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THE YEAR'S CATHOLIC POETS.

Catholic Writers of the Year Reviewed by Charles J. Phillips.

The close of the year brings a notable addition to the season's Catholic poetry, a volume from the pen of Louise Imogen Guiney, one of the world's best known writers. Miss Guiney has been living in England for some years past, a willing exile, but now she returns to her native land with new harvests garnered, her undeniably great gifts ripened to still greater fulfillment. "Happy Endings," is the title that Miss Guiney happily gives. It contains her "best poems," say her publishers. But this Catholic poet of true distinction has never produced anything that could not rank with the best. Sustained dramatic powers is hers; she individualizes words and gives to them a tone, a harmony, that no other has given. The play and gleam of light and color, the subtle shades of thought and emotion, the divine radiance of pure passion, the rapture and enthusiasm of faith and devotion are all within her range. Her new book confirms every word of this. No wonder Louise Imogen Guiney has an international fame! She is Catholic always, highly and devotedly so.

"The Prison Ships and Other Poems," by Thomas Walsh is, I believe, the first collection made of this poet's work. Yet his name has been known for years, he has contributed to the best periodicals of the country. His work is a stride ahead of the common purring poetry of the day. It possesses not only beauty, but strength. There are force and attack in his music, but it is even and harmonious.

The characteristics of Thomas Walsh's poetry are a certain cosmopolitan scope of thought and expression—like sinners in the snows of Russia and in the sunshine of Spain, and is so small at home, a very fine and somewhat fragile delicacy of imagery, and an undertone of terror that even the universal poet's gift of softness and tenderness does not wholly remove.

One who need not be told that Thomas Walsh is a Catholic. He shows his faith in his poems, in his appreciation of the world's beauties hallowed by religion, and most of all in his spiritual optimism. And when he sings of Christmas time, of Bethlehem and Nazareth, he wins the heart with the childlike simplicity of his love. A most sweet thought is expressed in the story of the lamb which the shepherds bore to Bethlehem the first Christmas morn; and "At Nazareth," picturing the Divine Child on His seventh birthday, reminding His Mother of the gifts the kings once had brought Him, is thrilling and deeply pathetic.

If we have not yet, in this country, adopted a Catholic Poetry Club, we have, beyond a doubt, a Francis Thompson Club. No need to say more of that unhappy genius here than to remark that some do not fancy his poetry, mystic and strange, while others have over him—hence a cult. But Charles Hanson Towne, one of our best-known Catholic poets, has done something far more valuable than raving over Francis Thompson; he has sung of him, and sung worthily. Mr. Towne's contribution to the year's Catholic poetry is "The Quiet Singer; and other poems"—the "quiet singer" being Thompson. Mr. Towne does not rave; he sings. And the title poem of his book is a good measure by which to gauge his powers. The same Catholic spirit that we look for in all Catholic poets' work beautifies these poems. There is one alone that is unforgettablely beautiful, telling the story of a dream dreamed by the Blessed Virgin, a dream wherein she sees the Divine Babe dead; and the waking of our Lady from that dream is pictured with such a thrill of happiness that one's heart is filled.

William Winter, one of America's ablest critics—and one whose poems, as well as critical writings, reveal a deep appreciation of the Catholic spirit—said this of John S. McGroarty's Wander Songs: "No one will read these poems without an emotion of mingled sadness and pleasure, or without a feeling that the author is a genuine singer of beauty, tenderness, sentiment and grace." Mr. Winter is right. Mr. McGroarty's poems are all that the venerable critic says. They are simple songs; their beauty lies in their simplicity. This poet's voice is not so much commanding as appealing, with a tenderness that is touching. His poems are the kind that some love to keep in old scrap-books, and to read over and over again.

There is not much of the "old-fashioned" simple poetry written nowadays. There are too few "people's poems." But A Round of Rimes, by Denis A. McCarthy, is

a book of people's poems. Mr. McCarthy strikes at the heart-chord in many of his verses, and his lines sing and swing like the good old songs of "other days." There is the lilt of Celtic music in his songs, and also "the tear and the smile." His American poems are not so appealing, though they have a militant air that one cannot miss. However, in none of them, so matter how ringing the strain of "A Song for the Flag," "The Veterans," "The Child-Workers," "Give Them a Place to Play," and others of like thought—in none of these does the author seem quite himself; or, rather, so wholly himself as in the Irish songs.

Taken all in all, A Round of Rimes is one of the year's best books of poetry. True, it does not voice the high, far cry of the stars, the echoing beauty of these illimitable spaces wherein some poets find sole utterance; but it possesses a sweet and endearing beauty, for it strikes the heart-chord; and is not this the first province of poetry?

Thomas A. Daly will be remembered for his Canzoni, which made the author famous. Mr. Daly enjoys the distinction of having invented something new in poetry; that is, he has voiced, in living song, a heart that had not found utterance until he came to give it freedom—the Italian in America, "The Dagoman." Canzoni struck a responsive note, for it ran into several editions, and now comes Canzoni, inimitable songs, this author's latest and best work. The volume is divided thus: "Italics," the Italian dialect songs; "Hibernic," Irish poems; "Anglic," songs in plain English; and "Songs of the Months." The Italian dialect poems are full of fun and fire, and they voice a plaintive cry. Canada is building up a literature of her own, and Catholic writers are taking their place in the first ranks of that literature. Of course, this is not news, for since the days when Mrs. Sadler wrote, and Montreal was a centre of letters, the Catholic pen has been busy in Canada. But to-day that pen is producing work that daily grows more national, more distinctly Canadian. We need not mention the names of Dr. O'Hagan, Father Dollard ("Sivnamon"), Dr. Roche, Dr. Fischer, Margaret Lillis Hart, and others.

From the pen of one of these, Dr. William J. Fischer, who edits "The Bookworm" in The Register, comes a volume of tasteful poems entitled: "The Toiler."

They are all of the sweet and simple things of earth, of the beauties of friendship, the loveliness of nature, the joys and sorrows of life as we live it every day. Dr. Fischer is at his best in country lanes and meadows, be it June or January.

Dr. Fischer is a poet of whom Canada may be proud. It is gratifying to see his work, infused with the true Catholic spirit, receiving the wide recognition in his own land.

This is some of the Catholic poetry of the year 1909. It can be taken as representative, and not without pride, even though there be no great epics, no immortal dramas, in the little catalogue. Much of this poetry by Catholic poets in the year 1909 sings sweetly, ever so warily at times. But what we want are larger things and a deeper utterance. Let us embody some of our Catholic philosophy in our poetry to strengthen and infuse it with the element of solidity, with sanity and optimism, and we will bring forth the larger things, the deeper utterance. It is not "the philosophy that would clip an angel's wings;" it is the philosophy that will make our poetry transcendently great and beautiful. If we can strike so deep and thoughtful a chord as Charles J. O'Malley does in these lines:

"Spade that shall dig my grave,
Outside the door of life art thou waiting!
And art thou sharpened now by some knife
While I hear the birds of spring-time mating?"

—if we can strike so deep a note, so also can we make the soul reverberate with Louise Imogen Guiney's triumphant

"How blessed are the dead!"

These words have a poignant meaning to-day, in writing of the Catholic poets of the year; for one of their most gifted leaders has passed, since the writing of this little review began, to that bourne where in truth is known "how blessed are the dead!" In the death of Father Tabb—John Banister Tabb—America's literature has suffered a heavy loss. His work was ever of the exquisite order, the dry-point etching of poetry; and it was witty; he was pre-eminently an epigrammatist. He was a poet, for he sang; and he sang because he was a poet. His literary production during 1909 was, indeed, a gem, the most perfect of any single year of his career. And this, despite the fact that for over a year he was totally blind. He was a priest, and a Catholic poet; yet he wrote comparatively little so-called "devotional" poetry, although he was really at his best in expressing religious devotion, especially devotion to the Blessed Vir-

Archbishop Issues Letter Anent Municipal Elections.

Electors Advised to Conscientiously Exercise Their Franchise, to Frustrate Secret Societies and Support Anti-Alcoholic Crusade.

Archbishop's House, Montreal, 21st January, 1910

Dear Beloved Brethren,

In a few days you shall be called upon to discharge one of the most important of your civic duties, the election of the Administrators of the city's affairs. The purport of this letter is to urge upon you the necessity of doing your duty as conscience and honor dictate.

The occurrences of the past few months prompt us to give special directions as to how you should act under the circumstances.

The International Eucharistic Congress about which I have often spoken to you of late will be held here next September. The enthusiasm it has aroused on all sides is most consoling indeed. From a national and a religious point of view the demonstrations will be an incalculable boon. In Faith and charity should we all be united. It is not for us to interfere in the choice of candidates. As the Eucharistic Congress, however, is apparently one of the planks of the coming elections—non-Catholics themselves have proved that such is the case by an act which does them honor—we declare that it would grieve us very much were the Majority to be contested on racial or national grounds. We trust that candidates and electors alike shall view the matter from a loftier standpoint.

The members of the Board of Control and of the Municipal Council should be upright citizens, gentlemen whose honesty and moral lives are above suspicion. We want disinterested men, proof against all corrupt practices, men of courage who will see that the laws of public morality are enforced.

It is useless to deny the fact that there are amongst us followers of sects condemned by the Church. If they do not come out boldly and assert their principles they are far from being idle. Their writings and speeches as well as their tactics are an indication of their spirit and aims.

Their ambition is to transplant over here, amidst our God-fearing people, the scandals and religious dissensions of Europe. Numerically they are not strong, thank God. They are persistent in their energetic efforts and are leaving nothing undone in order to attain their ends. They are dangerous enemies, and we warn you to be on your guard against them.

If such citizens, Free-Masons or supporters of the adepts of any lodge

FATHER TIM'S PORT OF CALL

Large Hearted Priest Holds Out a Helping Hand to the Perishing Ones and Becomes Their Idol.

It is almost three years now since Father Tim began his work of caring as best he could for the unfortunate and needy, says the St. Louis Republic. Every bed was taken during the nights of bitter cold, and scores of unfortunates were glad to roll up on the floor in the corridors and the big sitting-rooms, glad to be out of the piercing blasts that were sweeping up and down the streets and rattling at the shutters. Not a man was turned away from the warmth and cheer of the wanderer's hotel. All who could not pay for a meal were kept from laying themselves down to rest hungry.

Father Timothy Dempsey, big-bodied, big-hearted, gray-eyed Irishman from Tipperary, is the man these exiles of the "Lost Legion" have to thank for shelter, food and warmth. Father Tim, as they call him, is their idol, the man to whom they go in their time of trouble. Never was a man better fitted for his work or more in love with it. It is a case of the round peg in the round hole. Every man's cap is lifted when he passes them in the corridors of the big sitting-room. The instant he sets foot inside the doorway he is besieged with questions and requests. They crowd around his big frame like children, and he has a word of cheer and advice and it may be a bit of caution for every man among them.

HIS DOOR ALWAYS OPEN.

Clad in a long black coat, and a big fur cap on his blonde head, he stalks through the rooms of the queerest lodging-house of all the lodging-houses ever created. He is the personification of hope to these broken men who have lived to man know how, and have heaven only knows what stories back of their presence there. From them Father Dempsey knows no rest. There is never a moment that he can really call his own, as they come to his house at all hours of the daylight and in the early evening. He is at the call of the "Lost Legion" who darken his door a hundred times a day to tell him their troubles, that all go to swell the aggregate of human misery. His door bell rings, the door is opened, and some shell of a man tells his story, his restless hands twisting his cap and his eyes wistful as a little child's on the priest's face.

Father Tim is not so much concerned with what a man has been as what he is. Is he hungry? Has he any shoes? What can he do if work is found for him? These are the questions in whose answers he is most interested. The man talks on brookingly, haltingly, but he tries to tell the truth. The most convincing and carefully polished falsehoods clear gaze of those gray eyes. So he takes them in; he feeds them and cheers them and gives them a place to sleep. Then he hunts them a job and sees that they stay with it just as long as possible.

A COSMOPOLITAN GATHERING.

In spite of the heat and light, the cleanliness and comparative comfort of the hostelry, it is a place of sadness. It is a place where men prefer to sit apart from each other and commune with their own thoughts. The faces of the majority seem to be turned backward along the paths of memory, and many of them ate in fancy in the scenes and among the faces of their youth or their young manhood. All the types of all the races of Europe and America may be picked out in the crowded corridors as they wait their turn to pay their dime for a clean bed for a night's rest. They are the strangest band of lodgers that ever have been once. Whatever they may have been, they are now men who are glad to work with their hands at any job that will hold body and soul in company. The chill winds of the early evening and the late afternoon begin to drive them in front of their wanderings about the wintry streets. They are a pathetic sight as they painfully drag themselves up the

steps and stumble in at the door. On the faces of many of them the infirmities of advancing age and a life of exposure and hardship have etched the record of their troubles. Many of them are old men in whom the fires of life are burning low. One after another they file in at the door and anxiously watch the clerk as he hands out the locker keys from behind his little wicket.

But the name Dempsey is a constant lure for the sons of Erin who are in straits. They come to "Father Tim" in their troubles, as straight as a homing pigeon for its loft. Many of them are railroad laborers, who have grown old on the construction gangs of the Western roads. They have tamped ties and swung spike mauls on roads without number since they were straight-backed young men. They know the country from one end to the other and have a disposition to rove that keeps them continually moving here and there during the summer season.

It is this disposition that Father Dempsey is trying so hard to cure. He bends all his energies to getting them into a place where they can settle down from one year's end to another. Very rarely does he consent to send any of his men out on the construction jobs that are always waiting for them. Nearly every occupation of civilized hands that is found among the crowd that comes in after 6 o'clock in the evening. From cobblers to trip-hammer operators, all the trades are represented.

NEVER TURNS A DEAF EAR.

Here and there is a mere shell of a professional man. No matter who they are or what they have been, they all get a hearing from Father Dempsey. The Kellys, the Schmidts, the Janssens, Browns and Victorios are all his guests, his exiles, the wanderers whom he believes it is his life work to assist.

From 5 till 7 o'clock in the evening is the busiest time in the hotel of the exiles. In the intervals of listening to the stories of the men whom he has sent out to look after possible jobs Father Tim gives ear to the account that some workman gives of himself. The regular lodgers, of whom there are many, are coming in after their day's work, and the scent of cooking and the rattle of crockery and spoons drift up from the restaurant in the basement. The big, bare sitting-room is filling up with quiet men, who sit in the straight-backed chairs and smoke and dream. There is less noise in the corridors and waiting-rooms than in the lobby of the Planters or any other of the big hotels. Now and again a man wanders in slightly intoxicated, a little uncertain in his walk, but never hilarious, never loud in his speech. There is nothing of the aesthetic about the place, and the air is laden at all times with tobacco smoke, and the steam of the drying of dampened garments.

It is not the place where the soul of a settlement worker would be really delighted. The handling of an organization such as this is, in work for a man and a clever one. There are pipes and pipes, clay, cob and a combination of the two. There are no "No Smoking" signs posted by the ultra-good who have their own theories and insist that all who partake of their charity shall obey their whims. The men are treated as men, and they are not reminded of the nature of the institution at every step they make. One of the most striking things in the management of this strange lodging-house is the absence of the soulless card index and the multifarious swaths of red tape and bookkeeping with which so many of the charitable institutions of the country surround themselves. There is too much machinery and not enough of warm humanity in evidence for the men, who are helped by such places to have any real sense of gratitude.

HIS BRAIN HIS GUIDE.

All the card index that Father Dempsey ever uses is his tenacious Irish brain. He has a memory that would be the fortune of a politician and a handsake that would be worth 500 votes to any Alderman in a close ward. His hotel register contains all the statistics he ever has any use for. He is in the work to help men, not to collect sociological data. Now and then he has someone of his lodgers who can run a typewriter go over to his house and help him catch up on his back correspondence. Letters come in from all points of the compass, asking for news of such and such a man or boy who was last heard of it may be a half dozen years ago. If he has ever come into the notice of Father Dempsey he will remember all about him.

"My memory is my greatest asset in this business," he said. "If I see them once I have the gift of remembering them always. They like it that I can remember them well enough to call them by name. Sometimes they are gone for months but I never have any trouble in recalling their names, their nativity and their circumstances."

(Continued on page 8.)