

friend, James Shirley, would likewise have shared the common fate of Catholic authors but for one immortal lyric, "Death's Final Conquest." Shirley was the last of the Shakespearian school of dramatists, and excels most of his contemporaries in purity of thought and expression.

But a greater than any of these last few now claims our attention. John Dryden, the master of the Classical Age, is one of those whose great and undying influence on our language reflects a glorious lustre over Catholicism. As an essayist or dramatist, whether in the fields of satirical, controversial or lyrical poetry, he is equally at home. His vast range successfully covered all branches of the literary art. Dryden's conversion was productive of great results. It took the greater part of his life to settle his convictions, and he has expressed in poetry his religious feelings in different stages of the journey. The "Religio Laici," written to defend the Church of England, reveals him in the transition state, a somewhat sceptical spirit underneath an orthodox exterior. The literary merit of this poem stands very high, but it was completely surpassed by "The Hind and Panther," the first fruit of Dryden's conversion. This is one of the masterpieces of English literature. The author's pleadings for the new-found light are expressed with great force and beauty. Especially admirable are the opening lines in which Dryden pictures the Church of Rome as

"A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchanged,
Fed on the lawns, and in the forest ranged;
Without, unspotted; innocent within,
She feared no danger, for she knew no sin"

Macaulay terms the "Hind and Panther" the best criterion of Dryden's wonderful powers, while Hallam praises highly the sharp yet pleasant wit, the close and strong reasoning which renders it "the energy of Bossuet in verse." The "Ode to St. Cecilia" and the celebrated translation of Virgil, were the other chief poetic compositions of Dryden's Catholic days. His prose writings, among the best in the language, offer no less striking evidence of deep affection and reverence for the Faith which "moralized his song."

During the lifetime of Dryden there appeared a book which has since lost a great deal of the notoriety it then possessed.