

JOHN B. TABB.

CONVERT AND CATHOLIC PRIEST.

A Charming Poet; a Member of a Special School; an Admirable Essay upon the Works and Influence of Fr. Tabb.

A friend, a well known Western writer, once wrote to me: "What do you know about a poet who signs his name John B. Tabb, his poems are delicious?" My answer was, that I knew nothing of his personal history, but that his poems had found their way into my aristocratic scrap-book. Here I might pause to whisper that the adjective aristocratic, in my sense, has nothing haughty about it. When joined to the noun scrap-book, a good commentator—they are scarce—would freely translate the phrase the indwelling of good poetry. Since then my personal knowledge of the poet has grown slowly, a slight stock and no leaves. Even that, like my old coat, is second-handed. Such material, no matter how highly recommended by the keepers of the golden-balls, is usually found to be a poor bargain. But here it is, keeping in mind that rags are better than no clothing, and that older proverb—half a loaf is better than no bread. "John B. Tabb, (I quote) was born in Virginia, when or where I know not. Becoming a Catholic, he studied for the priesthood and was ordained." Here my data fails me. At present he is the professor of literature in St. Charles college, Maryland. It is something in his favor.

THIS SCANTY BIOGRAPHICAL FARE.

Where the biography is long, laudatory and in rounded periods, it is approached as one would a snake in the grass, with a kind of fear that in the end you may be bit. "May I be skinned alive," said that master of word-selection and phrase-juggler, Flaubert, "before I ever turn my private feelings to literary account." And the reader, with the stench of recent key-hole biography in his nostrils, shouts bravo. Flaubert's phrase might easily have hung on the pen of the retiring worshipper of the beautiful, "the Roman Catholic priest, who drudges through a daily round of pedagogical duties in St. Charles College." This quoted phrase may stand. Pedagogy, at best, is a dull pursuit for a poet. It is not congenial, and I have held an odd idea that whatever was not congenial, disguise it as you may, is drudgery. And all this by way of propping the quoted sentence. The strange thing is that in the midst of this daily round of drudgery the poet finds time to produce what a recent critic well calls "verse-gems of thought." These verse-gems, if judged by intrinsic evidence, would argue an environment other than a drudgery habitation. In truth, it is hard to desecrate them by predicating of them any environment other than a spiritual one.

This brings us to write of Fr. Tabb's poetry that it is elusive, from a critical point of view. When you bring your preconceived literary cannons to bear upon it, they are found wanting—too clumsy to test the delicacy, fineness of touch, and the permeated spiritualism embodied in the verse-gem. It is well summarized in the saying that "it possesses to the full a white estate of virginal prayerful art." One might define it by negatives, such as the contrary of

PASSION POETRY.

The point of view most likely to give the clearest conception would be found in the sentence: an evocation from within by a highly spiritualized intelligence. The poet has caught the higher music, the music of a soul in which dwell order and method. In other words, he has assiduously cultivated to its fullest development both the spiritual sense and the moral sense.

It is easy to trace in Fr. Tabb's poetry the influence of Sidney Lanier. It has been asserted, and with much truth, that Lanier's influence has strangely fascinated the younger school of Southern poets. Gladen, in his book on Younger American Poets, tells us that "Lanier differs from the other dead poets included in his book, in that he was not only a poet but the founder of a school of poetry." To his school belongs Fr. Tabb, a school following the founder whose aim is to depict

"All gracious curves of slender wings,  
Bark mottlings, fibre spirallings,  
Fern wavings and leaf flickerings.

Yea, all fair forms and sounds and lights,  
And warmths and mysteries and might,  
Of Nature's utmost depths and heights."  
The defects of this school are best seen

in the founder. He was a musician before a poet, and helplessly strove to catch shades by words that can only be rendered by music. Fr. Tabb has learned this limitation of his school. For the glowing semi-panteism of Lanier he has substituted the true and no less beautiful doctrine of Christianity. All his verse-gems are redolent of his faith. They are religious in the sense that they are begotten by faith and breathe the air of the sanctuary. To read them is to leave the hum and pain of life behind, and enter the cloister where all is silent and peaceful, where dwelleth

THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

Of them it is safe to assert that their white estate of virginal, prayerful art shall constitute their immortality. Fr. Tabb has not, as yet, thought fit to give them a more permanent form than they have in the current magazines. Catholic literature, and, especially, poetry, is so meagre that when a true singer touches the lyre it is not to be wondered at that those of his household, should desire to possess his songs in a more worthy dwelling than that of an ephemeral magazine. In the absence of the coming charming volume I quote from my scrap-book a few of the verse-gems, thereby trusting to widen the poet's audience and in an humble way gain lovers for his long promised volume.

What could illustrate the peculiar genius of our poet, better than the delicious gem that he has called

"THE WHITE JESSAMINE."

I knew she lay above me,  
Where the casement all the night  
Shone, softened with a phosphor glow  
Of sympathetic light,  
And that her fadling spirit pure  
Was plumbing fast for flight.

Each tendril throbb'd and quicken'd  
As I nightly climbed apace,  
And could scarce restrain the blossoms  
When, near the destined place,  
Her gentle whisper thrill'd me  
Ere I gaz'd upon her face.

I waited, darkling, till the dawn  
Should touch me into bloom,  
While all my being pant'd  
To outpour its first perfume,  
When, lo! a paler flower than mine  
Had blossom'd in the gloom!

"Content" is another gem of exquisite thought and workmanship.

CONTENT.

Were all the heavens an overlaiden bough  
Of ripened benediction lowered above me,  
What could I crave, soul-satisfied as now,  
That thou dost love me?

The door is shut. To each unsheltered blessing  
Henceforth I say, "Depart! What wouldst  
thou of me?"  
Beggared I am of want, this boon possessing,  
That thou dost love me.

"Photographed" may well make the trio in the more fully illustrating his genius:—

PHOTOGRAPHED.

For years, an ever-shifting shade  
The sunshine of thy visage made;  
Then, spider-like, the captive caught  
In meshes of immortal thought.

E'en so, with half-averted eye,  
Day after day I passed thee by,  
Till, suddenly, a subtler art  
Enshrined thee in my heart of heart.

"Not even the infinite surfeit of Columbus literature of the last six months can deprive Fr. Tabb's tribute in Lippincott's of its sweetness and light," says the Review of Reviews:

"With faith unshadowed by the night,  
Undazzled by the day,  
With hope that plumed thee for the flight  
And courage to assay,  
God sent thee from the crowded ark,  
Christ-bearer, like the dove,  
To find, o'er sunning waters dark,  
New lands for conquering love."

As a final selection, we may well conclude these brief notes on a poet with staying powers by quoting a poem, contributed to the Cosmopolitan, called "Silence," a poem permeated with his fine spiritual sense:

SILENCE.

BY JOHN B. TABB.

Temple of God, from all eternity  
Alone like Him without beginning found;  
Of time, and space, and solitude the bound,  
Yet in thyself of all communion free.  
Is, then, the temple holier than He  
That dwells therein? Must reverence surround  
With barriers the portal, lest a sound  
Profane it? Nay; behold a mystery!

What was, remains; what is, has ever been:  
The lowliest the loftiest sustains.  
A silence, by no breath of utterance stirred—  
Virginity in motherhood—remains.  
Clear, midst a cloud of all-pervading sin,  
The voice of Love's unutterable word.

WALTER LECKY.

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RELIGIOUS NEWS.

It is likely that the Vicariate-Apostolic of Arizona will be made a Bishopric.

The massacre of Catholics at Kovno, Russia, by the Cossacks has been confirmed.

The Bishop of Newport and Monevia has a pastoral on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

A remnant of the petty schism, long ago generated at Goa, existed in Ceylon. It has now vanished.

The corner-stone of the new St. Louis College, San Antonio, was laid December 31, by Right Rev. Bishop Neraz.

The pupils of St. Joseph's High School, Manchester, are to organize a society to be known as the Knights of Mary.

The jubilee of the superior general of the Irish Christian Brothers (Brother Maxwell) was solemnly celebrated recently.

The fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Apostleship of Prayer will be celebrated during the coming year all over the world.

At the late elections in Holland Mgr. Everts was opposed by Diggellen, the Grand Master of the Dutch Freemasons. The priest was elected.

The monastery of the Good Shepherd at Troy, N. Y., has received from the Chicago exhibition commissioners a gold medal for being a model reformatory.

Father Honeyman, of St. Augustine's church, Chilton, Wis., became insane and died the other night in the train by which he was being taken to an asylum. He was 32 years of age.

Foreign exchanges announce the death of Very Rev. Canon Rogerson, of Newport, Shropshire, England, and Rev. Edward Lynch, of the Diocese of Kilmore, County Cavan, Ireland.

Easter Sunday this year will fall on March 25. A double feast will then occur, as that of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin is also kept on that day. It is many years since those two feasts thus came together.

Hugh O. Pentecost, a former Protestant minister, denounces the A.P.A. as an unpatriotic order. He says Catholics are now and always have been as loyal to American institutions as any other class of people.

The St. Louis school board has rescinded the rule permitting the dismissal of Catholic children before the close of school hours to attend religious instruction in their respective parish churches.

Information has been received of the appointment of the Rev. P. J. Donahue, the rector of the cathedral, Baltimore, to be Bishop of Wheeling, to succeed Rt. Rev. J. J. Kain, D.D., who was recently made Archbishop of St. Louis.

Although the motion for the repeal of the anti-Jesuit law has passed the German Reichstag it can have no practical effect unless it is also adopted by the Federal Council, and then authorized by the Kaiser. Opinions differ as to the probability of it being thus successful.

Eugene Kelly, the Catholic banker, who retires from business with \$10,000,000 honestly earned, was always liberal to the Church, to its poor, and the cause of Ireland, whence he came to New York, where he landed sixty-two years ago, at which time his entire means were but \$15.

Brother Maurelain, secretary and manager of the Catholic Educational Exhibit, left Chicago for the South on Tuesday of last week to seek a much needed rest. His health is very much impaired after a constant strain of more than two years, during which he has given his whole attention to the Educational Exhibit.

The Church in France lost eleven prelates, amongst whom were five Archbishops, comprising the Cardinals of Lyons and of Rennes, three bishops and four Vicars-Apostolic. Four Sees are at present vacant—namely, the Archbishopric of Besancon, and the bishoprics of Evreux, Orleans and Mans.

The total number of churches within the city of Chicago is 108; of these 98 have resident pastors, and ten are attended from other parishes. The 98 are divided as follows: English-speaking congregations, 51; German, 22; French, 5; Polish, 11; Bohemian, 6; Italian, 1; Arabian, 1; Lutheran, 1.

ROMAN NEWS.

(Gleaned from the London Universe.)

The forthcoming appointment of Mgr. Salviati, Secretary of the Congregation of the Council, to be Vice-Camerlengo is probable.

It is positively affirmed in authorized circles that Mgr. Satolli has been appointed Archbishop of Bologna, but we are not warranted in stating it as fact.

The publication of the collective letter of the Hungarian episcopacy on the politico-religious laws is announced for Monday next. The struggle promises to be fierce.

Cardinal Richard caused prayers to be said in all the churches of Paris at Christmas for France, in consequence of the dastardly attempt in the Chamber of Deputies.

So far from recent letters from Rome representing the Pope as an invalid, they speak of his presence, his voice, and his energetic gestures as those of one in the enjoyment of capital health.

Among those whose names are mentioned as likely to be promoted to the red hat in the next Consistory are Mgr. Fausti, Auditor and titular-Bishop of Seleucia, and Mgr. Mauri, Archbishop of Ferrara.

The preparatory Congregation of Rites will assemble on the 9th of January, under the presidency of Cardinal Parocchi, to examine the cause of Beatification of the Venerable J. B. Vianney, parish priest of Ars.

Denial is given at the Vatican to the report that Mgr. Ferrata is to be recalled from Paris to be sent to Vienna to replace in the nunciature Mgr. Agliardi, who is to be named Archbishop of Milan.

The Germania publishes a letter of the Archbishop of Posen declaring that it is not exact that the Chancellor of the German empire advised him, either officially or confidentially, that a ministerial decision would re-establish the teaching of the Polish language in the primary schools of his diocese.

The Holy Father has nominated Mgr. Fierney to the bishopric of Hartford in the United States. Father Joaquim of the Crucifixion (Nicola Giannelli of the Passionists) to the bishopric of Bucharest, and Father Antonio Usse, of the Seminary of Foreign Missions at Paris, to be Vicar-Apostolic of Northern Burma.

The Czar Alexander III., anxious to testify his gratitude to the French clergy for their sympathetic attitude towards his officers on their recent visit, has decided to forward very high decorations to Cardinal Ricard, Archbishop of Paris, the Archbishops of Aix and Lyons, and the Bishops of Marseilles, Toulon, and Frejus.

On the occasion of celebrating the fortieth anniversary of his assumption of the Cardinalate, the Holy Father received the Executive Committee for his Jubilee festival, and warmly thanked them for the zeal and activity they had displayed in the discharge of their labour of love. The Pope afterwards ordered thirteen thousand lire to be distributed among the poor of Rome, and three thousand lire among necessitous priests.

The great doctrinal importance of the Encyclical on the Scriptures is still spoken of, and the publication of the document in a volume, with the Latin text beside it, by the firm of Roger and Chernoviz, of Paris, is cordially commended. The praise bestowed on the work refers to it as the most solid achievement of a Pontiff, who has done all that he could for the integrity of dogma and the progress of morality.

A POSTMASTER'S OPINION.

"I have great pleasure in certifying to the usefulness of Hagyard's Yellow Oil," writes D. Kavanagh, postmaster of Umfraville, Ont., "having used it for soreness of the throat, burns, colds, etc., I find nothing equal to it."

Why is a private detective employed in Her Majesty's mint like a Christmas confection? Because he is a Mint spy.

HACKING COUGH CURED.

Gentlemen,—My little boy had a severe hacking cough, and could not sleep at night. I tried Hagyard's Pectoral Balsam for him and he was cured at once. Mrs. J. HACKETT, Linwood, Ont.