

by Catholic writers in the days of faith was carried on for the most part by adherents of the "reformed religion." There were very few Catholic authors after More until the present century. The reason is not far to seek. The persecutions of Elizabeth afforded scant time for writing, and the sea of blood with which they covered the land extinguished all literary lights, and there were many of great promise, among the Catholic population. When the greatest fury of the storm had passed, murder gave way to robbery, and the most barbarous penal laws pauperized the Catholic. For almost three centuries this state of affairs continued, and the loss which English literature has thereby sustained can only be surmised.

Nevertheless, scattered among the more numerous non-Catholic writers henceforward we find not a few literary men who remained steadfast to the ancient faith. Our thoughts immediately revert to the martyr minstrel, Robert Southwell. A worthy disciple of St. Ignatius, he suffered torture thirteen times before death came to his relief. During his three years' confinement in prison he composed fifty-five beautiful poems, the chief characteristics of which, according to Angus, are "great simplicity and elegance of thought, and still greater purity of language." A rich and fertile fancy robes his verses in brilliant and enticing hues. But though highly proficient in the use of imagery, he is always natural, and in this respect, as well as in his usual ease and harmony, he closely resembles Goldsmith. There is withal a sententious vigor in his works which adds a peculiar point and force to the lessons they are intended to convey. Southwell's themes were constantly of a moral nature, the comparison of worldly vanities with religious happiness and like topics. He was the first of the religious poets, and his example has been the means of enriching our literature with many of its most treasured gems. The popularity of his poems was very great even in his own day, and eleven editions of them are said to have been issued within five years of his death. But not only as a poet does he deserve our highest praise. He is a no less brilliant writer of prose. The infamous proceeding which deprived him of life in his very prime caused English literature an irreparable loss. The noble tribute which the hapless young Jesuit paid to that other victim of Elizabeth's