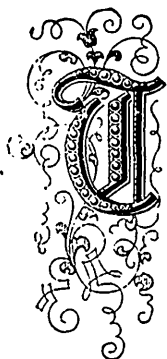


CARDINAL NEWMAN'S POETRY.



THE little volume of poems published anonymously under this humble title (*Verses on Various Occasions*), produced an impression immediately on its publication, not only among Catholics but among English readers in general, which could hardly have been caused by a volume of poems from any other writer of the day, with the exception perhaps of the Laureate. The explanation is to be found in the initials J. H. N. at the end of the preface—a signature long ago of world-wide celebrity. . . . As long as any memory of the English nation and the English language remains among men. Dr. Newman, we doubt not, will be remembered and revered; not indeed as one of the few whom poetry has made great, but as one of the great men who have written poetry”—H. W. Wilberforce.

This critic might have added that when Macaulay's famous New Zealander stands upon a broken arch of the tottering London bridge and meditates upon the ruins of Westminster and his musings oscillate towards the illustrious writers of England, he will rate Newman as one of the most brilliant gems in her literary diadem. It would be foolhardy to deny that the celebrated Cardinal was one of the ablest wielders of the pen that the English race has produced during the present century.

Some may be surprised and suspicious when we claim that the soul of the movement which deprived the established Church of England of her best and brainiest men, also possessed and exercised the rarest poetical gifts. It does, indeed, seem somewhat strange and incredible that he who was so devoted to the interior life and so ascetic in character, should make a successful essay into the province of poetry and grind forth not heavy mon-

otonous pieces of prosy verse, but should strike some of the sweetest notes in the grand orchestra of English song. The world is reluctant to admit that a man who is distinguished in science a master of prose, and a lucid, convincing preacher can also take a high rank in a line apparently so adverse to his own. But to those who carefully observe the trend of affairs and are not content with a superficial view of a subject, it is quite evident that the self-same qualities that produce a successful preacher should be those that enter most largely into the make-up of a great poet.

Lest this should seem to be captious special pleading, we would merely draw attention to the fact, that he who played with such a master-hand upon the chords of the human heart as to be the leader of the greatest and grandest school of thought that England has seen during this nineteenth century of enlightenment and progress; who delivered sermons laden with the highest spiritual conceptions, comprising as one critic has said "the grasp of a strong man's hand with the trembling tenderness of a woman's heart," most assuredly could have taken a foremost place among the poets of mankind.

Those who have pondered over and and studied Newman have all come to the one conclusion that had he devoted himself entirely to literature he would have been a poet. "A sermon from him," says Froude, "was a poem formed on one distinct idea." Professor Shairp observes "that he spoke out the truths that were within him, spoke them with all the fervor of a prophet and the severe beauty of a poet."

Another critic writes—"The very opening of *Callista* shows the scholar and the poet The elements of splendor and beauty are brought together by a master-hand and the effect is gorgeous The tuneful modulation of the sentences cannot fail to strike the reader's