

CARDINAL NEWMAN

The Angel of the English Language

THE latest appreciation of Cardinal Newman as a writer is from the pen of Rev. Dr. Alexander Whyte, a Scottish Presbyterian. This is what he says of Newman's mastery of English :

" If the English language has an angel residing in it and presiding over it, surely that angel is Newman. Or, at least, the angel who has the guardianship of the English language committed to him must surely have handed his own pen to Newman as often as that master has sat down to write English. No other writer in the English language has written it quite like Newman. He is simply inimitable. He is simply alone as a writer and has no fellow."

This mastery of English was not won by Newman without hard work. He himself tells us in words that recall and seem to justify Carlyle's definition of genius as " an infinite capacity for taking pains." In a letter written in 1869 to the Rev. John Hayes, Vicar of Colebrookdale, Newman said : " It is simply the fact that I have been obliged to take great pains with everything I have written, and I often write chapters over and over again besides innumerable corrections and interlinear additions. I am not stating this as a merit, only that some persons write their best first, and I very seldom do. Those who are good speakers may be supposed to be able to write off what they want to say. I, who am not a good speaker, have to correct laboriously what I put on paper. I have heard that Archbishop Howley, who was an elegant writer, betrayed the labor by which he became so by this mode of speaking, which was most painful to hear from his hesitations and alterations — that is, he was correcting his compositions as he went along.

" However, I may truly say that I have never been in the practice since I was a boy of attempting to write well, or to form an elegant style. I think I never have written for writing sake ; but my one and single desire and aim has been to do what is so difficult — viz., to