

to
-Catholics.

Christmas in Verse.

BY "CRUX."



OME place, possibly in a Catholic exchange, or in some Catholic magazine, I read a very appropriate article—a few years ago—upon the subject of Christmas poetry. It comes back to me now, and as we have reached another anniversary of the first hour of Redemption's work, it may not be inappropriate to give the readers a few passages from some of the writers who have taken this holy festival as the theme of their muse. It is not exactly of Christmas hymns that I would write, but rather of the poetic expressions of profane bards. As Christmas has a two-fold aspect—one religious, the other social—we find that the poets who have, in English, celebrated the event of Our Lord's Nativity, may be divided into two categories. We have few Christmas hymns in our language; and as the liturgy of our church perpetuates the Latin, so do we find that most of our best canticles and hymns—those that are most familiar to our ears—are in that language. But a great many Catholic poets have celebrated in verse the glories of that memorable night, and naturally they all display a religious sentiment. Of the non-Catholic writers very few have dwelt upon Christmas otherwise than as a social, or domestic festival. These latter paint in varied scenes all the traditions of yuletide and give us delightful pictures of home-circles and all the joys of reunion, all the charms of the social gathering around the paternal hearthstone.

It may prove interesting reading, at least I consider it appropriate to the season, so I will make no excuse for introducing a few of the flowers of Christmas verse that I would fain weave into a chaplet in honor of the Divine Infant of Bethlehem. The very expression which I have thus used at hap-hazard recalls to mind Adelaide Proctor's "Christmas Flowers." Here are a few stanzas from that bouquet:

And the bright feast of Christmas is dawning,
And Mary is blest;
For now she will give us her Jesus,
Our dearest, our best,
And see where she stands, the Maid Mother,
Her Babe on her breast!

And not one poor garland to give her,
And yet now, behold,
How the Kings bring their gifts—
myrrh, and incense,
And bards of pure gold;
And the Shepherds have brought for the Babe
Some lambs from their fold.

He stretches His tiny hands toward us,
He brings us all grace;
And look at His Mother who holds Him—
The smile on her face
Says they welcome the humblest gifts
In the manger we place.

Where love takes, love gives; and so doubt not;
Love counts but the will,
And the heart has its flowers of devotion
No winter can chill;
They who cared for "good will" the first Christmas
Will care for it still.

Seventy years ago, exactly, this Christmas Eve, the late Cardinal Newman, who was then a member of the Anglican Church, but whose soul thirsted for something more positive than the spiritual waters that it had so far drunk, was in the Island of Malta. There he wrote a Christmas poem which thus commenced:

How can I keep my Christmas feast
In its due festive show,
Rest of the sight of the High Priest
From whom its glories flow?

I hear the tuneful bells around,
The blessed towers I see;
A stranger on a foreign ground,
They peal a fast for me.

Numerous are Christmas poems that have been penned by the late Father Ryan, the Poet-Priest of the South. They are all filled with a species of wistful, quaint, fantastic sentiment that imparts to them a mystic garb rarely found in any

other author of English verse. Perhaps that which is the most free from this strange dreaming is the angels' songs in his "Christmas Chant." It is more lively and more in accord with what we feel when we hear the "Glorias" of Bethlehem. The anthem of the angels he gives us thus:

Gloria in excelsis!
Sound the thrilling song;
In excelsis Deo!
Roll the hymn along.
Gloria in excelsis!
Let the heavens ring;
In excelsis Deo!
Welcome, new-born King.
Over the sea and land,
In excelsis Deo!
Chant the anthem grand,
Gloria in excelsis!
Let us all rejoice;
In excelsis Deo!
Lift each heart and voice.
Gloria in excelsis!
Swell the hymn on high;
In excelsis Deo!
Sound it to the sky.
Gloria in excelsis!
Sing it, sinful earth,
In excelsis Deo!
For the Saviour's birth.

There is something of the simple and touching in Sherburne's description of the scene at Bethlehem. He sings:

See! Heaven's sacred majesty
Humbled beneath poverty,
Swaddled up in homely rags,
On a bed of straw and flags,
He, whose hands the heavens displayed
And the world's foundation laid,
From the world's almost exiled,
Of all ornaments despoiled;
Perfumes bathe Him not, new-born,
Persian mantles not adorn.

Then Crashaw came with his "Hymn to the Infant Jesus," in which he sings:

Lo, how the thirsty lands
Gasp for thy golden showers, with
long-stretching hands!
Lo, how the laboring earth
That hopes to be
All heaven by thee
Leaps at thy birth!
The attending world, to wait thy rise,
First turned to eyes;
And then, not knowing what to do,
Turned them to tears, and spent
them too.

There is a loftier strain in Pope's Catholic verses; they are characteristic of the poet and most worthy of the theme:

Swift fly the years and rise the expected morn!
Oh! spring to light, auspicious Babe, be born!
See nature hastes her earliest wreaths to bring,
With all the incense of the breathing spring!
See lofty Lebanon his head advance!
See nodding forests on the mountains dance!
See spicy clouds from lowly Sharon rise,
And Carmel's flowery top perfumes the skies!
Hark! a glad voice the lovely desert cheers;
Prepare the way! a God, a God appears.

Amongst the Protestant poets Milton stands out conspicuous in all his works, and in none more than in his "Ode on Christ's Nativity." It is one of the most sublime conceptions of the great epic poet—not excepting the finest passages of "Paradise Lost." The opening stanza would suggest a Catholic idea of the Divine Child and Holy Mother:

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring:
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

There is a deep sentiment in White's stately poem the "Star of Bethlehem." The reader will recall that opening stanza:

It is almost unnecessary to recall that beautiful and long-familiar poem, by Mrs. Hemans, which tells us how:

Once in Royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for its bed;
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child.

There is a deep sentiment in White's stately poem the "Star of Bethlehem." The reader will recall that opening stanza:

When marshalled on the mighty plain,
The glittering host bestud the sky;
One star alone, of all the train,
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.
Hark! hark! to God the chorus breaks,
From every host, from every gem;
But one alone the Saviour speaks,
It is the Star of Bethlehem.

Wordsworth seemed more inclined to recall the minstrels of former days and their Christmas carols, than the event at Bethlehem which marked the commencement of a new era for humanity. He tells how:

The minstrels played their Christmas tune
To-night beneath my cottage eaves;
While, smitten by a lofty moon,
The encircling laurels thick with leaves,
Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen,
That overpowered their natural green.

Tennyson also contemplates the Christmas of his day in the light of a festive season. Lamenting the absence of one dear to him he feels that he cannot keep the feast, and he tells us:

To-night ungathered let us leave
This laurel, let this holly stand;
We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas eve.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
By which our lives are chiefly proved,
A little spare the night I loved,
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footsteps beat the floor,
Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;
For who would keep an ancient form
Thro' which the spirit breathes no more?

Amongst the Irish poets not a few have written splendid verses on the festival of Christmas, but they seem all to be tinged with that deep melancholy which comes over the children of the Old Land, especially when an occasion of the kind awakens memories of a dead past and renders more conspicuous the vacant chairs by the fireside. There is one, entitled "Christmas Memories," which I came upon recently, and the authorship of which I have been unable to discover. It is so genuine and so characteristic of Ireland's Christmas thoughts that I will encroach upon space sufficient to give it in full. It runs thus:

Oh! those Christmas times, mavourneen
are not like the times of old,
When the light of love shone softly,
and our pulses felt no cold;
When the laughter of the young
hearts round the hearth rang merrily;
Now the laughter and the young
hearts all are gone, ashore,
machree!

Methinks I see our darling Kate,
her blue eyes fixed on mine,
And dark haired Patrick resting soft
his little hand in mine;
Methinks I hear brave Owen's voice,
and Brian's free and gay,
With soft cheeked Eily's mingling in
the holy Christmas lay.

Dreams! dreams! to-night the ancient
hearth no kindly look doth wear,
There is snow upon the threshold
stone and chillness everywhere,
No swell of rushing voices pours the
holy Christmas lay.

The young hearts, and the merry
hearts, mavourneen, where are they?
Ah, blue-eyed Kate and Patrick Dhu,
Where Shruel's silent dunghyrd
looks across the Inn's breast;
long, long have found their rest,
And Eily, thy young heart lies cold
and pulseless 'neath the sea
Full many and many a Christmas-
tide, alanna bawn machree.

And by Potomac's blood-tinged wave
brave Owen nobly fell,
My gallant boy! they say he fought
right gloriously and well;
And Brian's voice is hushed in death,
where blue Australian streams
Fill with their youthful melodies the
exile's glowing dream.

Men who have a wide grasp of intellect and firmness of decision are always positive. They know what they want, and are never on the fence.

Ashore, ashore, beside the light
our faces shine alone;
But they are clustered with the stars
before the eternal throne;
With St. Patrick and St. Brigid and
the angels robed in white,
They sing the old remembered
strains, their Christmas hymn,
to-night.

Old love! old love! His will be
bless'd that left e'en you to me
To keep my heart from bursting with
the wild, wild memory.
That soothing glance, mavourneen,
speaks of Christmas times to come,
When the scattered hearts shall meet
for aye in God's eternal home.

As another sample of Irish Christmas poetry I would like to reproduce Martin McDermott's "Exiles Far Away," but having occupied so much space with these gleanings—in fact gleanings mostly made by some person else in years gone past—I will be content with the opening stanza. I merely give it because it tells the sad story of the lonely thoughts come to the Irish people when this joyous season awakens memories of either past sorrows or of absent dear ones.

When round the festive Christmas Board,
Or by the Christmas hearth,
That glorious mingled draught is poured,
Wine, melody and mirth;
When friends long absent tell low-toned,
Their joys and sorrows o'er,
And hand grasps hand, and eye-lids fill,
And lips meet lips once more,
Oh, in that hour, 'twere kindly done,
Some woman's voice might say—
"Forget not those who weep to-night,
Poor Exiles far away."

MILLIONS FOR AMERICAN CENSUS.

The cost of the 12th census is now figured out to have been \$12,854,818, and it is further added that this is an average cost of 15¢ cents per capita in the United States.

A BEGGAR'S JOURNAL.

A journal is published for the instruction and edification of beggars. Its circulation is limited, being confined entirely to "professionals." It does not concern itself with politics or the drama, but contains what may be called "market reports" and scraps of advice and information written by and for beggars. Says the "Neue Freie Presse" (Vienna):

"The price of the paper is twenty centimes, or four cents, which seems rather high; but its readers deem it well worth the money on account of its advertisements, which, indeed, are the publisher's chief source of profit. These advertisements are exceedingly interesting reading for outsiders. Here are some examples:

"Wanted, a blind man who can play a little on the flute."
"Cripple wanted for a well-patronized seashore resort. One who has lost his right arm preferred; must be able to give good references and small security."

"Every issue of the paper contains dozens of such advertisements inserted by mendicant agents and bureaux. There are in Paris more than a score of such bureaux which undertake to supply all France, and especially the bathing and health resorts, with beggars to suit all tastes."

"The beggars' journal also contains announcements of approaching weddings, baptisms, and funerals, as well as a list of birthdays and name-days of persons of wealth, from which, it is to be presumed, many profitable hints are gleaned by its subscribers."

"No greater task could be given to a minister of the Gospel of Christ than to contribute to a reign of industrial peace. The workman of to-day is a thinking being. He knows what should be done. What seems to threaten public peace is but the precursor of greater social happiness and wealth." The Archbishop said that it would take time to bring about the desired changes, but that they would surely come. He thought the federation should meet oftener than once a year. Referring to the coal strike, he said: "Patriotism demands there shall never again be such a strike as the one just ended."

Men who have a wide grasp of intellect and firmness of decision are always positive. They know what they want, and are never on the fence.

The Speculator's Tragic End.

All the outward and visible tokens of Christmas were present. For at least a fortnight every janitor, elevator man, bell boy and waiter had been suffering from an epidemic of exorbitant politeness. Circulars addressed in all kinds of clerkly hands came with polite entreaties for contributions to Christmas dinners to be given the worthy poor.

Postmen were beginning to dispense gaudy "Christmas greetings," and dauntless messenger boys never delivered a telegram without also sending in their cards, on which "they made their meaning plain," a phrase that rhymed admirably with their statement of serving the public in all weathers, including "rain."

Of a surety it was approaching the great gift season of the year, else all signs failed, even that of poor relatives grown suddenly anxious for the health and well being of cousins and aunts better furnished with worldly wealth.

Jerome Hunt walked to his office with an inert appreciation of these things. He noticed the holly vendors on the sidewalk, the new outcrop of beggars, the street fakirs with their fluent platter of painted toys, the brilliant shop windows with their surging outside crowds. But it was as one gazes through a half-opaque veil, he saw, and yet he saw not. The street procession pushed and prodded him, a passing wagon splattered his immaculate clothes with fresh mud. In his own office building a box swung in one corner of the elevator. It was ornate with a sprig of holly, and was inscribed in huge black letters, "Merry Christmas." He smiled at it vaguely, but the eager conductor looked disappointed when he stepped off at his own floor without any move to contribute to the box. With the same abstracted air Hunt took his seat at his solid oak desk and gazed about. It was an office which bespoke more than mere competency; there was taste and even luxury in its appointments, soft oriental rugs on the floor, substantial bookshelves lining the wall, a few good pictures making the slightest waste places glad. In the outer office the flaxen head of the typewriter came wondrously near the dark one of a young clerk, as they bent together over what was obviously intended for a Christmas present.

Hunt noticed them with the same vagueness of gaze. Outside the shrill voice of a newsboy floated up from the street: "Nothin' British loss! Boer forces make Buller's men retreat!" The man at the desk groaned. Two sweet, silent Sisters of Charity came softly in and stood a moment with bowed heads. Mechanically he pulled out a handful of silver and poured it into their gentle palms.

A messenger boy bounced in with a note. Hunt took it and read: "Flurry on New York exchange. Santa Inez and Dennison preferred dropped four points. Please send another fifteen thousand to margin."

Signed by a large brokerage firm. Hunt wrote a check rapidly, put it in an envelope and sealed it. The boy waited. Hunt flung him a quarter impatiently. Before the door closed on the messenger a handsomely gowned woman floated in, with a bunch of English violets filling the air with perfume they exhaled from their nest on her Russian sable muff.

"Oh, Jerome!" she cried, "Do give me another fifty. There is the sweetest lace collar at Summerby's that I want to get for Susie, and we haven't an account there, you know. It is so cheap at that price, and just what she has wanted for ever so long."

The man made a faint gesture of protest. "Couldn't you get something else for Susie?" he asked, thickly.

"Why, no!" said his wife, decisively. "It's no use giving people what they don't want. It may seem extravagant to you, but it really isn't. You wouldn't think twice of giving a piano or a picture to Susie that cost six times as much. You know you wouldn't. Besides, I can save. I've decided to do without the orchids in our bouquets at the Lesters' parties. They would be awfully nice, but roses and lilies will really do just as well. So there is the price of a handkerchief saved at one fell swoop! Do hurry and let me have the money, Jerome!"

Ten minutes after the radiant matron had fluttered out, a swift young foot crossed the threshold, two velvet and furred arms nestled around the man's neck, and a fresh, enthusiastic voice began:

"Oh, pappy, dear, I've just seen the loveliest little pin for mommy for Christmas, but I haven't enough money to get it by \$25. Couldn't

you help me out—there's a dear, darling old daddy-kiss."

The man's face was grave, for again the messenger boy was coming. He took the note from him. It bore the former signature and read: "Another drop. We shall need \$10,000 more." He gazed at the paper stupidly. It was the last note in the tragedy of the week. The young voice broke in impatiently. "Dear papa. I'm so late now. Can't you let me have the money and go? Mamma will be so disappointed. Can't the boy wait?"

He groped absently for his pocket-book, thrust it into her hands, while she gurgled delightedly, and then he drew carefully another check for the brokers.

After that he put on his hat and walked to the bank. "What balance have I now?" he inquired at the window. The automaton behind the wicket trundled off, consulted a book, returned and replied impassively, reading from a slip of paper: "Account overdrawn \$351. Mr. Hunt!"

The man thanked him with equal coolness and departed. The crowd jostled as before, the street fakirs called upon all who would to come and see the wonders of the age. The man took it all in with the same vague, incurious look as before, only his face was graver and more apathetic. Mechanically he sat down in the rotunda of the office and let a boy brush his shoes, and equally mechanically he threw the bootblack an extra holiday coin. This time he remembered the largesse of the elevator boy, and an unfortunate beggar found what seemed to him a fortune in his crumpled hat. The janitor lingered and was rewarded. As he once more turned up the street, the newsboys were crying another British defeat.

He hailed a cab and gave an address on a fashionable street. When he alighted the cabman said: "Merry Christmas, sir," and he threw him an extra half-dollar. Then his hands sought through his pockets and discovered that this coin was his last. He laughed whimsically, so that the housemaid who answered his ring informed her kitchen colleagues that "Himself had been drinking, sure. It's all very well for rich folks what have money and time to spare for Christmas, but for the poor ones that work holidays as well as other days, an' is ground down with an apron for a Christmas present—'and so on ad lib., with the unfailing aggrieved, indignant chorus of the others."

Proceeding to the library, the dazed man tripped and nearly stumbled. The obstacle was a superb Persian rug he had sent home for a Christmas surprise for his wife. He smiled again as he thought of the January bill to come, the day of reckoning so near at hand. It was on this rug that they found him face downward—Christmas morning. He had spent the night with royalty. The King of Terrors and he had joined hands, but the gray mask was still placid and the set smile whimsical as it mocked the Christmas decorations, and newsboys outside shrieked another disaster.—Eva Brodridge.

ST. BRIDGET'S NIGHT REFUGE.

Report for week ending Sunday, 21st Dec., 1902.—Males 182, females 41. Irish 151, French 50, English 11, Scotch and other nationalities, 11. Total 223.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

Sir William Vernon Harcourt said recently in the British House of Commons: "The difference between the two ecclesiastical systems (the Catholic Church and the Church of England) is that the Church of England is a lay establishment. It was made by the laity, the appointment of Bishops is by the Crown and the ultimate appeal on matters of doctrine is to a lay tribunal."

BIBLICAL STUDIES.

According to a "Daily Chronicle" telegram from Rome, the Holy Father is preparing another Encyclical on Biblical studies.

A violent temper, leading, as it does, to frequent outbursts of passion, tends to wear out the nervous system, and in time robs its possessor of the power of initiative.

Begin every day with a programme and determined that you will carry it out as closely as possible. Follow this up persistently, day after day, and you will be surprised at the result.

NOTES

Canada from outside, returned Canadians, months of the calendar end of November, 1902. Of these 56,000 Manitobans and the 24,000 in Eastern Canada who moved from the Provinces to the y in the same period making the total addition of population of Manitoba for the eleven years of the Immigration reports that 31,489 of persons in the west were added. There have been thousands of free homesteaders in the same two and a half times