her lips still move in prayer!

"Ave Maria, gratia plena: Dominus tecum!" whispers the

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angel and delivers his message.....then stands back in trembling reverence. Suddenly the angelic choirs above are hushed; the heavenly hosts lean attentively towards the earth, all creation seems to come to a standstill while the Trinity awaits the opening of her lips whose "Fiat" will bring peace and salvation to a sinful world. It was an awful moment! Will Mary refuse? It is in her power to do so. Still her lips move in prayer.....

But,listen,as a gentle zephyr comes the answer,"Ecce Ancilla Domini: Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum."

"In that moment a God-like shadow fell upon Mary,and Gabriel disappeared; far off a storm of Jubilee swept far-flashing through the angelic world. But the mother feared not,heeded not. Her head sank upon her bosom and her soul lay down in silence." (Bethlehem,Faber,page 69) and adoration,for beneath her heart slept the Eternal Word.

"Et verbum caro factum est..

Et habitavit in nobis."

It was the first Angelus,and centuries later.Oscar Wilde will write: "Was this His coming! I had hoped to see:

A scene of wondrous glory,as was told
Of some great God who in a rain of gold
Broke open bars and fell on Darae:

.....

And now with wondering eyes and heart I stand
Before this supreme mystery of Love;
Some kneeling girl with passionless face,
An angel with a lily in his hand,

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And over both 'the white wings of a Dove",

(Ave Maria Gratia Plena, by C. Wilde)

so unfathomable are God's ways.

The next poem which any Catholic Anthology mentions is the Magnificat or Hymn of the Blessed Virgin, the crown of the Magnificat Old Testament, singing the last canticle of the Old and the first of the New Testament. It was the answer of the Virgin to Saint Elizabeth when she first perceived the sublimity of the honor of Mary's motherhood: and blessed her for her ready acceptance of the Archangel's astonishing annunciation "Blessed art thou among women!" cries Elizabeth, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" and Mary, though she calls herself a lowly handmaid of the Lord, is conscious of the glory of her election, and in the exaltation of her soul intones the glad Magnificat "My soul doth magnify the Lord...for He that is mighty hath done great things to me". Steeped in Scriptural thought and phraseology, indicating the fulfilment of the olden prophecy and prophesying anew until the end of time, the Magnificat is an ecstasy of praise for the inestimable favour bestowed by God upon the Virgin, for the mercies shown to Israel.

Such is the greatness of the Magnificat that while the canticles taken by the Roman breviary from the Old Testament are sung only once a week, the Magnificat enjoys the honor of daily recitation. In the choir of Solemn Vespers the ceremonies attending its singing are notably impressive...Almost every church composer has worked often and zealously on this theme. Palestrina published two settings in each of the eight modes of plain song. In the Royal Library at Munich there are preserved fifty settings by Orlando de

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Lasso. The great composer, Caesar Franck, when dying, turned to the priest who for twenty years had been his friend and said to him with a smile on his worn face, "Ah, the Magnificat, how I love it! What a number of versicles I have improvised to those beautiful words. I have written down sixty-three of them but I do want to get up to one-hundred. I shall go on with them as soon as I get better or else." he added in a lower tone, "perhaps God will let me finish them, in His eternity to come."

Now treating of the period which in English Literature constitutes the Anglo-Saxon period and extends to 1066, we first come across a poem translated from the Syriac and written in Ephrem's that language by Saint Ephrem. (306-373). It is called "The Christmas Hymn," a beautiful tribute to Mary. The author, after stating that his poor lips are all too worthless to sing Mary's brightness, proceeds to describe her role in the mystery of Christmas. While Christ becomes our victim to reconcile us with the Father, Mary becomes as the heavens, where God abides for He deigns to make His abode in her.

"In her womb the robe He weaveth
Clad in which He comes to save us.
See her Son, the Virgin beareth!
Lo, she gives her milk to feed Him,
Food to Him who feedeth all things:"

She is still a maid and a mother. When Mary sings to her "Be in her humility:

"Whence this gift to one so lowly
That I should conceive and bear Him-

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One so little, one so mighty

All in me, who dwells in all things!

Then she relates how Gabriel sought her, freed her, made her the mother of manhood. The poem closes with the mother feeding her child, and wondering how it is that she should feed Him who feeds all things from His table.

The A poem entitled "The Holy Innocents", by A.C. Prudentius
 Holy (348-414), after hailing the holy innocents as tender martyr-
 innocents flowers, makes a mention of the Virgin-Mother:

by "To Thee, O Jesus, glory meet
 Prudentius Who came to us a Virgin's Son"

From the Evidently the Christians of old were overcome by the
 that beauty of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Saint Anatolius in
 a Greek poem, "Great and Mighty Wonder", treats also of the wonder
 of the Virgin bearing the infant "with virgin-honor pure".

Proceeding with a study of Marian poetry in our own
 the Literature we now search the Anglo-Saxon period for any trace of
 Anglo- it. Our ancestors were heathen for some time after they came
 Saxon to England. The man who gave the first decided impulse to the
 period transformation of Anglo-Saxon poetry was Pope Gregory the Great,
 who, in 596 sent Saint Augustine to christianize the Saxons. The
 Britain religious element predominates in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Christianity
 received a warm welcome in England and inspired the great
 Northumbrian poets, Caedmon and Cynewulf. The former, the first
 native maker of English verse, and the latter the best Anglo-
 Saxon poet to represent the essence and spirit of Christianity.

It is probable that Cynewulf was the author of "The

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The Dream of the Rood"(eighth century). Cynewulf has a dream in which he sees the miraculous tree of the Cross by turns shining with jewels and bathed in blood. It speaks to him and relates to him its life from the day when it was struck down on the verge of the forest to that on which "the young Hero" brave and strong was lifted on to it, and it trembled as it received the kiss of God in man. The Virgin is mentioned in the poem as the one whom God has honoured as His Mother, "Blessed among women, before all men honoured."

The conversion of Ireland to Christianity gave men new ideals not only in religion but also in Literature. The first figure that stands out in the dawn of Christian literature is that of Saint Patrick who wrote a number of poems, among them "The Cry of the Deer," but which makes no mention of the Virgin. However, numerous hymns and poems were composed in her honor and in supplication to her by the early Christian Gaels. Men of the world as well as men of God, turned to her as their Mother and mediator as Our Blessed Lord meant they should when he said to the Beloved Apostle at the foot of the cross, "Son, Behold thy Mother." Poets and scribes vied with one another in the splendour of the titles they gave her. By the middle of the eighth century the Gaels had their own "Litany to Our Lady" wherein they salute her with at least sixty different titles which summarize the glories of Mary. She is honoured then under the title of Queen of Angels, and Mistress of the Heavens; woman full and replete with the grace of the Holy Ghost, Mother of the heavenly and the earthly Church; Mother of love and indulgence; honor of the sky; sign of Tranquility;

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Gate of Heaven; Golden Casket; Cleansing of the Sins; Purifying of Souls; Mother of Orphans; Breast of the Infants; regeneration of life; Beauty of Women; Leader of the Virgins; Mother of God; Perpetual Virgin; etc.

When we recall that many of these devotees were pagan warriors who had just renounced their heathen gods, we can not help but admire their staunch faith and humble attitude to one they had just learned to call by the sweet name of Mother.

Most of the poems and hymns of the Gaels have been lost to the world for centuries, but those that have been rescued from oblivion certainly testify to the genuineness of the devotion to Our Lady and there is much poetic beauty in them. However, as most of those compositions have been handed down by word of mouth it is not easy to conjecture when they were composed. We know for certain that two more hymns belong to the period now under discussion. "The Communion Hymn of the Ancient Irish Church" and "The Irish Hymn to Mary" written in the ninth century. In the former we hear a request that the sweet name of Jesus be lovingly groven

"On my heart's inmost haven."

Then the prayer continues,

"O Mary, sweet Mother
Be Jesus my brother,
And I Jesus' lover."

rish

ymn

p Mary

The "Irish Hymn to Mary" is a song of praise and rejoicing, repeating Mary's never-dying fame. She is hailed as "Judah's everglorious daughter who restored to weak and fallen

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manhood all its ancient worth, who received from Gabriel the message that should set free the poor and miserable sinner.

"Of all virgins pure, the Purest-ever stairless ever bright
Still from grace to grace advancing, fairest Daughter of
the Light.

Who shall find a title for one who has remained a virgin while she bore a child? The world which was betrayed and lost through the disobedience of a woman was also set free by a woman.

Not more spontaneously, not more naturally or simply nor more confidently does a child turn to its Mother than did the Gaels to Mary in distress and trouble, in temptation and in all trials of body and soul. Truly Mary was beloved of the Gael from the earliest dawn of Christianity. Wherever Our Lord is invoked, a prayer to Mary follows, as illustrated by the following poem, a translation by Eleanor Hull.

May the will of God be done by us,
May the death of the Saints be won by us,
And the light of the Kingdom begun in us;
May Jesus, the Child, be beside my bed,
May the Lamb of Mercy uplift my head,
May the Virgin her heavenly brightness shed,
And Michael be steward of my soul!

(Dreams and Images -Kilmer, p.290)

and by this other,

"O Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us;
O Glorious Virgin, pray thou also for us;
O Mother of God, O Bright Star of knowledge,

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O Queen of Paradise, watch thou and ward us;
 The light of glory obtain from Thy Child for us;
 A sight of thy house, by thy great power's might for us
 The Light of all lights, and a sight of the Trinity
 And the grace of long patience in times of adversity."

(Idem. page 290)

The last verse of a simple and beautiful hymn, called

"The "White Pater Noster" may also be appropriately quoted here;

ie White
 ater
 oster.

"O Men of the world, who are shedding tears,
 I put Mary and her Son between you and your fears,
 Brigit with her mantle,
 Michael with his shield;
 And the two long white hands of God from behind
 folding us all.
 Between you and each grief
 All the years,
 From this night till a year from to-night
 And this night itself with God."

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Chapter 3 Period Extending from 1066-1350

Now we enter the period known in our literature as the Norman Period extending from the Norman Conquest of England, 1066 to about the middle of the fourteenth century. "A hundred years of silence followed the Norman Conquest, and when a few writings appeared at the end of the twelfth century, they were mainly works of piety, homilies, sermons in prose and verse, translations of psalms, prayers—these fill pages which form the mass of what may be called English literature until about the middle of the fourteenth century. The ascetism of clisters, the growing tenderness which mingled with the devotion to the Virgin Mary were reflected in turn in these English works."

(Legouis and Cazamian, pp. 77, 78)

"The Normans did more than any other people to propagate the cult of the Virgin and to introduce the feast of the Immaculate Conception which was forbidden by the Church".

(Legouis and Cazamian, p. 66)

The clergy of the time realized the need more and more of instructing the unlearned people in the duties and doctrines of religion. Human nature being what it is, they thought it expedient to sugar the pill of didacticism and among these sugared pills may be found the Cursor Mundi, a poem of nearly thirty thousand lines containing a sort of summary of universal history. It is written chiefly in rhyming octo-syllabic couplets. Nowadays, he says, a man is not considered in the fashion unless he loves "paramours". The poet will undertake to write a work in

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honour of her whose love is sweeter than "honey from the hive,"
viz. Our Lady:

"Lady she is of ladies all
Mild and meek without gall."

She is ever true, loyal and constant; and he advises skilful
rhymers to construct verses in her honour.

"Therefore, bless I that paramour (i.e. Our Lady)
That in my need does me soccour
That saves me on earth from sin
And heaven bliss me helps to win.

(Cursor Mundi-Catholic Encyclopedia)

Mother and Mayden never-the-less
Therefore of her took Jesu flesh".

The author goes on to say that his book is written in honour
of Mary, and arranges his work in seven main divisions among
which he discusses the birth of Christ, the parentage of the Virgin
Mary and the story of her life. He concludes by describing the
Agony of Mary at the foot of the Cross and glorifies her immaculate
conception. During this period, through the Legends of the Saints,
ascetic ideas were being preached and practised, the exaltation of
Divine Love in contrast to worldly love, the cult of the Virgin
Mary, caused the ideal of Virgin purity to be held in high esteem.

all This theme is discussed in somewhat coarse fashion in an alliterative
Miden- homily on the text "Audi filia et vide inclina aurem tuam" known
ad as Hali Maidenhad (Holy Maidenhood).

Legend The "Legend of the Assumption of the Virgin" belongs to
the this period. It is written in rhyming pairs and in the southern

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the dialect. The well-known Vernon Manuscript at Oxford contains
 the Assumption eight or nine legends of the Virgin that came to the West
 Midland dialect from French sources.

Brunne's Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne"(1303) shows to
 Handlyng what extent the cult of the Virgin had advanced at this time
 Synne" when he states that "swearing by the Virgin is worse than swear-
 ing by Christ".

Gabriel The ill-fated Abelard(1079-1142) has left the world
 of the a poem written in Latin and entitled "The Gabriel of the
 Annuncia- Annunciation". Gabriel faces the gentle little maiden wrapt
 tion by in contemplation no doubt of the wondrous attributes of God.
 Abelard Clad in the simple, flowing garments of the East, she looks like
 a child absorbed entirely in God, and Gabriel dare not announce
 the marvellous message. He has to be urged, to be prompted:

"On with the message" urges the seer:

Say Ave! But Gabriel remains silent: More pressing
 becomes the request: Say, "All Hail; Has the Archangel forgotten
 his message? Should he be filled with fear in the presence of
 a mere child, he who once defeated the rebellious angels?—Say
 "The Lord is with thee". But lest you should not avail say too
 the word: Fear not". At last Gabriel is vanquished by her
 humility and loveliness and promises that she will keep her vow
 without a stain or spot. She hears, she believes, she conceives
 Him, Jesus the Counsellor who shall restore peace to the earth
 again by His sacrifice. She becomes the Mother of Him who shall
 blot out our sins and repatriate us into our fatherland over the
 starry skies.

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Assumption Saint Nerses, surnamed the Gracious, honors the Assumption
by Saint of Mary. After calling the Virgin-

Nerses "Unsullied temple, heavenly light enshrining, God's Mother
true, and still a stainless Maiden", he recalls how the prophets of
old prefigured and foretold the Virgin:

"The Tree of Life in fair garden planted" evidently a
reference to God's promise to Adam and Eve as they sadly leave
the Garden of Eden to go into the land of exile and regrets "I
shall put enmities between thee and the woman; she shall crush
thy head". Another reference is to Isaias who saw the Vision
of the Woman and her Child, and gave it to the faithful Achab as
a sign from Heaven: "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a
Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel."

She is hailed by Saint Nerses as Gideon's fleece con-
taining the gentle dew, the lightsome cloud, the book made fast
with sealing. "Ezechiel saw the portal barred and bolted; Daniel,
the mount whence the great stone was taken."

Hymn by About 1140, Bernard of Morlas wrote a poem to urge the
Bernard faithful to a greater love for and confidence in their Holy
of Mother and to beg for her intercession. He asks them to pay a
Morlas daily tribute of praise to Mary, to hail her as Mother and Virgin,
to seek her protection when in danger of sin. Divine grace, he
says, comes to us through Mary. It was Mary's faith and obedience
that opened the portals of Heaven and drew Christ down to earth.
It was through the sin of Eve that a stern sentence had been
pronounced on man; but Mary through her holiness and humility will
lead back to God the children of men.

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Death-Bed The "Death-Bed Hymn of Saint Anthony of Padua" written
 written by at the beginning of the thirteenth century testifies, once again
 in. to the enduring love of Christians for their Mother; they have
 Anthony enthroned Mary in their affections and learned to speak of her
 Padua as the Second Eve in accents of highest love. This time a new
 title is given to Mary "Lady of the Light" whose powerful rays
 eclipse all other stars; her heavenly window lights the way for
 the lost pilgrims of the world. We find in this poem again the
 idea oft-repeated before that Mary atones for the sin of dis-
 obedience of the first woman.

Lux "Lux Advenit Veneranda" by Adam de St. Victor, one of the
 Advenit greatest mystical poets of his time next enlists our attention.
 Veneranda" He attributes to Mary the power to destroy sin and to replace
 Adam it by joy-she is the Empress of the host supernal, victress over
 Saint the foes of hell. Her beauty is resplendent, sweeter than the
 Victor honeycomb, redder than the rose; whiter than the snow, brighter than
 the moon. The poet begs her to interpose for sinners who have
 wandered away from the right path. She, as the Mother of Mercy,
 will not spurn the sinner; her motherly heart feels the anguish
 of his guilty heart and she will bring him before the throne of
 her Son to obtain his pardon.

Stabat Mater's The thirteenth century also claims as its own the
 Stabat Mater's two companion hymns, one of which the "Dolorosa"
 is of liturgical use while the other is not. Both hymns celebrate
 the emotions of Mary at the Cross and at the Manger. Their
 authorship has been much disputed but they are generally attributed
 to Jacopone da Todi (1228-1306).

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he The "Speciosa" contains thirteen double stanzas of six "Speciosa" lines and describes Mary standing by the manger of her new-born Babe, swathed in poor bands lying at rest on His bed of straw between the ox and the ass. The Mother stands! She is ready to take up her Babe into her arms; now she bends lovingly over Him, speechless in her holy rapture; now she fondles her immortal Son. In His eyes there shines a smile for you, sweet Mother, for the heart you have formed is yours. But for a moment the eyes of the Mother become anguished and sad; through the sins of men, His creatures, she beholds the Christ-Child's features. Virgin of all virgins fairest, let me enfold your Babe; let me share in your holy emotions; let your Son heal me and His love shield me that my soul may enjoy Him all eternity.

The Speciosa was published in 1495 but soon fell into oblivion until it was revived in the nineteenth century by Ozanam when he was writing his "Poetes Franciscains in Italie au Treizieme Siecle". He soon gave up the attempt to write it in verse, but presented it to the world in simple prose. Doctor J.M. Neale, the Anglican hymnologist, introduced the "Speciosa" to the English-speaking world in 1866.

he The "Dolorosa" contains ten stanzas of six lines each "Dolorosa" and depicts the anguish of the Mother of Sorrows at the foot of the Cross where her Jesus hangs in agony. She sees those hands and feet so tender, rent with the cruel nails; those hands so often raised to bless, to heal and to forgive, how thy now painfully clutch the nails of the cross while blood streams from

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the wounds-those feet that have carried Him on errands of mercy all over Palestine are now pinned to the Tree of scorn. Truly can the Queen of Martyrs standing near her Son expiring on the Cross apply to herself the words of Jeremias: "Oh, all ye that pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow" (Thren.1,12). "Any Mother's heart would have broken at the sight of that Great Sanctuary Lamp of Life and Truth and Love emitting, not red rays over Calvary, but dropping red beads in a rosary of Redemption. Any mother would have collapsed at the vision of the beautiful wick of His soul flickering in death as the wax of His Body and Soul burnt itself away. Not all mother hearts have the same capacity for suffering, but no mother in all the world has a heart as tender as the Mother of Manhood" (Right Reverend F.J.Sheen.Ph.D.-Our Sunday Visitor March 8,1956). Still, though overcome with grief, the Mother stands! Blessed Mother, let me stand with thee beneath the Cross, let me stand and weep: let me be defended by thee, for I have heard the words of the Second Annunciation, not from the lips of the Angel, but from the very mouth of God, "Son, behold thy Mother!".....

A large literature has grown about the "Stabat Mater Dolorosa" because of "its pathos, vividness of description, its devotional sweetness and unction, its combination of easy rhythmic flow with exquisite double rhyming and finished stanza form. Doctor Coles says of it. The hymn is powerful in its pathos beyond almost anything that has ever been written".

(Stabat Mater-Catholic Encyclopedia).

Because of its epic and lyrical character, the hymn

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has received numberless musical settings by composers such as Jasques des Pres in the fifteenth century; by Palestrina, Pergolesi, Haydn and Dvorak. There are over sixty translations of the "Dolorosa" into English, and the statement of Sir Walter Scott, that he would rather have written the Stabat Mater than all his works, testifies to the love and admiration in which it is held by English writers.

Petrarch's To this period belongs also the beautiful tribute to
 to the Mary by Francesco Petrarch in "Virgine bella che a Sol Vestita"
 rgin I It is a cry of sorrow and anguish from an overburdened
 ry" heart, an appeal to the Mother of love and compassion who always
 replies to all who ask with confidence. "If the misery of man
 moves thee, incline to my prayer and help me in my struggle".
 Then we hear the cry of humility-"Though I am but dust and thou
 art Heaven's radiant queen". Petrarch addresses Mary as the
 sure star that guides the mariner over life's tempestuous ocean.
 He, in the midst of the storm, is tossed to and fro, helpless and
 alone with his sins. Still he trusts in Mary and implores her
 not to let him perish. His life, he complains, has been one of
 sorrow, torment and tears. Mortal pleasures have soiled his soul
 but the Virgin, he fondly hopes, will obtain from God some mercy
 for a contrite and humble heart. Then there is a cry of pain
 for the one whom he loved so loyally and long but who has now
 departed for another world. If by Mary's help and care he once
 rises, his life will be consecrated to the Virgin. He will devote
 to her his thoughts, speech, pen, his mind and his heart with all
 its tears and sighs. The prayer closes with a supplication that

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his dear Mother will point to him the better path and view his changed desires; that she will commend him to her dear Son that he may breathe his last sigh in peace in Jesus' arms.

It is interesting to note that,echoing the cry of this lover of Mary his friends after his death placed on his tomb the following epitaph:

"This stone covers the mortal remains of
Francesco Petrarch

O Virgin Mother, receive his soul:

Son of the Virgin have mercy on it'.

This earthly life was weary!

Let him have rest in the heavenly temple!

It is finally the early part of the fourteenth century hails the great work of Dante, the "Divina Commedia" which Piero Misciatelli called "a miracle of the love of Mary." "The Divina Commedia", he says, "is nothing other than a miracle performed by the Blessed Virgin Mary to save the soul of Dante, a miracle glorified in verse by the sinner devoted to Mary...who first was moved to pity by Dante's lot?..Who averted the danger of the harsh judgment hanging over him? Who? but the gentle Lady of Heaven, Mary."

(Dante Vivo-by Giovanni Papini)

It is only natural that Our Lady should have inspired the one who loved her so ardently with the sublime poetry encountered in the "Divina Commedia". This work is composed of one hundred cantos written in the measure known as the terza rima. Dante relates, twenty years after the event, a vision which

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he had when "he was still living a sinful life". In this vision which started on the morning of Good Friday and lasted for seven days, he passed through hell, purgatory and paradise, spoke with the souls in each realm, and heard what God had in store for himself and for the world. Three ladies, among them the Blessed Virgin, are moved to pity for the poet lost in the forest and send Virgil to serve him as guide. Virgil representing human philosophy guides him from the dark wood of separation from God through the inferno and purgatorio to the earthly paradise. Beatrice representing divine philosophy enlightened by revelation leads him then into the true paradise in which eternal happiness is found in the sight of God.

The Purgatorio, the most artistically perfect of the three canticles shows how love is to be set in order; Paradise shows how it is gradually made perfect. The closing canto is the crown of the whole work.

"Throughout the Sacred Poem the Blessed Virgin plays a most important part. It is, as it were, the working out in inspired poetry of the saying of Richard of St. Victor-'Through Mary, not only is the life of grace given to man on earth; but even the vision of God vouchsafed to souls in Heaven'"

(Catholic Encyclopedia)

Dante vies with the Church in endowing Mary with various epithets. In Paradise, he speaks of her as "the towering Rose", "beauteous Flower", "the living Star", "beauteous Sapphire", "Lady of Heaven", "the crowned Flame", "queen of heaven", "queen of this realm", "a treasure", "a beauty", "Virgin-Mother,

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"meridian touch of love"; "living spring of hope" etc. But the name he loves best is evidently the sweet name, Mary, which occurs fifteen times in the Paradiso, seven times in the Purgatorio, and, as is proper, not all in the Inferno.

(1) In Canto X of the Purgatorio, Dante exalts Mary as an example of humility, referring to the Annunciation and the answer "The Purgatorio" of the Virgin: "Ecce Ancilla Dei". In Canto XIII, she is an example of fraternal love: "Flying towards us", says the poet, were heard, but not seen, spirits speaking courteous invitations to the table of love. The first voice which passed by in its flight loudly said: "Vinum non habent", and went on repeating it behind us", an allusion to the charity of Mary when at the marriage-feast of Cana, she told her Son of the family-distress and asked Him to work a miracle. In Canto XV, Dante relates how he seemed to be suddenly caught up in a dream of ecstasy, and to see many persons in a temple and a woman about to enter, with the tender attitude of a mother, saying: "My son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I sought thee sorrowing", and then she was silent.-In Canto XVIII, Dante is dropping into a contented slumber when he is re-awakened by the rush of the nice slothful souls who will not suspend their act of penance even to secure the prayers of the living which would hasten the fruit of their penitence; so they utter their warnings as they hurry past, and one of the souls shouted in tears; "Mary ran with haste to the hill country". The bard would have us realize that in all virtues, Mary is our model, here one of zeal in behalf of her neighbour.

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Following Dante in his course through purgatory we now reach Canto XX to find that Mary is here proposed as a model of poverty. While Dante proceeded with steps slow and scant, he heard souls piteously weeping and complaining, and by chance he heard one calling with tears: "Sweet Mary", even as a woman in travail, "so poor wast thou as may be seen by that hostelry where thou didst lay down thy Holy burden".

In Canto XXI, Dante visits the circle of the gluttons; he encounters a wondrous tree, fruit-laden and bedewed with clear water from a neighbouring fall, from the midst of the foliage in which a voice recites examples of abstinence. "Of this food ye shall have scarcity", then it continues "Mary thought more how the wedding feast might be honourable and complete than of her own mouth". Thus Dante presents Mary as a model of abstinence.

In Canto XXIV the words quoted from the Scripture, "Virum non cognosco", suggest Mary as an example of chastity.

2) Now, turning to the beautiful lines of the Paradise for the mentions of Mary, we find that they are manifold. In the twenty-"Paradiso" third Canto, the poet describes Our Lady following Christ ascending to the ninth heaven, in the sublime lines spoken by Beatrice as she reproaches Dante for looking at her instead of turning to "the fair garden which flowereth beneath the rays of Christ: "Guiva e la Rosa, in che il Verbo divino carne si fece"-

A little farther on, Dante describing the "throngs of splendours on whom the ardent rays shed glowings from above" refers again to this title of Rose when he says that the name of the beautiful flower which he involer daily drew all his mind

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together to look upon the greatest flame...Gabriel descends and crowns the Virgin-"Tutti gli altri lumi facean sonar la nome di Maria"-Mary then rises through the Primum Mobile far out of sight, while the saints reach up tenderly after her with their flames and sing sweetly: "O Queen of Heaven".

In Canto XXXI, Dante gazes with awe-struck wonder on the features of his new guide, Saint Bernard. At his promptings, he looks above and sees the glory of Mary like the glory of the dawn, flaming amongst countless angels-each one having its own specific beauty.

In Canto XXXII, Saint Bernard shows the poet various souls on their thrones, and explains to him the place assigned to them by grace, and especially points our Blessed Lady thus: "Now, raise thine eyes towards the face that is most likened unto Christ: for only its brightness has power to fit thee to see the face of Christ. And Dante gazed in transport upon the face of Mary. Nothing that I had seen before says Dante, showed me so great semblance of God. Then the Angel Gabriel exulted before her singing: "Ave Maria gratia plena" while from the courts of heaven came the sounds of response to the canticle.

Finally in Canto XXXIII, the crowning canto, we hear the prayer of Saint Bernard to Mary (lines 1-39). He hails her as Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son, uplifted above all creatures, thou art to us the meridian touch of love and a living spring of hope. Thou art so full of grace that even the saintliest must have recourse to thee; thou art full of pity, munificence, and tenderness. Then he continues telling the Virgin that Dante

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would, through her obtain the favor of unlifting his eyes towards the eternal bliss that the Supreme Joy may be unfolded to Him. The eyes of Mary, so beloved of God, revealed at a glance how greatly, devout prayers please her. She answers the prayer by looking into the light of God to obtain Bernard's petition for Dante; and Dante anticipating Bernard's permission, with the passion of his longing already assuaged by the peace of now assured fruition, Dante, through the power of Mary, looks right through the light into the face of God.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN FOLK-SONG

Chapter 4 From 1350 to about 1500

In England this was a period of war and calamities, which however left ample room for joy and hope. The light of heart loved frank feasting, mirth and holidays; the austere sighed over the world's sins, yet did not lose courage, but set themselves strenuously to reform abuses. It was in that period that "Merry England" was born. Judging by Chaucer's portraits of the Canterbury pilgrims music entered into every walk of life. The Young Squire "sang or fluted all day". The Pardoner "sung so merrily and loud". Well could the Friar "sing and playen on the rote". Rivalling the Young Squire as a songster is Nicholas, the clerk, in the Miller's Tales.

"And above all there lay a gay sautree,
 On which he made a nightes melodie
 So sweetly, that all the chamber rang:
 The "Angelus ad Virginem", he sang.

This was the time of the carols with their spirit of joyousness and gayety which carried one back to Assise. In fact most of the early English carols come from Franciscan poets. In the first half of the thirteenth century Richard Lederede, a franciscan friar and Bishop of Ossory wrote his "Cantelenae" or songs to be sung to the popular airs which were already in use. Then, when the singers took as their medium of expression the language of the people, then it was that Mediaeval devotion found its true voice. Those songs tell us much the sort of people our Mediaeval forefathers were and how the faith entered into the very fibre of their souls and cast a glamour over all their

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thoughts, and sanctified their joy and sorrow in life.

We are not surprised then to find that in this age of faith and song the Virgin Mother should hold a prominent part.

As Father Blakely writes in the "America" (1916, VI.14) page 521; "With native Catholic instinct, these poets whose names have perished, always found the Child with Mary, His Mother, and their tenderest songs are memories of Bethlehem and Nazareth". Never did Catholic devotion express more practically and simply the mystery of the Incarnation. See, for instance, how sincerely the mystery of motherhood is voiced in the songs of the Nativity:

"This endernight
I saw a sight
.....
And ever among
A maiden song
Lullay..by..by;lullay.

This lovely Lady
Sat and sang
And to her Child gan say
"My Son, my Lord
My Father dear,
Why liest thou in hay?
My own dear Son,
Thou art my God verey
But never the lesse
I will not cease
To sing: By, by, lully, lulley!

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Somewhere about the time of Chaucer, a Franciscan friar of Norwich, John Brackley by name wrote this carol of the Virgin Mary:

I saw a sweet, seely sight
 A blissful bird (maiden)
 A blossom bright,
 That moaning made
 And mirth of manger.
 A maiden mother so mild
 A knave child
 In cradle keep
 That softly sleep:
 She sat and sang.

And here is another carol about Mary taken from an old manuscript dating from the year 1400:

A King of Kings now forth is brought
 Of a maid that sinned not,
 Neither in deed neither in thought

Res miranda.

An angel of council this day is born
 Of a maid I said beforne
 For to s-ve that was forlorn

So de Stella.

The sun hath never down going
 Neither his light to time losing
 The star is ever more shining

Semper clara

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Right as the star bringeth forth a beam
 Of whom there cometh a marvellous stream
 So childeth the maid withouten womb

Pari forma

One carol of especial loveliness breathes the fragrance of cloistered serenity. It dates between the years 1450 and 1460, when England was being rent by the Wars of the Roses. Thinking then of this conflict between York and Lancaster some English monk wrote this carol of another rose:

There is no rose of such virtue
 As is the rose that bore Jesus

Alleluia

For in this rose contained was
 Heaven and earth in little space.

Res miranda

By that rose we well may see,
 There be one God in persons three,

Paree forma

The angels sungen the shepherds to
 Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gaudeamus

Leave we all this worldly mirth
 And follow we this joyful birth

Transeamus.

If the mystery of Mary's motherhood is voiced in the songs of the Nativity, there is the same human mystery commingling with divine worship in Our Lady's gaze as she nurses her Child.

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It was a new theme in Catholic devotion, finding expression wherever the friars went, popularizing the new mystic worship of Our Lord's sacred humanity.

Another song "The Flower of Jesse" shows how the fifteenth century Englishman intermingled his love of nature with his Faith to pay homage to Christ and His Mother. He looks out on the May time, and drinking in the beauty he sees he must lay it in homage at the feet of our Lord or Our Lady:

"I pray ye flowers of this country,
Where'er ye go, where'er ye be,
Hold up the flower of good Jesse
Before your freshness and beauty.

As Fairest of all
That ever was and ever shall".

"The Nativity and Passion of Our Lord were, indeed, the great themes upon which the Mediaeval religious singers poured out the wealth of their poetic imagery and devotion. But, as connected with the mystery of Our Lord's earthly coming, Our Lady is the queen of their song, both in her motherhood and in her perpetual virginity. All the chivalric worship of womanhood passes into these songs as the singers look upon her in the glory of their marvellous purity and her high dignity. Indeed the passion for purity thrills in all the singers' praise of her. Yet always it is a purity warmed with a divine pity for common human-kind; for she is the Virgin Mother of man's Redeemer, and so to her they take confidently their confession of sin and petition for grace"

(The Dowry of Mary, November, 1916)

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Here is a characteristic rhythmical prayer:

"Mary, Mother and Maiden
 Ever well be thee!
 Mother and Maiden mild,
 Mary, think on me!
 Mary mild, that Mother art
 And maiden whole and clean,
 Shield me now and ever
 From sorrow and heart-tene (trouble)
 Mary out of sin
 Ever keep thou me,

Chaucer's

Of the many songs, other than carols, written at this

Chaucer's

period, Chaucer's A.B.C. or "La Priere de Nostre Dame" is one of the most impressive. It was written at the request of Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, as a prayer for her private use. Its object, then, was to promote devotion to the Blessed Virgin. It is not likely that the poem is a mere translation from the French as is claimed by many writers. Chaucer was a typical medieval English Catholic at a time when the whole world recognized in England the greatest centre of devotion to the Blessed Virgin! And as G.K. Chesterton points out in his book, "Chaucer" the translation so far surpasses the French original as to constitute a new poem redolent of a deep Catholic piety which can be found in scores of other places, especially in the Canterbury Tales. Chesterton says that Chaucer "had a devotion to Our Lady perhaps greater than that of Dante; as great as that of Saint Bernard in his beautiful oration in the Divine

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Comedy. The poem called his A.B.C., he continues, contains language that goes almost beyond the doctrinal limit in attributing omnipotence and supremacy to Mary. The poem is full of lines that have a certain large and liberal majesty because they are filled with the greatness of the occasion. Chaucer is expanding his heart and soul and bursts-out:

"Almighty and al merciablen queene,
 To whome that al this world fleeth for socour,
 To have relees of sinne, of sorwe, and teene,
 Glorious virgine, of alle floures flour,
 To thee I flee, confounded in errour,
 Help and releeve, thou mighti debonayre,
 Have mercy on my perilous langour!
 Vanquished me hath my cruel adversaire."

There is no comfort, but in thee, dear lady; thou art the course of grace and mercy, and through thee we have grace as we desire. Chaucer goes on to say that ever his only hope has been Mary; although he has been a beast in will and deed, yet will his Lady help him in his every struggle. He calls her glorious maid and mother, lady bright, queen of comfort, noble princess, vicar and mistress of the world, governess of heaven, devout Temple where God has His dwelling. He begs Mary to intercede with His Father that He be not angry with the sinner; to remind Christ that by His passion He has paid the debt of sin for all who believe and are repentant. Mary, he continues is full of mercy.

For when a soule falleth in errour
 Thi pitee goth and haleth him again".

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With the best writers of the Church, Chaucer asserts that all great saints are marked by devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which devotion is one cause of their sanctity.

Then his heart goes out to the sorrowful Mother at the foot of the Cross and he begs her:

"Let not our alder foo make his tobaunce
That he hath in his lystes of mischaunce
Convict that ye bothe have bought so deere."

Several more favors he implores her to grant—to deliver him from the eternal fire of hell, never to fail man in his need, to reform and chastise him, to be his judge, to receive him when wounded and sore he can no further flee, he may find mercy instead of justice, and Chaucer closes his prayer with these words:

"Now, lady bryghte, sith thou canst and wilt
Ben to the seed of Adam merciabile
Bring us to that palais that is bilt
To penitentes that ben to merci able.

Amen"—

The Mention might be made here of another of Chaucer's Physician's tributes to Mary. It is the Physician's Tale, a marvellous little Tale tragedy of maidenly virtue, chaste in spirit as in mind, modeled after the Blessed Virgin, "the pattern of life", showing as an example the clear rules of virtue. The martyred maiden of the Physician's Tale was drawn in character on the model of the Virgin Mary.

John Lydgate, a Benedictine monk, and the most voluminous poet of the fourteenth century, has left us at least two poems on

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John Lydgate's poems
 Mary: "To the Virgin" and "The Child Jesus to Mary the Rose"
 besides the "Lyf of Our Lady".

"To the Virgin" greets Mary as Queen of Heaven, Lady of the world and lodestar to mariners in distress; Celestial Cypress set upon Sion, highest Cedar of holiness, carbuncle of charity, beautiful sapphire; yard of Aaron, well of grace and pity where the Holy Ghost deigned to seal the crystal of Her virginity, Balm of Gilead that cures all the infirmities of those that languish in tribulation. Evidently Lydgate had a great devotion to the Joys of our Lady, for each of the three stanzas closes with a request for all who have such a devotion.

"Grant them good peace, save them from mortal war,
 To thy five joys that have devotion.

.....
 O Sapphire, loupe all swelling to repress
 On cankered sores and venomous feloun,
 In ghostly woundes by their governess,
 To thy five joys that have devotion.
 Preserve and keep from all adversity
 To thy five joys that have devotion.

In the second poem mentioned above, Jesus tells His Mother how God the Father beholding the meekness of Mary sent The Holy Ghost into her breast when He then was born for manhood. "O Mother, Mother, of mercy abound, Fairest Mother that ever was alive, though for man I have received many wounds among them there are five roses against whose mercy fiends may not strive, when mankind prays for help in the presence of Mary".

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The stanzas from the beginning of the "Lyf of Our Lady" are manifestly the verses of a singer:

"O thoughtful hearts, plunged in distress
 With slumber so sloth this huge winter night,
 Out of the sleep of mortal heaviness
 Awake again and look upon the light
 Of thilke star that with her beames bright
 And with the shining of her shenes merrie
 Is wont to gladden all our hemisphere"

The beauty of this star, he declares, is greater than that of all the other stars: for it is the star that towards eve, at midnight and at morrow scares away all our sorrow. She dries up the bitter tears of Aurora after the morrow gray;

"In lusty April and in fresh May,
 To enhance the mystes of our cloudy air"

Henryson's "To Our Lady" a short poem of twelve lines where he expresses his admiration for his "Lady leal and lovesomest of fair and beautiful face". Humility is the key-note of his verse. His request is that the pure Virgin will put away all his wicked works, make him chaste, and keep him under her protection until he reaches the abode,

"Where thy Maker of Mightiness most
 Is King and thou their queen is!

Dunbar's "The Ballad of Our Lady" we owe to W. Dunbar (1465-1550). Ballad of a Franciscan friar, styled by Craik "the Chaucer of Scotland", and Our Lady. by Walter Scott, "a poet unrivalled by any that Scotland has produced". Each stanza of the Ballad opens with a greeting to the

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Virgin and closes with Gabriel's salutation: "Ave Maria Gratia plena!". Never has our Mother been designated under so many titles. Dunbar vies with Dante in his commendation of Mary and the use of many and varied epithets to describe her attributes. The poet asks for no favor from her, but pours out his heart in his rich and expressive vocabulary.

"Ave Maria Gratia plena!
Thy birth has with His blood
Fro fall mortal original
Us ransomed on the Rood"

Barclay's "Ship of Fools" about the year 1509, he placed it under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and prefixed to it the little poem entitled "Star of the Sea" which begins thus:

"Thou art the Star, blazing with beams bright
Above these worldes waves so violent"

Evidently, Barclay is thinking about the sea of life and of Mary as the Star which placed over the world's tempestuous sea, shines forth by the luster of her merits and examples. To him also Mary is,

"Man's Mediatrix to God Omnipotent"

and to her he presents his poor and simple book as the grateful homage, of a humble son.

Nor were the English the only singers of Mary. While they poured out their grateful hearts in carols, ballads and various poems, their brethren in the Faith in other countries were also paying their tribute to the Madonna. In Italy Boccaccio and

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Dominici among others have left us each a touching reminder of their love for the Holy Mother.

Boccacio's Boccacio in "Queen of the Angels" begs of the Virgin without queen of the guile that she will relieve him of his anxious woes, that she will protect and save him from the snares that stay beyond to misdirect and defile him.

Dominici's Dominici in his "Mother Most Powerful" describes in a charming manner the various ways in which Mary caressed and loved her Child: he wonders how her heart did not break when she felt His infant lips pressed to her cheek and heard Him lisp for the first time the word "Mother". He concludes: this

"Shows thou wert mortal, -Mother, yes, and more!"

The Spaniards also had cultivated a great love for Marian poetry. Two of their productions attract our attention as they were both written in prison.

Ruiz's While for some unknown cause, Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita was kept in prison he turned to Mary for help and solace and addressed her as, piteous Mother, light and brightness shone from Heaven. He dedicates his soul and body to her: O Queen, he exclaims, grant hearing to a sinner. Haste and send the strength I so require. From out his weary prison, his life and woes so mean he begs Mary to petition Her Son for Him, remembering the deep sorrows of the Cross and the bitterness that Jesus Himself found on earth.

Pero Lopez Pero Lopez wrote "Song to the Virgin Mary" while he was in "Prison". He also places all his hopes in Mary for, he says, "The Virgin" welcome ever was most sweet to those who come to her with their

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cares and troubles. He loves her more than all and his sins seem very great when he thinks of her. When from this prison I shall retreat, he says, my pilgrim steps shall seek thy shrine in Guadalupe, and there I shall honor thy image.

Rodriguez de Padron's Very touching is the "Prayer to the Blessed Virgin" written by another Spaniard Rodriguez de Padron about 1450. He also had evidently been touched by sorrow for he seeks a refuge in Mary and reminds her that she is his strength in moments of dismay, grief's redress and sorrow's balm. Will she teach him to distrust earth's passing folly and all its dazzling art? Will she not let thoughts profound and holy penetrate the innermost recesses of his soul? Will she not lead him to the sublime realms where tread her foot-step holy?

Fray Luis de Leon's "At the Assumption", also deserves to be mentioned here as it is one of the few poems of the time in praise of Mary's Assumption. It is really a prayer intermingled with descriptive passages of the Virgin's soaring to Heaven while amid blissful songs, choirs of angels attend their queen and crown her with stars. The poet begs Mary to turn her eyes from those glories to the earth, a waste and desolate land where grieve the exiled sons of Eve. When her gentle vision has marked their sorrow and desolation, will she deign to take her children along with her and raise them to the Hills of Praise?

Gil Vicente's Gil Vicente, a Portuguese poet, wrote a charming little poem entitled: "Hymn of the Angels and Sibyls." Addressing themselves to the sailor of the sea, the angels and Sibyls bid him confess that neither ship nor sail was ever found as beautiful as

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Wells
d
byls

Mary, the plenitude of grace, charm and loveliness. Then, they invite the knightly lord-of-arms to say whether any horse and sword was ever found as "beautiful as She". Lastly, they greet the shepherd of the hills and bid him speak whether any peak or vale or rill was ever found as, "beautiful as she".

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Chapter 5. From 1550-1800

We now enter a sad period in the development of Marian poetry-the period of the so-called Reformation in which the Church was robbed of her property,her clergy persecuted,her doctrines set aside, and supplemented by a new cult. It was a time when Luther,Calvin,Henry VIII,Voltaire and other impious men,to all appearances,triumphed in their work of destruction. They ruled out the tenets of the religion of Christ to establish a new order of things,a new religion for humanity. With the Reformation and the cynicism of the eighteenth century,the Old Church was swept away and what the nations substituted for it neither curbed the pride nor calmed the passions of men. Gone were the days when religion encircled both poetry and reality,and every heart,in unquestioning allegiance,humbled itself before her. What a change from this when the Renaissance and the Reformation came to dominate Europe. These ill-associated movements broke up the spiritual unity of Christendom.

Although the solid bulwark of the moral traditions of the Church stood firm in the minds of many serious-minded people,the writers who remained Catholic could not with safety display their Catholicism.

The Merry England of the Middle Ages lost its peace of mind and heart,and even if the age of Elizabeth is sometimes called a nest of singers,it was no more a time when believers sang of faith,and all the joy and song-making centred round the Church.

Among the few English poets who wrote about the Virgin-

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Mother, R. Verstegan, H. Constable, Beaumont, and the convert, R. Crashaw are the most important.

Richard Verstegan, although of Dutch descent, was born in England and wrote English verses. His Lullaby of Our Lady has been preserved for us. On reading it, one can easily form in his mind a charming picture of the young Mother nursing her Babe while in smiling grace, her heart overflowing with happiness, she sings to Him a lullaby. Now she interrupts her singing to kiss her Infant Son, now to press Him still closer to her heart as if she heard distant footsteps and feared to lose Him. And what does she sing?

"-His love sustains my life

And gives my body rest

Sing lullaby, my little Boy

Sing lullaby, my life's Joy

She calls him her Babe, her Bliss, her Child, her Choice, her Fruit, her Flower and Bud, her Jesus, her only Joy. While the little head rests upon her breast and she plays with the seeking hands and the baby feet, Mary sings of the shepherds who left their sheep for joy to seek their God; of the three kings who came hither bringing incense, myrrh and gold, that they might behold heaven's Treasure and King.

"Sing lullaby".

How the Mother's virgin soul is thrilling with unearthly bliss as she now tells her baby how the shepherds were guided to the stable by an angel; and the Magi, by a beautiful star, all to see the fairest Son that ever a Mother had.

"Sing lullaby, my little Boy;

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Sing lullaby, my life's Joy".

And now, picture the Mother-Maid, more than beauteous, inclining her head and giving her Jesus another kiss while she lays him asleep on her lap. Now her gentle voice is stilled while angels run to-and-fro and a crowd of eager-eyed young saints watch over their sleeping God.

I. Constable's H. Constable, who after becoming a Catholic, was imprisoned in the Tower of London, has praised in a sonnet the glory and magnificence of Mary's relations with the Blessed Trinity. God loved Mary, states Constable, as his sole-born daughter. And why does He love her? Because her birth was free from the guilt which others bear from the time they are conceived in their Mother's womb. Mary, being so pure and holy, God bestowed on her His Holy Spirit as her Spouse. Of this Spouse she conceived God's only Son: thus was Mary intimately linked to the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Then, Constable, having in mind the vanity of earthly pomp and glory, and deploring the fact that Mary was being forgotten by the children she so dearly loved, exclaims:

"Cease then, O Queens who earthly crowns do wear,
To glory in the pomp of worldly things:
If men such respect unto you bear
Which daughters, wives, and mothers are of Kings,
What honour should unto that Queen be done
Who had your God for Father, Spouse and Son?

"The Assumption", a poem in six stanzas, was written by Sir John Beaumont a brother of Francis Beaumont. The poet sees, as in a vision, a beautiful form ascending "so high

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Mr John

Next the Heavenly King".

Beaumont's Around her a host of angels, sent by God to bear her away to the
the sky, fly eagerly while they sing her praises.

Assumption

Who is she, exclaims the seer, who, adorned with light,
makes the sun her garment? Who is she, at whose feet the queen of
night lays her tribute? And the answer comes: Look at the crown
which adorns her head; there you will discern her name written in
starry fires-oh, this is the queen whose virgin-flesh has housed
the living God; this is she whose fair body, immaculate in birth,
should not know the corruption of the tomb. This is she who loved
so ardently, who grieved so sorrowfully; now she rises to Heaven
to be united forever to her Son.

"A queen has come into her kingdom!

A crown has been won".

Crashaw's

Now we turn to another lover of Mary, Crashaw. Crashaw

Quaerit

was an eminent religious poet, one of the fifty-five Fellows

Jesus

ejected from Cambridge for refusing to subscribe the Covenant.

suum

He afterwards gave up all prospects of ambition and wealth, and

Maria

made his submission to the Catholic Church, living for a long
time a life of poverty and suffering. Crashaw developed a
great love for our Holy Mother, and it was to the Marian shrine
at Loretto, that he, exiled from his native land, had gone: and,
as befitting a child of Mary he was buried there.

"How well (blest Swan) did Fate contrive thy death

And make thee render up thy tuneful breath

In that great Mistress' arms, thou most divine

And richest offering of Loretto's shrine"

(Ode on the Death of Mr. Crashaw-A. Cowley)

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Crashaw's *quaerit Jesum Suum Maria*, depicts a scene of deep sorrow and anguish when the Virgin-Mother in an agony of grief bewails the loss of her Son. Her bleeding heart cries aloud lest her loved one never return:

"And is he gone,whom these arms held but now
 Their hope, their vow?
 He is gone;the fair'st flower that e'er bosom dress'd
 My soul sweet rest"

And the Mother misses the eager feet of Him who filled her life with joy;there are strange knockings at her heart,and each is a pain that leaves no rest-Perhaps she sets out on the high road that leads to the Sea of Galilee; perhaps she stands at the top of the hill,and into the far distance her eye reaches-but He is gone!... and the Mother moans:

"Make haste and come,or e'er my grief and I
 Make haste and die."

Then she bids her heart be still. Is she mistaken? Is she really the Mother of Him she mourns over?

"What but the fairest heaven could own the birth
 Of so fair earth?"

No,she is not mistaken-this womb of hers was once His dwelling house; oft her trembling voice sang to his sweet ears; oft she has wrapped his slumbers in soft airs and driven away his worries: oft she has been glad to seek her lost soul on His soft cheek; oft these arms have caressed and embraced Him. But now,He is gone; He has left their little home to seek the great cities, perhaps never to return. He had bid her farewell and she had

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looked into His face perhaps for the last time. Oh, is there a home for Him save at his Mother's side?-But hear, the anguished Mother:

"Dawn then to me, thou morn of mine own day
 And let heaven stay.
 Oh, would'st thou here still fix thy fair abode,
 My bosom God:
 What hinders but my bosom still might be
 Thy heaven to Thee?"

L.Silesius's Mary E.Mannix has translated for the lovers of Marian Song of poetry the "Song of Praise to Mary" written by L.Silesius, a Praise to convert to the Catholic Church who later became a priest and Ma: retired to the Monastery of the Knights of the Cross in Breslau where he died. In his poem, he promises Mary that he will praise, love and serve her all his life. He will sing Mary, the Morning Star, for through her the Lord of heaven and earth was given to us. Light and splendor, he continues, adorn Mary. She is gentle, holy and pure-a host to protect us from our enemies. Then he compares her to a chariot of gold that will bear us to Christ, and to a chosen vessel, the dwelling of the Almighty Word. The poem closes with the writer's renewed promise to love and serve Mary to the last day of his earthly career.

L.de Vega Now turning to Spanish Literature we are delighted Carpio's with Lope de Vega Carpio's sweet Lullaby of the Virgin. What Lullaby scene the author had in mind when he wrote it we know not; but it may have been a scene during the journey to Egypt. After some days of anxious traveling along the roads in the mountains

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of Judea, Joseph and Mary, tired of their journey, are stopping for a rest. Perhaps the Virgin is bathing her face and hands in the limpid waters of the fountain, Joseph is dipping his weary feet in the cooling liquid of the running brook, while the Baby Jesus is sleeping softly under the palm-trees. Then the Virgin sings her lullaby, beseeching the multitudes of angels attending on her Babe to bend down the branches of the palm trees to shield her Darling's rest. Now, the wind is stirring the branches and Mary begs them to sway gently, that Jesus may not awaken. He is weary, sings the Mother, His tears for earth so dreary have tired his eyelids; come, dear angels, come and comfort your God. Again she entreats:-Bend down the branches yonder to shield my Darling- But night has settled on the weary travellers, and Mary, always thoughtful of her Jesus, now pleads with the night frosts not to pain her Son. She will conceal Him in her arms, caress and warm Him:-O Angels of the Blest come closer and bend down the branches to shield my Darling's rest.

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Chapter 6-The Nineteenth Century and After

If the Catholic religion and Catholic poetry in general had suffered a period of depression for about two hundred years, this depression proved to be the gloom before the Resurrection. Already before the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, "A reaction had set in against the hard Deistic Rationalism of the previous century. On the Continent the brilliant negations of Voltaire were no longer à la mode; men had turned from the coldness of the Enlightenment to warm their spirits at what fires the ecstatic religiosity of Rousseau had set burning. The transition from the destructive philosophical criticism of religion to the positive assertion of belief in the supernatural ideal in the arts in favor of the medieval, was bringing into the Church notable intellectual and literary converts and was lifting to prominence Catholic Apologists whose writings sparkled with all the fine confidence of the new spirit".

(Catholic Literary Revival-Colby, p.22)

Gradually the Catholic Literary Revival set in, and as of old, poets turned to Mary. In fact if we look upon the Catholic revival of letters as the continuation, after a breach of two centuries, of that strain in English poetry that had died with Crashaw, we see how fitting it was that Mary should play a large part in it. In fact, as testified by Colby and others, the revival of Catholic art in the nineteenth century was accompanied everywhere by a revival of devotion to the Mother of God but most notably in England.

But before we turn to the many Catholic poets and

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Converts to the Church who dedicated their talents to the service of the Virgin-Mother, we must pause a moment to admire with what childlike love and simplicity, such non-Catholic poets as Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Lamb, Wordsworth, D.G. Rossetti and others, turned to the Mother of Christ, loved and venerated her and sang her beauty and power.

Byron's
Ave Maria
Don Juan
Canto 111) ".....felt that moment in its fullest power

Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft

While swung the deep bell in the distant tower".

and even the forest leaves seemed to answer the call to prayer,

"Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer!"

Oh, exclaims the poet, facing the pictured image of the Madonna;
Oh! that face so fair, how I have loved it in the sweet hour of twilight, in the solitude of the forest, on the silent shore of the sea! Strike, Angelus bell, strike! for that painting of the down-cast eyed Madonna is no idol!

"Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love!"

Chime on, sweet bell; chime on in honor of Mary; call home the weary; the bird to its nest; the oxen to its stall. Whatever peace and happiness is ours

"Are gathered round us by the look of rest".

Ave Maria! sweet comforter of the sailors who have been torn apart from all they loved. Ave Maria! the pilgrim's

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heart is filled with love as he hears in the distance the sweet tolling of the vesper bell.

"Ave Maria! may our spirits dare

Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!

alter
 Scott's
 hymn to
 the
 Virgin
 Lady of
 the Lake-
 anto1111)

In the "Lady of the Lake", which published in 1810, brought such fame to Scott, we find a most beautiful and confident appeal to Mary in the "Hymn to the Virgin". While surveying the country, Roderick crosses Benvenue and passes near the Goblin Cave where Ellen and her father have sought refuge. Roderick then overhears the song which Ellen is singing:

"Ave Maria! Maiden mild!

Listen to a maiden's prayer!"

.....

"Maiden, hear a maiden's prayer,

Mother, hear a suppliant child!"

Ellen, we know, had lost her mother when still very young; and, although Lady Margaret had bestowed upon her all her care and tenderness, Ellen evidently looks up to the Virgin as to her own Mother, most loving and kind. She calls on her, from the wild, to protect and save them in their exile:

"Safe may we sleep beneath thy care,

Though banished, outcast and reviled".-

.....

"Ave Maria! undefiled!"

Ellen continues, all their hardships will appear light if the Virgin will deign to smile upon them; all de ons shall flee from their haunts if Mary will only hover near. Then follow the

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act of resignation and the tender supplication for a dearly beloved parent:

"We bow us to our lot of care,
Beneath thy guidance reconciled:
Hear for a maid a maiden's prayer
And for a father hear a child!

Ave Maria!

Charles Lamb's insight into his feelings towards the Blessed Virgin in a six line inspiration poem. He reveals in "Aspiration" his belief that she is a Virgin pure and full of grace and that her Jesus is heaven-born. Exactly what he means by "worship" in the following lines is unknown to us, but the lines are none the less expressive of his profound admiration for the Virgin-Mother:

"Lady most perfect, when thy sinless face
Men look upon, they wish to be
A Catholic, Madonna fair, to worship thee."

Wordsworth's To most people Wordsworth's poem "The Virgin" is an isolated sonnet, while it is really one in a series of over one hundred sonnets which may be found in any complete edition of the author's poetical works, under "Ecclesiastical Sketches". These sonnets form a history of the Established Church of England. Some of the sonnets which precede the "The Virgin" and follow, depreciate and ridicule beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. Wordsworth treats of "The Corruption of the Higher Clergy", "Monastic Voluptuousness" etc. This is the slender setting of this beautiful and oft-quoted tribute to the Blessed Mother--really one

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of the highest poetical tributes to the Immaculate Conception.

"Mother, whose virgin bosom was uncroost
 With the least shade of thought to sin allied";
 Woman! above all women glorified,
 Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
 Purer than foam on central ocean tost.
 Brighter than eastern skies at lambrent strewn"...

The sestet which follows, however, shows Wordsworth's total ignorance of a Catholic's relations to the Virgin. In the preceding sonnets he has described the dissolution of the monasteries, and the dispersion of the monks and nuns. Then turning to the saints he has stated that they too must fly from a chasing land--

"Ah! if the old idolatry be spurned
 Let not your radiant shapes desert the land"

Then, he continues, the saints never demanded adoration. This explanation given in "Saints" makes clear the meaning of "Thy image falls to earth". Wordsworth evidently means that the statues of Our Lady like the statues of the saints will no longer be permitted in England. However, the poet, mercifully states that should a Catholic continue to bend "the suppliant knee" he might not so unforgiven for this "idolatry".

The octave of the sonnet is undoubtedly a little dull, and Wordsworth was probably sincere in his praise of Mary: he may be forgiven for not knowing the whole truth. However, the sestet, on being studied, loses all its beauty.

We can easily picture D.G. Rossetti, painter and poet,

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G. standing in admiration before one of his sketches of the Madonna
 Rossetti's and paying her another tribute, that of the poem "Mary's Girlhood"

Mary's "This is the Blessed Mary, pre-elect God's virgin".

Girlhood Many years she dwelt in Nazareth of Galilee, and during
 all those years she was a perfect model of devout respect,
 simplicity and patience. From the earliest years of her infancy,
 she was wise and faithful, charitable and strong in peace. She
 grew in close union with God in perfect peace and happiness until
 one day

"She woke in her white bed, and had no fear

At all-yet wept till sunrise and felt wed:

Because the fulness of time was come".

W. Faber's Among Faber's numerous works we find many poems written
 poems to in honor of Mary, only a few of which will be mentioned here. In
 Mary one of these poems, Faber greets with transports of joy, the dear
 "Little Maiden " on her birthday. This he calls "the dawning of
 salvation's happy morning".

In "The Grandeurs of Mary", a long poem of fifteen
 quatrains, he envisions the Virgin in heaven.

"A splendour that looks like a splendour divine"

Who could have dreamed, he says, that God would have raised a
 creature so high? So marvellous is her glory that saints and
 angels lie far in the distance. God has made for her a world by
 itself. In that world the arms of the Trinity are thrown in
 rapture around the Word's Mother. In God's wide spheres there
 is nothing that can approach Mary's glory. Is her heart really
 human, Faber wonders-is it a created heart?

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The next stanzas enumerate Our Lady's powers, her "grand ministrations of pity and strength, her boundless motherly love.

"Inexhaustible wonder; the treasure of God
Seem to multiply under thy marvellous hand"

and the poet concludes,

"But look, what a wonder there is up in God;
One love, like a special perfection, we see;
And the chief of thy grandeurs great Mother,
is there-

In the love the Eternal Himself has for thee"

Another very significant poem claims our attention because of the deep truth it expresses. It is called "Our Lady in the Middle Ages". Again Faber has a vision, but it is no more a vision of heaven and its splendours, but one of the earth and the miseries into which it was plunged after it had forsaken Our dear Lady. What horrible sights! Among the rich and powerful, only wassail, arms and chase; among the poor and lowly, discontented and envious hearts; gentleness had withdrawn from every land- This sad state continued until men finally turned to Mary again.

"Then were the natural charities exhaled
Afresh, from out the Blessed Love of Mary".

Patmore's In his autobiography Patmore tells us how for many years he had not agreed entirely with the Church in her insistence on child's devotion to the Mother of God. There was, he felt something "superficial" in his devotion to her. So he resolved to make a plebeian pilgrimage at Lourdes. He knelt at the Gave and arose "with a tranquil sense that the prayers of thirty-five years

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had been granted". From then on, Mary appeared to the poet as the ideal of womanhood. The immediate fruit of the pilgrimage was the Ode, "The Child's Purchase" in which he dedicates his talents to Mary and asks her help and inspiration in his future work. In it the poet describes himself as a child whose mother flings him down a coin-his gift of poetry. He is to spend the coin in any way he chooses, but he finds that he is not satisfied. He finally decides to return the gold coin to his mother and exchange it for a kiss. The ode is a prayer, and one of the finest Marian poems in the English language.

His dedication to Mary opened with this exquisite passage:

Ah! Lady elect,

Whom the Time's scorn has saved from its respect,

Would I had art

For uttering this which sings within my heart!

But, lo!

Thee to admire is all the art I know,

My Mother and God's! Fountains of miracles!

Give me thereby some praise of thee to tell..

Grant me the steady heat

Of thought wise, splendid, sweet,

Urged by the great rejoicing wind that rings,

With draught of unseen wines,

Making each phrase, for love and for delight,

Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night.

After his conversion to the Catholic Church, Aubrey de

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De Vere's Vere was asked by Pope Pius IX to write hymns to Our Lady whose Immaculate Conception was soon to be proclaimed. The result was a volume called May Carols which forms a rich bouquet for the altar of the Madonna. The preface to the May Carols introduce the reader to De Vere's technique. The deists of the eighteenth century had scorned the Incarnation; and worshipped man; the romanticists had worshipped nature. The whole truth after which the age was blindly striving, says De Vere, was to be found in the Incarnation. He advises the poet to approach the theological truth of the Incarnation through "the lesser elevation" of the divine motherhood of Mary. "Mary is the guardian of all those sacred mysteries which relate to the Sacred infancy."

De Vere warns us that the "May Carols" must not be regarded as a collection of hymns, but a poem on the Incarnation, a poem dedicated to the honor of the Virgin-Mother. Through her, poetry might be saved from the curse of an "abstract Christ".

"May Carols" then, is De Vere's permanent gift to the Catholic literary 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".

Francis Thompson certainly deserves to be called the poet of Mary. It is significant that his first published poem, "The Passion of Mary" was dedicated to the Holy Mother. In this poem he asserts that the crown of Lady Mary was no mere crown of majesty, for Christ circled her with the reflex of His own crown of thorns. Christ, His passion ended, went up to heaven, but, alas! Mary continued along the road to Calvary. But one day,

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER BY JOHN

Christ

"Caught thee at last into the day,
Before the living throne of Whom
The Lights of Heaven burning pray".

When Thompson after suffering terrible agonies and
undergoing a thousand deaths, finally gave up narcotics, he celebrated
his victory by writing the "Ode on the Setting Sun". Although

"The Cross stands gaunt and long
'Twixt me and yet bright skies",

he will bear that cross but not, without first a prayer to the
Blessed Lady who had already made many of the bitter things in his
life, sweet;

"Therefore, O tender Lady, Queen Mary,
Thou gentleness that do't enmoes art' rape
The Cross's rigorous austerity,
Wipe thou the blood from wounds
that needs must gape".

For Francis Thompson the best of all God's creatures
was Mary. He sang her praises often and he sang them well. In the
Assumpta Maria, which he confessed having "vamped" from the Office
of Our Lady, he celebrates her power and majesty as the Mother of
God, comparing her to Daniel's mystic mountain, to the four Rivers'
fountain,

"watering Paradise of old!"

to a fold embracing the eternal Lamb.

"who is she, in candid vesture,
Rushing up from out the brine?"

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN MILITARY

She in us and we in her are,
 Beating Colward;"

.....

Open wide, thy gates, O Virgin,
 That the King may enter thee!

.....

"Christ the promised,
 Thy maiden realm is won, O strong!
 Since to such sweet Kingdom comest,
 Remember me, poor Thief of Song!

Thompson was essentially a Catholic and his Faith was the font that fed his soul. He goes even further than Craslow in poetic worship of the Virgin-Mother. He was certainly born to sing Mary.

The lover of the Divine Mother would find inspiration to sing of her when contemplating the heavens, as witnessed in his touching poem

"Lines for a Drawing of Our Lady of the Night":

"This could I paint my inward sight,
 This were Our Lady of the Night:
 She bears on her forehead the starlight of her purity;"

"The mantle which she holds on high
 Is the great mantle of the sky".

Then the poet invites the sick toiler, when the night comes on, and he feels despondent, to think that it is Our Lady who spreads her blue mantle over him,

"and folds the earth, a wearied thing,

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN HOLYBY

Beneath its gentle shadowing;

 Then rest a little, and in sleep
 Forget to weep, forget to weep!"

This last poem, it is thought, was written partly as a comfort for Thompson himself. It represents a triumph over adversity. Wandering the streets of London, lonely, hungry and pain-wrecked, he had often spent the night on a bench near the Thames embankment and suffered the "abashless inquisition of each star". How the singer of Our Lady loved to think when these trials were over, how his dear Mother had then watched lovingly over her erring son and kept him from sin, while under the starry heavens he roamed, a homeless wanderer. Because of these associations, Thompson would always find inspiration to sing of Mary whenever he contemplated the heavens. In a poem on the death of a Jesuit astronomer, he refers to her as the "Gardener of the Soul"

"Starry amonist, starward gone,

 Passed through thy golden garden's bars,
 Thou seest the Gardener of the Star

 What said'st thou, Astronomer
 When thou did'st discover her?
 When thy hand its tube let fall,
 Thou found'st the fairest Star of all!"

It was in "The Mistress of Vision", a profound poem of magical music, that Thompson reached the heights of mystical imagery

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

and declared that Mary was the font of his inspiration without which he could not sing. This same "Mistress of Vision" appears also in "An Ode after Easter":

"The Woman I behold, whose vision seek
All eyes and know not; t'ward whom climb
The steps o' the world, and beats all wing of rhyme".

In the "Motto and Invocation" to the prose volume, after a request for the Saints' assistance, comes this perfect little prayer:

"Last and first, O Queen Mary,
Of thy white Immaculacy
If my work may profit aught
Fill with lilies every thought!
I surmise
What is white will then be wise!
.....
Remember me, poor Thief of Song!

"So Francis Thompson prayed to his beloved Queen of Heaven and that heart-cry so poignant in its dear simplicity, should fall as a personal message on the ears of all who call themselves Catholics, and children of their Mother-Queen".

(Great Catholics-p.409)

Hawker's In 1875, when Francis Thompson was only fifteen years of
8 there passed away a man who, to his generation, had been a hopeless
ur's eccentric. It was R.S.Hawker. Strange as it may seem, Hawker
although an Anglican clergyman, had always a great devotion to
Mary and wore round his neck a medal of the immaculate Conception

THE VIRGIN-LOCHER IN LOBBY

He had found in the Virgin a source of joy, inspiration, help and solace. From this tender love there welled forth some charming Marian poetry. Hawler was received into the Church on the eve of the Assumption and died on that great feast—a fitting reward for such achievements as King-Arthur's Waes-Hael. On reading the last name poem one suddenly witnesses a scene of the good old days of King Arthur. The knights and their ladies have congregated for a Christmas wassail. Those men are brave fighters, but, they are also good Christians, and so they do not separate even their carousing from spiritual ideas. They justify their drinking and merry-making with the thought of the Baby Jesus drawing "His life and nourishment from the breast of Mary. What childish simplicity in those fierce warriors suddenly transformed into "preux chevaliers". In the name of Jesus they fill the "tawny bowl".

"Put cover down the curving crest
Mould of the Orient Lady's breast".

Waes hael! lift no lid, but drain the reeds for wine in imitation of the Divine Babe who drew the milk hidden in His Mother's breast. Waes-hael! as the wine glows, so did the breast of Mary. Drink-hael! As Jesus pressed life from its mystic source so now bend in reverence and breathe the reeds for wine. And there follows a deep silence for a few moments.

Waes hael! we are Christmas children proudly acclaim
the knights,

"Drink hael! behold we lean
At a far Mother's knee.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

To dream that thus her bosom smiled,
 And learn the lip of Bethlehem's Child".

Hilaire Belloc also has celebrated the Virgin but he never separates the Mother from the Child as is certainly most fitting. In "Our Lord and Our Lady" he first describes with what tender love and solicitude Mary hastened to the desert with her Child when Herod threatened His life. She sang to Him and told Him a story short: and wrapped Him up in warm clothes to protect Him from the cold. But when Our Lord had grown to manhood, the Rich crucified Him in Golgotha. This time she was powerless to hide and defend Him. But, because He had been her Babe and she loved Him, she followed Him up the long way to Calvary where she took her stand at the foot of the Cross. There the agonizing cry of her God pierced through her heart like a sword. But the day of reward came and now:

"...Our Lady stands above the world
 With the white moon at her feet."

G.K. Chesterton has rightly been called "The Knight of Our Lady" for his whole life was lived close to the Blessed Virgin. Even as a boy, when he was not yet a Catholic, he wrote verses in her honor; in his eager and brilliant youth he sang of her; and throughout the crowded years of his manhood, she was again his theme.

Her influence was strong upon him throughout the long struggle which ended in his reception into the Church. When at length, he decided to become a Catholic, Our Lady was his strength. Writing in his autobiography about the honour due to her says,

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

"But with people who are Catholics...I want the idea (of honouring Mary) not only liked but loved and loved ardently, and above all, proudly proclaimed" (page 244). Referring to his conversion, he tells us, "It was in front of a gilded and very gaudy little image of Mary, in the port of Brindisi that I promised the thing that I would do as soon as I returned to my native land".

Repeatedly then, Chesterton wrote about Our Lady. She and her Babe are the theme of his widely known "Christmas Carol" where he describes the Christ-child lying on Mary's lap.

"O weary, weary were the world
 But here is all right"

The Christ-Child is lying on His Mother's breast; the rulers of the world, are cunning-but here are the true hearts. Finally,

"The Christ-Child stood at Mary's knee.
 His hair was like a crown,
 And all the flowers looked up at Him
 And all the stars looked down."

"The Queen of the Seven Swords" published in 1926, four years after Chesterton joined the Catholic Church, will always prove a mine of beauty and pleasure, for in this little volume are verses deeply tinged with poetic feelings and a vigorous Catholic spirit. Here is the poetry of a modern medievalist singing the filial songs of a troubadour of Mary. Here in this little volume we find the seven champions of Christendom: Saint James of Spain, Saint Denys of France, Saint Anthony of Italy, Saint Patrick of Ireland, Saint Andrew of Scotland, Saint David of Wales, Saint George of England each with a tribute to the Mother of God on his lips.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

"The Queen of the Seven Swords" is wholly written in honor of Mary. For her, "these songs are sung". A few extracts will indicate the tone of this poem;

"She turned the face
that none has ever looked on without loving".
.....

When God turned back eternity and was young
Ancient of Days, grown little for your mirth.
.....

When earth and sky changed place for an hour
And heaven looked upwards to a human face".

On reading these chivalric tributes to Mary, one recalls what Chesterton writes in his Autobiography "I am very proud of what people call Mariolatry; because it introduced into religion in the darkest ages that element of chivalry which is now belatedly and badly understood in the form of feminism".(page 81)

Ballad But it is especially "The Ballad of the White Horse" which has earned for its author the title of "Knight of Our Lady". It has been called by many critics, not only Chesterton's greatest literary achievement, but the greatest achievement of the twentieth century. Our Lady is the centre of this early poem. It is the modern crisis that Chesterton celebrates under the symbolism of King Alfred's fight in the Dark Ages against the Barbarian Danes. The poem opens with a picture of the Christian King, alone and disconsolate in the forest of Athelney. He is hiding from the triumphant invaders who have defeated him in many battles and scattered his discouraged followers.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

"And Alfred, hiding in the deep grass,
Hardened his heart with hope".

Of a sudden, a vision is before him. It is the Mother of God.

"She stood and stroke the tall live grass".

.....

"She spoke not, nor turned not
Nor any sign she cast".

The broken king arises and asks her for a sign of what the future may hold for him and for His Christian people. And a voice came human but high up.

"I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises high.

.....

Night shall be thrice night over you,
And heaven an iron cope.

Do you have joy without a cause,
Yea, faith without a hope?

She vanishes and Alfred, alone in the forest, hears only the roar of the distant sea and the marching pagans. But with the divine warning he sets out to gather the chiefs. To those who will not fight he reveals the message received

"Out of the mouth of the Mother of God

.....

"And this is the word of Mary.

The word of the world's desire:

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

'No more of comfort shall ye get,
 Save that the sky grows darker yet
 And the sea rises higher".

Hearing this message all the chiefs and warriors gather up courage.

"Up on the old white road, brothers,
 Up on the Roman walls!
 For this is the night of the drawing of swords,
 And the painted tower of the heathen hordes
 Leans to our hammers, fires and cords,
 Leans a little and falls."

The next verse in Alfred's challenging battle cry is one of the finest in the whole ballad.

"Follow the star that lives and leaps
 Follow the sword that sings,
 For we go gathering heathen men,
 A terrible harvest, ten by ten,
 As the wrath of the last red autumn-then
 When Christ reaps down the kings".

In the midst of the fierce battle when the last arrow was fitted and flown, when the hopeless lance was laid in rest, and the hopeless horn blown, King Alfred looked up and again he saw Our Lady standing on the rent standards, and looking as innocent as she did among the lilies of Nazareth.

"Over the iron forest
 He saw Our Lady stand,
 Her eyes were sad withouten art,
 And seven swords were in her heart-

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

But one was in her hands".

Then the last charge went blindly, and the Danes began to
retreat. Cried Alfred then:-

"The Mother of God goes over them,
Walking on wind and flame"

.....

"The Mother of God goes over them,
On dreadful cherubs borne;"

and thus

"Endeth the Battle of Ethandune
With the blowing of a horn.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

Chapter 6-The Nineteenth Century and After-American Poets

Now, turning to the American Continent we find therein a host of writers who have devoted their leisure hours to the advancement of Marian poetry. A reference will be made to a few of them whose productions are most noteworthy.

Longfellow's "Blessed Mary's Month" is a poem of the most blessed usual charming imagery and soothing, melodious versification, written by Longfellow. "Blessed Mary's Month", where he celebrates the month dedicated to our Mother. This is, he says, the month of our Blessed Mother; Virgin, and at the same time, Mother of our Saviour. Then he sings in a touching manner the motherly tenderness of Mary. All hearts are touched at the sound of her name, continues Longfellow; alike the bandit, whose cruel hands are smeared with the blood of his brother; the priest, the ruler, the poor and the rich, the dreamer and the man of action. All pay to her their homage and respect. Here follows a striking comparison; Children who have offended their father and are sore afraid of his wrath will sometimes beg their elder sister to intercede for them, while repentant and sorrowful they remain outside their home awaiting the sign of forgiveness. So it is with sinners, who repent of their evil deeds and wish for their father's forgiveness. Realizing their guilt, they dare not draw near to God, but they offer to Mary their request and their prayers and she intercedes for them in heaven. -Here, one pauses wondering why Longfellow introduced the idea of a sister pleading before a wrathful father in favor of a prodigal son? The comparison would have been so much more effective, so much truer had he made the mother of the child intercede. For who would be

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

satisfied with Mary as a sister when she is really the true and tender Mother of the whole human race? However, the tribute Longfellow pays to the Queen of Heaven is nevertheless very beautiful...After describing her as peaceful,merciful, patient,loving and pure, he concludes:

"And if our faith had given us nothing more
 Than this example of all womanhood

 This were enough to prove it higher, truer,
 Than all the creeds had known before".

A.Poe's . Among the many poems written by the strange and melancholy man of E.A.Poe, "Hymn of the Angelus" would indicate that the poet's love of the Virgin was perhaps the one ray of light which illuminated his gloomy and morbid existence. Evidently the sensitive and wayward son of Mary had great confidence in her and offered her a prayer several times a day, for he says,

"At morn,at noon, at twilight dim,
 Maria,thou hast heard my hymn!

Then he begs the Holy Mother to be with him whether he be joyful or sad whether in prosperity or misfortune. Then follows a revelation of the poet's intimate relations with Mary. How humbly Poe acknowledges that it is due to her protection that his soul did not become truant. When time passed rapidly and not a cloud obscured the sky, Mary was there to guide him lest happiness should prove harmful to him. But, now that the storms of life darkly overcast his soul, oh how much he needs her! But his trust is as great as his need, nay greater! And only one boon he seeks of his tender Mother:

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

"Let my future radiant shine

With sweet hopes of thee and thine!

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Father Ryan, "The Poet-Priest of the South" in "My Beads" tells us of his unflinching love for Mary. He has had these beads for twenty years, and every day of those years he has recited the Rosary and told his dear Lady every grief of his; he has wept over the beads, and in every gem found relief. Age has overcome him, friends have departed and joys have fled, but always the prayer of the rosary has won from the Queen of Heaven consolation and comfort for her faithful servant.

"
 Another of his poems, "Feast of the Assumption" represents the saintly old priest on the evening of the feast kneeling, with bowed head before the statue of Our Lady. Some interior darkness has settled on his soul, and like a homesick child, he feels deeply the terrible loneliness crushing his very heart. All day long, he says, he has called on Mary. But she was heedless—perhaps was she listening to the sweet song of the angels in heaven or to the glad acclaim of winged spirits rising above from the land of sorrow? How could she then hear his lone lips wail her sweet, pure name? Deeper and deeper grows the darkness and more and more confident becomes the piercing cry of the bruised heart. In heaven, Mary is hailed as Queen, she wears a crown and a sceptre, but, pleads the poet,

"Let thy sceptre wave in the realms above

where angels are;

But, Mother, fold in thine arms of love

Thy child afar!"

"Dark! dark! dark!

Mary! I call! Wilt hear the prayer

My poor lips dare?"

Will Mary forget the sweet blood shed?-Will she forget the words of the dying Christ: Mother, behold thy son-

The miracle has been wrought- a sweet peace fills the soul of the man who had almost despaired in his hour of anguish and perplexity:

"Oh, priceless right

Of all His children! The last, least one

Is heard to-night.

C. Stoddard's In "Ave Maria Bells", by C.W. Stoddard we read the grateful
 e Maria tribute of a heart that had long been troubled by incertitude and
 lls doubt before it found a haven in the bosom of the Catholic Church. Stoddard was always greatly moved at the sound of church bells as they reminded him of a dear Mother whom he greets in "Troubled Heart" as "Holy Virgin, our Blessed Lady, who hast gloriously appeared to us, and who hast appeared only to us! (page 171).

Thus sings the lover of Mary:-at dawn, in consecrated churches, the bells summon the faithful to pray, recalling to their minds that the humble and sweet little Maiden conceived of the Holy Ghost, as the angel had declared.-

One forms an idea of the effect caused on the author by the sound of the Angelus bell when he reads this passage in "Troubled Heart";-"When they (the bells of Rome) rang the Ave Maria, it seemed to me that ten thousand glorious tongues were loosed to syllable her praise. Never, no, never could I escape from their salutation.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

At noon, continues Stoddard above the din of the noisy city, the musical chiming of the bells again lifts our souls to repeat the perfect prayer of Mary; "Be it done unto me according to thy word!"

"Then all the sacred bells rejoice".

At eve when the sun is setting, and the day is fast dying away, the poet invites the "prayerful bells" to ring, while the stars suddenly blossom in the heavens, for

"Of all the songs the years have sung us,

'The Word made Flesh had dwelt among us'

Is still our ever new delight".

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etry

Father Tabb, another poet-priest, has written several lyrics in honor of Mary. Brevity, the most obvious characteristic of his work, sets him apart among poets of acknowledged excellence and undying fame. In his short lyrics, he has traced almost the whole life of the Virgin-Mother.

The Immaculate Conception he describes as a dewdrop born of the darkness; as the flower of a barren thorn; as a rainbow beauty with which was veiled the Divinity.

Two poems on the Annunciation are deserving of notice. The first could be called the Fiat!- Fiat! the flaring word flashed through and a cloistered, untainted womb suddenly wakes to the life and light! In the second poem, Father Tabb tells us that, except for the Divinity, nothing in Heaven

"So pure as is this lily-gleam of earth

Whereat the highest angel holds his breath,

In telling of a God's incarnate birth".

THE VIRGIN-FACTER IN POETRY

Then, if through Mary, I render love to God, He will approve
the tribute paid,

"For 'tis Thy Holy Face,
Not Caesar's that I trace
In here portrayed".

"The Maternity" proclaims the thought, that only through
Mother-Mary are we one with the humanity of Christ, and through
Christ one with our heavenly Father:

"Motherless the world above
Earth had closer claims of love".

"Mary" acknowledges the Virgin as Maid-Mother of divine
humanity; she is unique in her supremacy since God designed to build
within her a temple of flesh to enshrine the Divinity:

Blessed be
The miracle of thy maternity,
Of grace the sole immaculate design!

J. Rooney's "Ave Maria" J. J. Rooney's "Ave Maria" is sufficient indication that
the poet was a great lover of Mary. The martial spirit which
pervades the first part of the poem suddenly changes to one of
tender love towards the end. The author would first enlist as a
soldier of Our Lady and go forth valiantly to fight his three
allied enemies—the Flesh, the Fiend and the world—Then he would be
the sailor of Mary and sail the high seas of the world to spread
her glory and her fame. He would also be happy to sing to Mary
"heart music from all lays" and be her poet. But, finally, he
chooses to be her Son begging her not to refuse his claim. The
reason for his choice he explains:

THE VIRGIN-NIGHT IN SCOTLAND

"Alone and motherless am I ;
 Tho' strong, I long for rest-
 The thunder of the world's applause
 Is not a Mother's breast.

.....
 Ave Maria! Shield us all,
 Thy sons we choose to be.
 Mother of grace, we raise our hearts,
 Our hearts, our love to thee!"

M.Kelly's We are delighted to find B.M.Kelly writing this little
 The poem to Our Lady on behalf of the busy housewife with so many
 housewife's little worries to upset her. It is a confident prayer calling
 prayer". from a simple and loving heart.-Dear Lady, who kept the house of
 Christ the Lord, who prepared the food for Him, who made the bed
 whereon lay the Christ-Child, be with me while I go about my daily
 task,

"Speed the wheel and speed the loom,
 Guide the needle and the broom,
 Make my bread rise sweet and light,
 Make my cheese come foamy white,
 Yellow may my butter be
 As cowslips blowing on the lea.

Though my tasks be menial, lady be with me always, and
 when I shall stand before the judgment seat of God, be it he
 still, thou who art the Handmaid of the Lord.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

Most beautiful of all the tributes in verse to Mary and her Holy Child are two poems by Joyce Kilmer. One is called "The Singing Girl", and it pictures Our Lady as "a little maiden", "In blue and silver dress", who "sang to God in Heaven and God within her breast". "It pierced me like a sword when this young maiden sang: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord'". Then follows this touch-so characteristic of Kilmer's gay and tender fantasy.

"The stars sing all together
and hear the angels sing,
But they said they had never heard
So beautiful a thing!

The poet closes by asking Saint Mary, Saint Joseph and Saint Elizabeth to

"Pray for us poets now
And at the hour of death".

The other poem is "Gates and Doors" written at greater length. It is a rollicking carol of the hostler who "opened up the stable the night Our Lady came". He held her bridle and helped her to alight and spread clean straw on the pavement that she might lie down and rest after her tiresome journey. For that kind deed Christ has rewarded him with "an everlasting crown". The next morning he had the privilege of kneeling by the manger where Christ was born and his soul was filled with happiness when the Baby Jesus, resting on His Mother's knee "gave him His hand to kiss". The carol ends with the gentle admonition to "take from your soul's great portal the barrier of doubt", and to welcome to your home the poor and the weary, for your breast to-morrow shall be the cradle

THE VIRGIN-MOTIF IN POETRY

of a King.

In several of his other poems, Kilmer refers to Mary. In one of them, the "stars flashing through the air are "errant strands of Lady Mary's hair" and the poet wonders,

"As she slits the cloudy veil and bends down through,
Do you fall across her cheeks and over heaven too?"

In the "Rosary" he praises Mary again. Not all men, he states, can praise the Master on the lute or the harp. How can we pay our tribute to God, says one, for "skilled must be the laureates of kings". But, despair not, oh man, for there shall issue from your toil

"Music like that God's chosen poet sings".

.....

"There is one harp that any hand can play,
And from its strings what harmonies arise!
There is one song that any mouth can say,-
A song that lingers when all singing dies,
When on their beads our Mother's children pray
Immortal music charms the grateful skies".

.O'Sheel's Like Kilmer and many other writers, O'Sheel always keeps Mary's the Babe and the Mother together. "Mary's Baby" suddenly places by before our eager eyes a vision of the Cave of Bethlehem with its attendant poverty and suffering. Joseph, mild and gentle is bending over the straw where reclines a pale, frail girl, holding her Baby in her arms. Joseph expresses in accents tender his regret that Mary should have to rest in this dismal place. "All is well with me," sweetly replies the young mother, and then sings to her child,

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

"Baby my Baby, O my Babe",and,

"Suddenly the golden night all with music rang"

But the shepherds have heard the angelic chorus. They rush towards the stable and now they crowd silently at the entrance of the Grotto and with bended knee worship their God. But their very silence of worship breaks the Mother's sleep. Smiling, she shows them her beautiful Child,while reverently kissing His tender cheek she says: "Baby, my Baby",and

Suddenly a flaming star through the heavens sped"

Now a change comes over the scene. A cavalcade from the far east comes this way. Three weary old men, three kings alight from their camels and prostrate themselves in adoration before the King of the universe.. Mary weeps whispering low: "I love Him so! Baby, my Baby",and

"Suddenly on Calvary all the olives wept".

J.Carroll's From Bethlehem,we now pass on to Ireland and there witness lady- with one of Erin's sons,P.J.Carroll,C.S.C.the touching scenes of ly in "Lady-Day".

Ireland" "Through the long August day, mantled blue with a sky of Our Lady", they are at the well from early morn,till darkness settles upon the land. Their hearts at rest,they sigh their prayers to Mary under the broad-leaved trees which protect them from the splendor of the sun. The brown beads pass in procession through their fingers. With each Ave breaks from the hearts of the lovers of Mary, a song of praise and tenderness. The blue-eyed, innocent children march down the white road; they too sing words of love "Unto her with the gold of the stars and the blue of the skies".

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

In the still summer air, "with Our Lady's blue sky far above them"
and beyond the mountains "where slumbers the Irish green sea".

"There they speak to her, weep while they
pray to her, beg her to love them,
Till beyond the bright stars where
their home and their treasure shall be".

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

Chapter 6 The Nineteenth Century and After-Canadian Poets

Before bringing to a close this study of Marian poetry, it is fit that the productions of at least a few Canadian poets should be inserted here.

The cult of the Blessed Virgin has always flourished in Canada and has brought from our poets many beautiful expressions of genuine lyric poetry to describe and to crown this radiant Woman. The stars of the heavens, the lilies of the valley, the might of the sea, the strength of the tower, -all are called upon for descriptive titles. Yes, even the white driven snow, symbolic of the word Immaculate, is used, and we even have a feast of Our Lady of the Snow.

This recalls to our minds one of the most beautiful ballads of our Irish-Canadian poet, Thomas D'arcy McGee, called "Notre Dame des Neiges". The ballad is an example of the genuine Marian poetry that sprang from the pen of a man whose heart ever loved and revered Our Lady. The writer invites the pilgrim who should chance to visit Canada to seek the shrine of Notre Dame des Neiges-and then tells the legend-

"In the old times when France held sway
From the Balize to Hudson's Bay,
O'er all the forest free,
A noble Breton cavalier
Had made his home for many a year
Beside the Rivers Three,

Then he describes the home as one "to every trav'ler dear" for here his way was cheered by the Breton song and dance. Gay and merry and brave was this cavalier, and pious too, for, when the chilly

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

blast of December froze fast the river and the plain.

"His custom was, come foul, come fair,
 For Christmas duties to repair
 Unto the Ville Marie,
 The City of the Mount, which North
 Of the great River looketh forth
 Across the sylvan sea".

But on the long trip between Three Rivers and Montreal a blinding snow storm overtook the traveller. Everything was frozen hard- no sun guided him-But the sleigh bells played their joyful tune and the cavalier kept up his courage, until evening darkness spread over the earth. Then the exhausted steed fell "stiff as a steed of stone". The master blew his horn, but in vain; no answer came but the howling of the wolves. Sad was the heart of the traveller lost in the storm; benumbed and bewildered,

"At every step he sank apace-
 The death-dew freezing on his face-
 In vain each loud alarm!

Thinking that his last hour had come, he cast himself down on his knees, and with faith and confidence he prayed Saint Catherine and Saint John and called upon Our dear Lady for the grace of a happy death.

"When lo! a light beneath the trees,
 Which clank their brilliants in the breeze-
 And lo! a phantom fair,
 As God's in Heaven! by that bless'd light
 Our Lady's self rose to his sight

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

In robes that spirits wear!

.....

Oh! lovelier, lovelier far than pen,

Or tongue, or art, or fancy's ken

Can picture was her face-

Gone was the sorrow of the sword,

And the last passion of Our Lord

Had left no living trace!

.....

So the worm radiance from her hands

Unbind for him Death's icy bands,

And nerve the sinking heart-

Her presence makes a perfect path

Ah! he who such a helper hath

May anywhere depart.

The smiling Virgin led the trembling knight who followed
in her footsteps,

"Vowing a grateful vow-

Until far down the mountain gorge

She led him to the antique forge,

There her own shrine stands now".

Such is the poetry that sprang from the pen of a man
whose source of inspiration was the Virgin-Mother.

Mary F. Windeatt Mary F. Windeatt, a Canadian poet, born on the Western
"Assumption" prairies in Regina has written several poems to honor Our
Holy Mother, among them "Assumption".

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

"An old woman she was, when the end came,
 A mother of sixty years-
 The relic of Bethlehem's beauty,
 Of Calvary's tear."

But to-day, Assumption day, is her rising; this day will
 mark the end of her sorrows and sufferings

"And swift on the wings of the morning
 Love seeks her again".

.....

"Not a soul shall be sick for her sorrow
 Her loveliness ever done-
 A queen has come into her kingdom!
 A crown has been won".

Clarke's George Herbert Clarke, professor of English Literature at
 the Virgin Queen's University, has glorified Mary in the poem "The Virgin
 Albert". of Albert". The poet takes us to the shrine of Notre Dame de
 Brebieres in Britany while France is at war, probably with Germany.
 It is Eastertide, but alas! a desolate Eastertide; no priest is
 present to celebrate Mass at the shrine. But the Britons and
 Gauls are there; they linger side by side gazing up at the statue of
 Our Lady. "Death they know well" and they are prepared for it,
 before the statue they pour out their hearts to their dear Mother.
 Near by,

"Birds skirt the stricken tower, terrified"

.....

still no priest,

"Yet still they wait, watching the Babe and her".

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

Suddenly, the brutish foe hurls with hate his bolts

"Broken the Mother stoops;" and down she sways until she
sees below her soldiers, guns, transports endlessly arrayed, and
her voice sweet and low murmurs:

"Woman are foe for them! let me be theirs,
And comfort them and hearken all their prayers!"

Bliss Carman's "A Christmas Eve Choral" by Bliss Carman is a revelation
of his regard for the Virgin: with his fine and delicate fancy and
his gift of melodious versification, he exhibits a thorough under-
standing of things spiritual. The Choral is a dialogue between
Mary and Joseph. While all the earth is sleeping, Mary hears
across the dark the sound of joyful Halleluja. "Why are thy
tender eyes so bright?" inquires Joseph. To which Mary answers
that in the day that is to be she sees an aureoled man-child,
great love's son.

From afar comes the minstrel Angel of the star, but
Joseph hears him not;—

"Why is thy gentle smile so deep, Mary, Mary?" It is the
secret that I must keep, answers the Virgin. Again,

"Tender as dew-fall on the earth
She hears the choral of love's birth"

"What is the message come to thee, Mary, Mary?" And Mary
replies,

"I hear like a far-off melody"

"His voice proclaiming peace for love's sake."

Halleluja! Mary now hears, moving as rain-wind in the spring an
angel chorus sing—

THE VIRGIN-MOTIF IN POETRY

"Why are thy patient hands so still, Mary, Mary?"-

"I see the shadow on the hill
And wonder if it is God's will
That courage, service, and glad youth
Shall perish in the cause of truth".

"Halleluja!" Her heart has heard the harmony of time. "Halleluja!"

"Halleluja!" The kings drew near and made obeisance.

"Arise", said they, "we bring you
Good tidings of great peace!
To-day, a power is weakened
Whose working must increase,
Till fear and greed and malice
And violence shall cease".

A.M. Stephen's A.M. Stephen, a well-known writer of Vancouver has published poetry on at least two poems of great beauty about Our Lady; one "Regina, Mary Ora pro Nobis" and the other, "The Golden Helen". In the first of these, he represents the Virgin with the Infant God cradled in her arms. Then to this Beauty, he unfolds the secrets of his heart. Evidently he has not always loved Mary, for the whole poem is a recognition of the mistake he has made in using his talents against her. My queen, he sorrowfully exclaims, if mine eyes had glimpsed thy face instead of the sordid things of earth. I could have known thee then. I now kneel at thy feet and ask thy forgiveness for wasted forces spent in service of thine enemies.

"Beauty, I crave thy vengeance!

If through the great walls of mine insolence

Thy sword shall pierce my heart.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

Death will be sweet life".

He begs Mary to cleanse and purify his soul and to slay his enemies.

"Let thy swift lightnings cleave my edifice-
Thy cleansing breath, white fire and arching flame,
Sweep through my temple aisles at will.
Dread queen, unveil thy face and slay
These hosts who desecrate thy shrine!"

In the poem "The Golden Helen", Stephen calls Our Lady,
"A queen of Beauty, white and wondrous fair,
With golden love-lights in her eyes and hair".

If her name is only breathed, it will stir forgotten music; in her name, swords gleam and crimson beacons flare. Even the "corridors of time" men have sung her praises. She inspired the Troubadours of France, the warriors on the battle field.

"Mary -O Mother of God-your smile
Through tears we treasure as gold refined
From the drift of the years that flow
.....
Mary, a light on the hills that stand
In the mist of their purple bloom"
Mary, your tomb is a shrine where we may kneel.
"Mary, the Queen-we hear the hymn
In the cloister rise and fall.
All hearts bow down when prayers are said
To beauty crowned and dead.

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

A queen of wonder, white and golden fair,
 The Trojan Beauty is all soul's despair!
 Eternal symbol of the love that flows,
 A hidden music at the heart of life,
 Her face shines still above the strife;
 Her hand still sheds the fragrance of the rose.
 A queen of Beauty, white and wondrous fair
 With golden love-lights in her eyes and hair.

MacInnes's Life runs rich in Tom MacInnes's lines, "Mother" where "Mother" he exhibits exceptional delicacy and luxuriance of beauty..The author is well known for his fundamentally religious outlook: here we are pleased with the charming freshness of his poem.

"There's a voice that I have heard
 Along the way of life,
 A voice that soundeth only
 When my soul is worn with strife".

When I fall, continues the author, someone's soothing voice murmurs in my ear: "Sleep, child, sleep!" It is the Mother of all men who thus comforts me with dreams beyond my understanding and a song whose words I cannot remember, except: "Sleep, child, sleep!"

"O Mother, -holy Mother!

O Mother of my soul!

Should the departing day find me from my soul, let me like a weakling child-fall back into thy arms,

"And o'er my failure whisper only

'Sleep, child-sleep!"

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

E. Mackay's In "Spring in Nazareth" by Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, bring in we feel the Madonna passion which has inspired and coloured much Nazareth. of the author's prose, and not a little of her verse. The poem is a true lyric, revealing an imagination which moves with power and freedom as a bird soars on the wing. The poem is so beautiful that it will be inserted here as a fitting close, to this thesis.

SPRING IN NAZARETH

From "Fires of Driftwood" by Isabel Ecclestone Mackay

"The Spring is come!" a shepherd saith:
Sing sweet Mary,

"The Spring is come to Nazareth
And swift the Summer hurrieth."
Sing low, the barley and the corn!

Across the field a path is set..
Sing, sweet Mary,
Green shadow in a golden set..
The tears of night have left it wet.
Sing low, the barley and the corn!

The Babe forsakes His mother's knee,
Haste, sweet Mary..
See how he runneth merrily,
One foot upon the path hath He..
Green, green, the barley and the corn!

THE VIRGIN-MOTHER IN POETRY

The Mother calls with mother-fear..

Hush, sweet Mary!

Another sound is in His ear,

A sound He cannot choose but hear..

Hush,hush, the barley and the corn!

Far and still far.. through years yet dim

List, sweet Mary!

From o'er the waking earth's green rim

Another Springtime calleth Him!

Bend low, the barley and the corn!

Call low, call high, and call again,

Ah, poor Mary!

Know, by thy heart's prophetic pain,

That one day thou shalt call in vain..

Moan,moan,the barley and the corn!

O mother! make thine arms a shield,

Sing,sweet Mary!

While love still holds what love must yield

Hide well the path across the field!..

Sing low, the barley and the corn!

"The Spring is come! a shepherd saith:

Rest thee, Mary...

The passing years are but a breath

And Spring still comes to Nazareth..

Green,green, the barley and the corn!