

KEBLE'S CHRISTIAN YEAR.



HERE must be few amongst us who have not heard of the great religious revolution which, in the first half of the present century, was brought about by the most illustrious scholars at Oxford University, the centre of education in England. The leaders in this great Tractarian movement were Newman, Faber, Pusey, and Keble. The result of this religious uprising was that the English Church lost some of her brightest geniuses and the Catholic Church had the honor of satisfying the consciences of some of these great men. Neither Pusey nor Keble went so far as to enter the Catholic Church, but this is not surprising even though Keble was the originator of the work. We all know how difficult it is to throw aside the principles and prejudices which have been inculcated into us from our youth, and, therefore, the wonder is not that all of these men did not desert the English Church, but that so many did.

John Keble who started the famous Tractarian movement was a clergyman of the Anglican Church. He was moreover a poet of considerable merit, and the work on which his fame rests is his 'Christian Year.' This series of poems entitled the 'Christian year' includes a poem for each of the Sundays and feast-days throughout the year. In looking over this book we find that the order of the feasts corresponds to that used by the Catholic Church. We find also many of the doctrines and practices of the Catholic church beautifully portrayed in some of the poems of this son of the English Establishment.

A comparison has frequently been drawn between the Christian Year and Faber's Hymns. Faber writes with greater

freedom, and often displays much warmth and energy in his hymns; but Keble's poems possess a certain smoothness which is very pleasing to the ear, and they are much more polished than those of Faber. Faber's nature was such that nothing could restrain him; whereas Keble is said to have possessed a "shy and delicate reserve, which loved quiet paths and shunned publicity." Both Keble and Faber are the observing children of nature, and it is thence they derive the inspiration for many of their most beautiful hymns. There is a great distinction however to be drawn between these poets and most of the other poets who have taken nature as their standard. The latter forget the Creator and adore creation; the former adore the Creator in the things created. Here is the view which Keble takes of nature, as he has expressed it in one of his poems.

There is a book, who runs may read,
Which heavenly truth imparts,
And all the lore its scholars need
Pure eyes and Christian hearts.

The works of God above, below,
Within us and around,
Are pages in that book, to show
How God himself is found.

The Christian year is eminently Catholic, which is a most remarkable characteristic, since the author was himself a Protestant. We shall now examine some particular parts of his poems that we may observe with what piety and devotion he treats of spiritual subjects, and to begin we shall quote from his poem on Christmas, to see with what grandeur he describes the birth of the Redeemer, and the effect that it had on the universe.

What sudden blaze of song
Spreads o'er th' expanse of Heaven?
In waves of light it thrills along,
Th' angelic signal given—
"Glory to God!" from yonder central fire
Flows out the echoing lay beyond the starry
quire;