#### OUR LADY AND THE PROTESTANT POETS

A true authentic poet is not a mere rhymester or juggler of words. While he must of course know the technique of poetry, he must have primarily a soul that is open and responsive to beauty in all its forms. It is the beautiful that the poet sings and the higher the beauty, the nobler the verse. And when a man of genius sets out to sing of the great things of nature with a heart that is kindled with the loftiness of his theme, we are not surprised that he produces a masterpiece which is human heart has reasons of its own, and if the poet's heart is preeminent and an inspiration to noble deeds. And just because spiritual beauty far transcends the loveliness of nature or the grandeur of human exploits, it is true to say that great poets spread their wings widest when they sing of the things of the soul.

Of all the spiritual visions that is given human eyes to see, none save One is nobler than that of Mary, who unites in herself the soul-touching beauty of virginity and the compel ling tenderness of motherhood. Her life-story has been the theme of poet and artist since that blessed day when she first appeared among men; or, better still, since that day when under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost she sang of the beauties of the Lord's handmaid in that glorious canticle of spiritual joy which we O Mary, Mother, be not loth call the "Magnificat." In this sublime poem she not only set a standard but also gave an inspiration to the poets of all subsequent ages. By it she taught them to sing of the great Into our shadow bend thy face, ness that comes from holy living and union with God. From it poets can always learn that in proportion as the human element is made to subserve the spiritual, the real significance of sanctity becomes clearer. Indeed, the whole life of the Blessed Virgin seems like one grand poem, or, rather like a cycle of poetry. There is in her life the lyrical note, which reaches its sweetest cadence when she kneels by the crib of the Divine Infant voicing the great love of her heart in a low lullaby. there are dramatic notes, too, as when she sees her Son preaching to the people, or riding into the Royal City of Israel on Palm Sunday, acclaimed by all as the long-expected Messias. Nor is there lacking the note of tragedy, as when she loses the Boy in Jerusalem in his twelfth year: or again, when she gives him over in His thirtieth year to a world which she knows will cruelly put Him to death. But the most poignant note of tragedy comes on that first Good Friday when she sees Him led out like a lamb to slaughter, and suspend ed between heaven and earth in expiation for the sins of the world.

No wonder, then, that in all ages poets have chosen our Blessed Lady as their theme since from her life it is plain that everything base, every thing small, everything mean, was so far removed that to write about her was like treading through newlyfallen snow or playing with star-dust. In the ages of faith, scores of poets

extolled the beauties of Mary's life

and with true poetic incisiveness searched into the innermost depths of her heart. The Marian literature of the medieval Church is so tender and inspiring, especially after the that only those devoid of poetic feeling or living faith can read those hymns without emotion. Even our English language, when it could barely babble, crooned poems in Mary's honor. And if we take up the Latin literature of those ages of faith, what more soul-touching poem can we find than, say, the Stabat Mater" which for depth of feeling and tenderness of sentiment stands by itself apart. And there is nothing finer in the post-classical Greek language than St. John Damascene's hymn in honor of Our Lady's Assumption. If it be true that whereever there is a lively faith there is a deep devotion to our Blessed Lady, then we may take it for granted that the ages of faith there was a whole Marian cycle of poems beloved of the people. From the collection of medieval poems made by Blume and Dreves, as also from the collection of Mone, we can get a faint idea of the output of the medieval Church. In the popular mystery and morality plays that were enacted at Michaelmas and Candlemas in the great piazzas before the churches, the part of the Blessed Virgin was a very prominent one. Indeed, most of the miracle plays were nothing else than a poetic reproduction of what the popular mind conceived the life of our Blessed Lady to have been. About all this medieval poetry in honor of Our Lady, there is this one hall-mark-it is eminently healthy sane, though shot through withal, by a most virile and touching

The Reformation destroyed a great deal more than the faith in countless hearts. It was not only a religious safely say that it was also a literary It broke man off quickly and sharply from the traditions of the past, and every literature must grow out of traditions. It turned men's minds to merely earthly pleasures and pursuits, and thus dried up the fountains of true tenderness, which must be pious if they be anything at all. It exalted to a place of prime importance the purely material, thus banishing from the poet's horizon the spiritual visions which solicit the soul most strongly. The Reformation, even as far as poetry was concerned was a noticeable step backwards: therefore it is true to say that in the first two centuries of If thou sleep not, mother mourneth Protestantism practically all the Protestant poets, when they came to

speak of the Blessed Virgin, spoke of her not in Protestant terms but in accents distinctly Catholic. Shakespeare is a typical example of this, and if he just misses—despite his towering genius—scaling the heights that Dante attained, it is because he could not appreciate as fully as the Italian bard the true beauties and sanctities of womanhood as blossom ing forth most exquisitely in the Blessed Virgin.

It is a splendid justification of the Church's attitude toward the Blessed Virgin that practically all the great poets accept it unhesitatingly. Pascal somewhere says that the and if the poet's heart is preeminently a heart alive to the human element and the appeal of the human story, we can understand easily even Protestant poets have delighted to chant the praises of Mary, who

however spiritual and holy is still the mother of our poor human kind How fully Dante Gabriel Rossetti has realized this is beautifully exemplified in the poem "To the Virgin":

"Soul, is it Faith, or Love, or Hope, That lets me see her standing up Where the light of the Throne is bright?

Unto the left, unto the right, The cherubim, arrayed, conjoined Float inward to a golden point, And from between the seraphim The glory issues for a hymn.

clothe. Who seest and mayst not be seen, Bowing thee from the secret place. O Mary, Virgin, full of grace !'

It was not his puritanical training but the Catholic air which he breathed in Italy which made it possible for our Longfellow to sing thus of Mary in that soft melodious cadence that is his preeminently:

"Virgin and Mother of our dear Redeemer! All hearts are touched and softened at her name :

And even as children who have much

too-indulgent Father, in great shame,

Penitent, and yet not daring unattended To go into His presence, at the gate Speak with their sister, and confid-

ing wait Till she goes in before and inter-So men, repenting of their evil

And yet not venturing rashly to draw

With their requests an angry father's Offer to her their prayers and their confession.

And she for them in heaven makes intercession if our faith had given us And

nothing more Than this example of all woman-So mild, so merciful, so strong, so

So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving,

This were enough to prove it higher and truer

Than all the creeds the world had known before."

William Cullen Bryant has written a beautiful commentary on the words of the Hail Mary: "Blessed art thou amongst women." There is in "The Mother's Hymn" a note of tenderness which we by no means find in most of his other poems. It must have been in a moment when he was thinking of his own mother that he was lifted out of himself into a rare atmosphere in which he saw the great Mother of the human race standing like a matriarch at the head of that endless procession of humanity which by the example of her life she tries to draw heavenwards;

Lord. Who ordainest for mankind Benignant toils and tender cares, We thank Thee for the ties that bind The mother to the child she bears.

We thank Thee for the hopes that

Within her heart, as, day by day, The dawning soul from those young

Looks with a clearer, steadier ray.

And grateful for the blessing given With that dear infant on her knee, She trains the eye to look to heaven, The voice to lisp a prayer to Thee.

Such thanks the blessed Mary gave When from her lap the Holy Child Sent from on high to seek and save The lost of earth, looked up and

All-Gracious! grant to those who bear A mother's charge the strength and

light To guide the feet that own them e'er and a political upheaval; we can In ways of Love and Truth and Right.

> There is a note almost medieval in The Virgin's Cradle Hymn," by Samuel Coleridge, suggested by a print of the Blessed Lady which he saw in a German village. Except by Francis Thompson whose Catholic heart was responsive to all appeals of religious sentiment, this poem has perhaps never been equalled for ten-derness, deep feeling and sweet sim-

Sleep, sweet babe! my cares beguil

Mother sits beside thee smiling Sleep, my darling, tenderly !

Come, soft slumber, balmily!"

There is a rare figure in English iterature whom we all know and love-Ben Jonson-who was good enough to have been a Catholic, if he just missed coming into the Church. In a very narrow age, In a very narrow age, filled with small men, he looms big for his courage in praising Catholic practices which were universally We need not be surprised, then, that Jonson gets closer to the true significance of Mary's life and

Daughter, and Mother, and the Spouse of God. Alike of kin to that most blessed

Trine Of Persons, yet in union One Divine, How are thy gifts and graces blazed

Most holy, and pure Virgin, blessed Maid, Sweet Tree of Life, King David's Strength and Tower, The House of Gold, the Gate of

Heaven's power, The Morning Star whose light our fall hath stayed. Great Queen of queens, most mild. most meek, most wise,

Most Venerable, Cause of all our joy, Whose cheerful look our sadness doth destroy, And art the Spotless Mirror to man's

The Seat of Sapience, the most lovely Mother, And most to be admired of thy sex, Who made us happy, all, in thy

By bringing forth God's only Son, no

Thou Throne of Glory, beauteous found that as the moon, The rosy morning or the rising sun, Who like a giant hastes his course to

run, Till he hath reached his twofold point of noon."

At the present time when almost the entire world is at war, it may be well to recall a poem of Rudyard Kipling which opens up to our mind's eve a picture of medieval times when men just before the conflict threw themselves on their knees to recom mend their souls to our Blessed Lady The medieval chronicles, especially those of Florence, are full of just such themes as Kipling must have exquisite little hymn:

Ah, Mary, pierced with sorrow, Remember, reach and save The soul that comes tomorrow Before the God that gave!

Since each was born of woman, For each of utter need-True comrade and true foeman, Madonna, intercede!'

If there is an English poet who by nature and temperament was predisposed to reverence our Blessed Lady, it was William Wordsworth. soul open to the most subtle and elusive beauties of nature, he could not but be quick to see the blending of all beauties in a true image of Our Lady. These he shows forth in his exquisite poem, "The Virgin, than which perhaps nothing more beautiful has ever been composed:

Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrost

With the least shade of thought to Woman! above all woman glorified, Our tainted nature's Solitary Boast

Purer than foam on central ocean Brighter than eastern skies at day-

break strewn With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon Before her wane begins on heaven's

Thy image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween, Not unforgiven the suppliant knee

might bend. visible power, in which did blend All that was mixed and reconciled in

thee Of mother's love with maiden purity, Of high with low, celestial with

poet who lived out in his life the apostolic succession, an infallible revolt brought in by the Protestant chair, unity, sanctity, truth, an Reformation — Oscar Wilde, the inviolable priesthood, a holy sacridecadent, whose pathetic misuse of genius cannot but touch the heart.

"The Protestant churches are but Had he but devoted consistently and of yesterday, without authority, exclusively to religious themes the talents which he prostituted to unworthy naturalistic ends, he impotence almost atones for their might easily have become the finest own sin of schism by the way it sets religious singer in our tongue. It off the might, the majesty and the was probably the good Mother hereself who, as a reward for the few Catholic Church stands where her moments that he spent in writing the following sonnet, obtained for him at the eleventh hour the grace of reception into the Church

Was this His coming? I had hoped A scene of wondrous glory, as was

Of some great God Who in a rain of gold Broke open bars and fell on Danal:

Or a dread vision, as when Semele Sickening for love and unappeased desire, Pray'd to see God's clear body and

Caught her white limbs and slew her utterly With such glad dreams I sought this holy place,

And now with wondering eyes and heart I stand Before this supreme mystery of

Love: A kneeling girl with passionless pale

An Angel with a lily in his hand, And over both, with outstretched wings, the Dove!"

from one's enemies. From those sake; she treasures their words who are enemies of our faith, and and their works, her sons alone from one's enemies. those who have been educated in an | Chrysostom, Thomas Aquinas, and atmosphere that is frankly hostile to Duns Scotus, Cyprian and Augustine, the cult of the Blessed Virgin, we Anselm and Bernard are ours; their Catholics may Mary's prerogatives, Mary's beauty, feet we learn filial reverence and Mary's tenderness and Mary's mismission than any other Protestant flowers gathered from the Protestand her virtue so fragrant that even those who have come to curse or must fall down in loving wonderment at her who is; in very truth, "our tainted nature's solitary boast."-Thomas M. Schwertner, O. P., in Rosary Magazine.

#### ELIZABETH OF BELGIUM

The Queens of Europe are sad and anxious women nowadays; and the bravest and best-loved of them all is perhaps the saddest and most anxious. The letters of a British major to his mother, published since his death at the front in the little volume entitled "From Dugout and Billet," give a brief but moving glimpse of Elizabeth of Belgium, to whom he was pre-sented, not realizing at the moment that she was the Queen, or any one more imposing than "a little fairy lady with a face full of soft woman liness and pale care.

They fell naturally and simply into conversation, and the major soon

She only wanted to hear about two things — armies and soldiers.
She talked of them with unassuming intimacy.

She said that from the beginning of the War she had been moving about : always moving, never in one place. All the time I could see that she was repressing her feelings. You could see she was suffering acutely

"'Have you relatives fighting, madam?" I asked, greatly blundering.
"'All of my sons,' she replied, 'those

who have not already fallen.' "'But, forgive me, madam, your sons must be children!' Her eyes

filled 'My little ones are safe in England: but every Belgian, dead or fighting, is my son, she said with tremendous emotion. 'I am Rachel, Monsieur le Capitaine, and I can not be comforted. I can only try to comfort.

And so only did I stumble on the truth I was in the presence of one of the most tragic of living figures, the indomitable little Queen of Belgium. think the sun got into my eyes then."-Youth's Companion.

#### CATHOLICISM ROMAN AND ANGLICAN

In his book "Catholicism Roman and Anglican, Professor A. M. Fairbairn, a non Catholic, says :

"I freely admit the pre eminence of Catholicism as an historical institution; here she is without a rival, or a peer. If to be at once the most permanent and extensive, the most plastic and inflexible ecclesiastical organization were the same thing as the most perfect embodiment, and vehicle of religion, then the claim of Catholicism were simply indisputable. The man in search of an authoritative church may not hesitate . once let him assume that a visible and audible authority is of the essence of religion, and he has no choice; he must become or get himself reckoned a Catholic.

The his understanding with invincible charms. Her sons proudly say to him: 'She alone is Catholic, continuous, venerable, august, the very Church Christ founded and His Apostles instituted and organized. She possesses all the attributes and There was an unfortunate English notes of Catholicity—an unbroken

Master placed her on the rock endowed with the prerogatives and powers He gave her, and 'against her the gates of hell shall not prevail.'

'Supernatural grace is hers; it watched over her cradle, has followed her in all her ways through all her centuries, and has not forsaken her yet. She is not, like Protestantism, a concession to the negative spirit, an unholy compromise with naturalism. Everything about her is positive and transcendant; she is the bearer of divine truth, the representative of divine order, the supernatural living in the very heart, and before the very fact of the natural. The saints, too, are hers, and the man she receives joins their communion, enjoys their godly fellowship, feels their influence, participates in their merit and the blessings they distribute. Their earthly life made the past of the Church illustrious, their heavenly activity binds the visible and the invisible into unity, and lifts time into eternity. To honor the saints is to honor sanctity; the Church which teaches man to live holy, helps him to love holiness. And the

fathers are hers; their laborings. which says that it is lawful to learn sufferings, martyrdoms, were for her she treasures their words are able to say: 'Athanasius and wealth is our inheritance: at their

ant garden must prove to us if it can prove anything at all, that Mary's heapty is acts and rites with an awful yet blissful significance; turns all worship into a divine parable, which speaks the deep things of God, now into a medium of His gracious and consolatory approach to man, and man's awed and contrite, hopeful and prevailing approach to Him."-Catholic Columbian

WEARY FOR WANT OF WORK

"One of the most pitiable objects in the world is the jaded rich man, remarks the Casket. "Some people may find it hard to believe that a rich man can be jaded; can be tired of things that his money buys; can be discontented. 'I'd like to try it,' says some one; 'I'll bet you I'd not tired of it.' But, tired, jaded, rich men are to be met with every day in populous communities. are tired of their automobiles, of their pianos, of their yachts theatre, and opera and ball: tired of pleasure; tired of everything. This is the curse of a too great devotion to money or to pleasure. god of them, and the god turns his back on you and leaves you lonely and disappointed.'

#### THE CATHOLIC OFTEN TO BLAME

If the Catholic party to a mixed marriage had had more zeal and a better knowledge of what the Church eaches, the non-Catholic might have had the grace of conversion. In many cases too much thought is given to the mere material things-income, house and furnishings, clothes guests, etc., and the difference of religion is comfortably set aside until "after the wedding." The young Catholic wife or husband has lost the golden opportunity, and the coming of children only widens the breach that difference in religious belief is sure to make.

Dealing with the problem, a writer in the Ave Maria expresses his conviction as follows: 'Mixed marriages for our young

people are, for the greater part, wholly unnecessary and many of them now take place solely because of the lack of a little reasonable effort on the part of those directly and indirectly concerned. Charging a complete lack of effort on the part of the slothful, negligent

Catholic partner to interest the non-Catholic in his or her religion, this writer draws upon instances that came under his observation: "More than once I have personally known non-Catholic young men and young women who were absolutely indifferent on the question of coming

into the Church" he says. "I have known them to assert that the question of their becoming Catholic was 'up' to the Catholic prospective partner; and it has been at times an amazement to me that young Catho lics, enaturally ignorant of the pitfalls

ahead, could be too indifferent even to ask a prospective life partner to look into the claims of the Church.

The loyal Catholic, with a firm belief in what the Church teaches, will not be heedless of her admoni tions against mixed marriages. He will place duty first of all, and often through so doing, will win the respect of the non-Catholic, and lead him or her to ask instruction on the teachings of a Church that has such loval children. With the desire for instruction and the grace of Godnever refused to an earnest seekerwhat might have been a mixed mar-riage becomes a Catholic marriage, and a home is founded on a basis of love and trust and unity.-Sacred Heart Review.



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