THESIS
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for the
Degree of Master of Arts
by
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Literary Art and Convert Writers

I. Introduction:

1. Literary art, its definition, its office.
2. Conformity to truth essential to great art.
3. Literary art the Handmaid of Divine Faith.

II. Dissertation proper:

I. Convert Writers discussed:

(a) Cardinal Newman
(b) Cardinal Manning
(c) Father Faber
(d) Robert H. Benson
(e) Aubrey De Vere
(f) Joyce Kilmer
(g) Michael Williams
(h) Gilbert K. Chesterton

III. Conclusion:

1. Evidence of perfected artistry in the work of these writers, as Catholics.
2. Comment and summary of investigations.
Art is the result or accomplishment of the creative faculty which employs imagery to work upon the subtler emotions of the human soul. It is more than intellectual skill, more too than merely physical beauty, more indeed than imaginative fecundity; it is more even than depth of thought and power of reflection; it is the sum of these mental activities which create a representation expressive of personality and emotions. "Art", says Croce, "is an expression for the sake of contemplation, and by means of art, a man can represent for himself and others the peculiar excellencies of the mind." (I). Art depends mostly upon the prowess of a creative imagination, and the fine sensibilities which nourish the imaginative powers. Hence these powers directed to the expression of life in all, or any of its phases in its complexity or in its mystery, give us what is known as literary art, and the literary artist reveals in himself the potency to feel and express life in its various moods and issues; to view it from those heights where it can be contemplated calmly and undismayed; and to convey undiminished and unspoiled, the results of his serene contemplation. There is no part or aspect of this report to be overlooked, if its artistic value to be judged, and the investigation must discover it to be exact, revealing, positive, simple, and unrestricted, sometimes indeed subjugating elegance of form to adequacy of content and fineness of texture. To be true to its office therefore, literary art must reveal life not in its extent, but in its height, depth, and significance. Technical efforts may produce thoughts very interesting, but unaided, they can never produce literature.

As the immaterial fabric of human thought surpasses the gleam (I). Dublin Review, March 1926, page 70.
of pale sunshine on the canvass, so does literary art transcend the work of the painter or the sculptor. It is the highest of the fine arts, and the most perfect achievement of the creative powers of the mind. It fashions its masterpieces in the invisible alembic of the soul, moulds them under the guidance of the intellect, adorns them with all the splendors of the imagination, and sustains them by the united activities of memory and will. Literature is therefore, a concentrated record of life, and its true task is to give a correct representation of human nature.

When Michael Angelo stepped back a pace from the finished image of his "Dream", he stood before a perfect piece of sculptural art, and attested to its perfection when he bade the marble prophet speak. The man who lacks the power to make his work conformable to truth, lacks fundamental skill; his vision of life is inadequate, or it is false.

Irregularities combined into a morbid conception, by a still more morbid fancy, cannot delight the mind, for pleasures arising from incongruities vanish quickly, since it is truth that gives the intellect its proper enjoyment and repose. The imagination which twisted the nebula of Orion into a cruel, hare-lipped, brutal, shapeless monster, was itself the disordered victim of drugs; and where this poor, distorted faculty perceived only revolting untruth, the mind of Richter beheld angels. The things of beauty which give enduring joy must be based upon the possibility of reality; and since the infinite longings of the soul are the intangible substance from which genius frames its choicest works, we can readily see how literary art becomes the Hand-Maid of Divine Faith. Viewed in this light the subject of
this work resolves itself into a proof that literary artists—converts to the Church, produce their truest art after conversion.

Heresy is, to say the least, a poor light to follow, and those who allow their talent to be guided by its unsteady ray give numerous manifestations of the disadvantages of their choice. By most of them, their high art is made an outlet for discontent, affectation, or even pessimism. The poet whose unripened genius immortalized the Grecian Urn, and looked through "magic casements" over "perilous seas", saw only forlorn lands by fairies tenanted, because his vision was not brightened by the sunshine of Faith. His soul's infelicity saddened the beauty of his song. His gift in its origin seems pilfered from God; in its use it is dedicated to the "light which never was on land or sea"; to Cynthia, the moon-goddess, and to other shadows of fancy. True poet though he was, he has not left us many lines to prove him other than pauper in spiritual things. What of the artist who played Atheist in Eton inorder "to avenge himself on masters who were not civil"? (I). We shall not venture on the uncertainty as to what music might blend with the "profuse strains" of his "Skylark", but it is fairly safe to conclude that his "Prometheus" would not have been such a pagan conception of liberty, had its author ever bent adoring knees before a Catholic Altar. Somewhere, or in some manner the enchained race symbolized in this poem, would have found Redemption from the soul's most shameful slavery, in the Sacrifice of Our Great Lover, Christ. We do not deny to Shelley that one short moment of poetic rapture which caught his soul in contemplation worthy of St. Francis of Assisi, or St. Theresa of Avila, but it was then his illumined mind beheld the "Sweet Benediction in the eternal curse,

A living form among the dead; a star above the storm,"

(I) Hogg's Life of Shelley, page 136.
And in the ecstasy of the blessed vision his poet-soul sang sacred truth: Thou mirror, in whom as in the splendors of the sun, All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on."

This outburst of poetic passion is nothing short of a challenge to the unfaith which cast Our Lady out from her ancient "Dowery"; it is moreover an enduring tribute to Catholic veneration for that masterpiece of God's creation, Mary Immaculate. Mad for beauty, the genius of England's most poetic poet, by a sort of natural instinct sought to sing of Her, who is the one fair form of unsullied human loveliness. If he had loved Her as did St. Bernard, his art would be as revealing as the Angel's wand in Patmos.

What Christian heart can acquiesce in the puritanic conviction of the blind bard who gilds ugliness, such as that of Satan's revolt, with the luster of a triumph?. Only an intellect narrowed by heresy could extol the arch-rebel as a hero, commend his anarchy as a necessity, and picture the Most High as a tyrant. Had Milton the creed of Dante, with Dante he could have lifted his poetic mind, on the wings of inspiration to the pinnacle of intellectual beauty, and stayed his chastened spirit where living light flows around the throne of God, for "Faith can lead, beyond the vault of logic and the flight of fancy", up to the bright home where, "God's vesture curves and floats around His feet." (I)

We cannot fail to see that the greater the genius, the more sterile its heretical illumination, the more wanton its waste of powers in mental orgies. Minds otherwise strong, masculine, classi-deliberate, destined to be founders of new dynasties in literature,

(I) "The Revealed" by Canon Sheehan, Page 25, verse V.
have spent themselves in illusions, and in the dull, helpless half-beliefs of heresy. Though reason is nature's highest gift, its light is, as it were the basic element for the light of Faith. "The last act of reason must be full," says Cardinal Manning, "before the first act of Faith can be made." (I) Faith being therefore, so to speak, the perfection of reason, need we hesitate to affirm that the mind devoid of Faith is stunted, if not deformed or dwarfed?

Now if Divine Faith completes reason, and ennobles the offices of literature, then literature as well as reason becomes the willing servitor of Catholic belief. While the heretic and the unbeliever with daily abstractions, flatter the creations of their own minds, by yielding them a reverence which should be paid only to Divine Revelation or while they seek in nature for evidence of the tenets they consider it convenient to believe, the Catholic artist in prose or poetry, disciplines his soul by the consideration of unchangeable truth and imperishable beauty. He knows that eternal values are best understood by those who ponder on eternity; and that the Church of the Saints gives the ground-work for firmest creed to the highest conception of the mind, because truth need not deny nor contradict itself.

That light-hearted old Christian whose best known picture, shows him with his rosary, and who laughed his glad story-songs for Merry England, had it is said, "a most orthodox grip of his catechism." This much is among the little we know of him. "The Faith of old England, that is the old Faith, amply satisfied Chaucer." (2). He got his philosophy of life from the close study of Dante, the prophet-

(I) Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost, Manning, page 63.
(2) English Literature -- Shuster, page 632.
poet of mediaeval Catholicity whose "De Monarchia" is devoted, in part at least, to prove that man's natural powers cannot ascend to the supreme beauty without the aid of that Divine Light which is Faith. So sincere and strong was this Divine Light in the soul of him who "voiced ten silent centuries", that Pietro Alighiere declared, "if Catholic belief were extinguished on earth, Dante could restore it." (I). It was this same Faith that led him unscathed through the netherland of unavailing woe, and wafted him up to the realms of "singing nuns", (2), where eight vast circles of siren-song arose in tuneful concord. Here he was obliged to account for the genuineness of his belief. St. Peter himself was heaven's censoring inquisitor, and the poet answered him well in his ever famous declaration: "Whatso yourself believed after the fiery Spirit sanctified you, that too do I." Without further question the poet was permitted to enter into, and to survey the "perfect life of love and peacefulness" above, and he describes for us in the last Canto of "Paradiso", the light that flows around the throne of Him, who wondering at the glory of His works: "loves his own beauteous essence all the more".

Even at its feeblest, Catholic Faith bids her poets sing, with an earnestness almost as assuring as that of St. Paul. There is no insecurity, no surmising, no doubt. Wonder even fades away or merges into reverence and love. Listen to the Peri near the gates of light, warbling her love-song to her little homesick heart. She does no violence to the convictions of Moore, when she says what he himself knows so well to be true:

(2) Paradiso, Canto X, 64-76.
"Take all the pleasures of all the spheres
And multiply each through endless years,
One moment of heaven is worth them all." (I)

This last could solace the soul of man, when the beauty of the "West Wind", or the "Cloud", or the "Princess", or "The Roll of the Dark Blue Ocean", might have palled upon his spirit. At their best, disbelief and unbelief can only guess at spiritual truth and beauty, and the report of their conjecture is often vague or futile.

And now we come to examine some characteristic works of literary artists, prior to their conversion and after it. First on this list appears the name of John Henry Newman, one of the leaders of the noblest thought of all times, and the exponent of spiritual reform within the Anglican communion.

The prejudices which rendered honest research difficult or impossible, Cardinal Newman's arduous intellectual endeavors did much to nullify. To give back to disintegrating Anglicanism a semblance of Faith became the burning desire of his heart, and for this sole purpose he first tried his gifted pen and gave to the world, some of the most beautiful pages in literature. This literary work stands unsurpassed except by his own work as a Catholic in the world of English letters. Newman's technical control of the language and his power over literary methods are likewise undisputed. Vast scholarship, classical instinctiveness, refinement of taste, simplicity of style, have ever been denied him, either separately or collectively. All of them are evident in most of his works. What excellencies then, do we find in the literature of the great English priest, which are

(I) Paradise and the Peri, Moore, verse 3.
the canons of great art, he manifests his soul's inmost secret: mistrust, loneliness, and religious discontent. More than that, he shows his spirit tethered by some unnamed restraint: the result of doubt and unquiet questionings. He seemed to fear the exhibition of those emotional forces which in the freer days to come, would move his audience to tears. (I).

Twelve years before his entrance into the Catholic Church, verses to his Guardian Angel, had given us partial glimpses of the "vision haunting" him. (2). This vision was more fully set forth in the poems he contributed to the "Lyra Apostolica", and he actually attempted to come face to face with the haunting vision in the Catholic shrines of Italy and Sicily. "I went to the Sistine to assist at the 'Tenebrae', for the sake of the 'Miserere'," he declares in his "Apologia", and "I was still more driven back into myself, and felt my isolation all the more." (3). In these Catholic lands, Newman showed unmistakable signs of the struggle going on within his being.

A memorandum of days at Oriel College, dating back to 1829, keeps record thus: "I am led by God's hand blindly, and I know not whither He is leading me". (4).

His spells of sobbing at Castro Giovanni, his delirious answer, to the weeping servant, "I shall not die; I have not sinned against the light." (5) seem a necessary prelude to that passionate appeal of his soul,

"Lead Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on."

(2) Verses on Various Occasions, Newman, page 69.
"Lead Kindly Light" is indeed characteristic; it shows better than any other work of Newman his spiritual condition at that time, and the light for which he so beautifully petitioned. It is the "de profundis" of a great mind sunk in the gloom of doubt; it summarizes in its own perfect way, the qualities of Newman's Anglican literature; it illustrates well the limitations placed upon a poet's genius, by the uncertainty of heresy; it is the loud wail of a great mind in the prison-house of disbelief; it is the exposition of a sadness that weighed heavily on the poet's heart; it manifests the futility of the Anglican church to satisfy, illuminate or sanctify the soul. Light! Light was needed, and the sunlight heights of Divine Faith. "To be on the Mount of Christ, while the poor world quarreled at its base"(I), is what Newman asked in his prayer: "Lead Kindly Light". It is well to remark that before he became the prince of English prose writers, he had been both priest and prince in the Catholic Church, and the most perfect prose creation in the English tongue is his "Apologia"; one of the most perfect sermons ever delivered in any tongue is his "Second Spring"; and nothing more highly spiritual has appeared in English literature, than "The Dream of Gerontius".

In this master-vision of faith and love, the soul's cry for light is answered to the fullest. Exile being past, the exultant soul, angel-heralded, cries out to Christ: "Lover of Souls, Great God, I come to Thee", and then hastens with eager speed to the judgment seat, to lay its longing eyes upon the Face of God.

Urged on with the passionate energy of love, the soul flies to the dear, wounded feet of its Immortal King, and then "consumed and

quickened by the glance of God", it is overwhelmed with light, that light of which all earthly light is but the merest shadow. Finally the dazzled soul begs thus:

"Take me away,
That sooner I may rise and go above,
And see Him in the truth of everlasting day".

Newman's later literature is like his Catholic life, an inspiration. Strength of soul and loyalty to Truth are his most precious legacies from both. His "Idea of a University" is the classic of modern educational efficiency. "It ought to be bound by the young student of literature, as a frontlet on his brow, and a talisman on his writing wrist." (I) This commendation is no unmerited praise; and his historical lectures spread before one's view a thousand years of the world's story in as magnificent a panorama, as was ever sketched by a master hand.

As an autobiography the "Apologia" stands without a rival, except it be "The Confessions of St. Augustine". In sublimity, simplicity, and power, the "Dream of Gerontius" is Dantean. Adequately though unobtrusively, it exemplifies the proper adjustment of poetry to religion. Its high spirituality enforces no restraining law on poetic imagination, or poetic inspiration. On the mountain of divine revelation the great Cardinal measures the vast issues of human life and contemplates their eternal consequences. Faith brought to his mind and soul all those forms of excellence with which grace and harmony are associated, hence every detail in the two-fold prospect of the "Dream of Gerontius" is an object of intensely poetic interest.

(I) The Catholic Teacher's Companion
He understands life in as far as a finite intellect can understand. He sees it as a Saint; he reveals it as an artist. His soul's expected "Visitant,
Knocking his dire summons at the door",
opens to our wondering senses, visions of holiness,
"Whish, with its effluence like a glory
Circles round the Crucified". (I)

This great poem is impossible to the genius of Protestant Christianity. In it Newman's literary art has attained perfection.

Cardinal Manning's own publications reveal him as a writer of considerable merit, long before his entrance into the Catholic Church. Yet he had been a priest thirty-two years before he attempted his great work: "The Eternal Priesthood". Critics name this book his masterpiece. Another work of vastly superior character is "The Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost". Its subject matter alone eclipses anything from which Protestant poets have spun their poetic theories. This book claims for Manning, an uncommon accuracy and strength of mental vision, and a more uncommon power over abstractions, analysis, comparison, and division of subjects. Its theme is great enough for the master mind of St. Thomas Aquinas, whose faith turned logic into poetry. The literary art of Manning has treated with masterly skill the action of the Divine Spirit of truth upon the souls of men, and in the process of treatment his artistry remains unquestioned. Research brought him necessarily into contact with minds, whose wisdom and singular beauty of expression, are paralleled only by their sanctity. St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Bonaventure,

(I) The Dream of Gerontius, Newman, (last stanza)
St. Thomas of Aquin and St. Theresa became his guides to the unclouded summits where his genius was given "to understand the voice of the whole creation of God". (I) On those blessed heights, he heard more than the mere "Intimations of Immortality"; he there was taught those truths which are eternal and he faithfully reports them, so faithfully indeed does he report them that no man dares to "correct his discrimination, because men of the world do not understand the spirit of God". (2)

In writing of these classical treatises he was guided by the spirit of wisdom, whose name is "Sapientia", (3) and he has interpreted thier spiritual message in a medium so pure, energetic, elegant, free and graceful that not even envy itself can deny it any title to poetry, save form. Faith was for Manning, the sacred science by which all things were seen in the light of God, and God in all things. His intellectual fineness and skill were used in the perfect ordering of holy thoughts and in the expression of more than poetic sentiment. It can be truly said that his Faith gave unction to every phrase of his writing, and a soul to his every utterance. By kindling his spirit to perfect charity and zeal, Manning produced works comparable to those of St. Augustine. His theme glorified his art, as his art glorified or adorned his theme; and what his writings lack in poetic beauty, they compensate in sublimity of content. The contemplation of high subjects is the first real requisite for great art; and the artistry of love of Christ and His Holy Mother gave greater color to the literary works of Manning, than all the resources of pagan lore contributed to the rhetoric of Cicero. True artists must know much, but they must love more; and Manning's artistry was perfected by his love for God. He

(I) Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost, page 13. (Manning)
(2) " " " " " " 102. " 
He follows the contour of his high theme, with regularity and ease; no tones were impossible to the instrument with which he planned to express his thought, and that thought was the "Eternal Priesthood". For it, he made researches through the whole scope of Holy Writ; and he returned stocked with piety and erudition for his task. To explain and analyze God's ways with man, was for Manning a grand passion; and in the exposition of that work, he has made himself a classicist and a romanticist in one. To express the subject his mind contemplates, requires more than creative faculty, in fact, truth needs no creative faculty, it is its own best expression. A reason that is perfected and enlightened by divine Faith, marks Cardinal Manning as a writer of surpassing worth, and endows his works with historical, ethical, aesthetic and religious significance.

Father Faber, the most human of the tractarians, has endeared himself to all readers of the precious books and hymns that came from his pen, after his reception into the Catholic Church. His contributions to literature before that event, were numerous and rich in poetic values. Indeed from his early Oxford days, his poems are sweet, wistful, inspiring, but, there is ever, ever the "Poor echo round each hollow stone,

In this dark desert place". (I)

From his continental tour in 1839, comes to us a charmingly interesting series of letters, essays, and even a song or two, which thrill with poetic description. Devotion, as he has seen it in the old lands of chivalry and art, is very often the subject of

(I) Poems, Faber,
his sincer admiration. He is the most tender of the illustrious Anglican trio; compared with the warmth and color of his paragraphs, Newman's inimitable language stands perfect indeed, but white and tintless as Phidian statuary; the eloquence of Manning, constrained and unemotional. After his conversion in 1845, he gave whole-hearted scope to his poetic talent in the composition of hymns for various Religious occasions. These explain their author's talent, more than do the beautiful songs of his Anglican days, in that they repose upon accurate, theological doctrine, and they throb with ardent devotion to the Sacred Humanity of Christ. The fervor of Faber's heart, naturally fervent, was placed henceforth at the disposal of his genius, and we possess as a consequence, an array of works which have raised their author to a high place among the writers of mystical theology. His chosen subjects were worthy of his art, and all the poetry of his was laid a gracious tribute at the "Foot of the Cross". For Faber, there was more poetic sweetness in the name of Jesus, than could ever be evoked from the "rainbow-wreaths, and "dream-mists" of which the poets of his native land had sung with so much charm. At this period of his life, he is quite certain that

"To speak of Him, however poorly, was to soothe, instruct, and win the heart". (I)

Faith opened Faber's mental vision to Divine Beauty, eternally and unchangeably beautiful. The riches of his eloquence must be given henceforth to Christ, fulfilling His own divine Will in the mystery of His Love. This is the exalted subject which Faber made the substance of his soul's grandest song, "The Blessed Sacrament".

It is a great poem in prose-work; it the triumph of a poet's faith; it is the masterpiece of a convert's genius; it is the testimony of devoted love to the Eucharistic Heart of Christ. Catholicity supplied him with rules, whereby he was able to judge shades and grades of true beauty, and his literature owes its graces, not so much to his native ability, as to his Faith.

If the Almighty could ever have borne testimony to sanctity in the Anglican communion, he would have done so in favor of Faber, for if Newman was the Angel of Anglicanism, Faber was its Saint, and he dedicated the powers of his Anglican sainthood, to defend a system of belief badly broken into by wordliness and sordid ambition. Back even in the days of doubt and disbelief, a real and sincere love for God, was the dominant tone in his religious writings. The hymns of his young parsonhood glow with beautiful sentiments and aptness of poetic expression; yet, these earlier achievements in poetry and song have an undertone of

"The spirit-wasting moods,
The fever, restlessness and weak disease
Of those who pray too seldom". (1)

The "tresses of the night and darkness, deeply pressing", (2) blinded his view of that world immune from the rust of time. His heart drank deep of untruth and unrest; doubt and anxiety warred with his spiritual energy, but even then, echoes of unceasing music, and dreams of unearthly beauty kept haunting his soul. The Muse of the Anglican songs heard at last, low whisperings from the Tabernacle, and it was then, that Faith made Faber's genius, an oblation beyond prayer.

(1) Poems, Faber; (Wild Moods) Lines 32-34.
(2) Poems, Faber; (The Echo) lines 5 and 6, stanza 2.
Only Divine Faith could make him say, with certainty, "There is nothing good, holy, beautiful or joyous, which Jesus is not to me."(I)

Aubrey De Vere pays a high tribute to the beauty of Father Faber's Catholic hymns, when he says of them in his own exquisite poem, "The Immaculate Conception",

"He sang them well, that bard
Great-hearted, who for love of Christ, preferred
The priestly vestment to the singing robe;
Thus sang he, God's decrees his arduous theme,
High on the summits of the Hills of God."

Down the years, a little space from the Oxford Movement, and that blessed discontent which drove Newman home to Rome, and we come face to face again with the decadent Anglican body, letting slip from its grasp, with much agony indeed, the most remarkable genius of his own generation, Robert Hugh Benson.

A gentleman both by education and birth, he was the son of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, whose refined and religious tendencies seem to be in no small measure transmitted to his son. Eton and Cambridge did their best to form the mind and spirit of the boy, in whom the gift of genius was most certainly joined with quickness of temper and a nervous system, rather tense from the outset. The dark night of the soul through which he had to pass on his journey to the haven of peace, was necessary, it would seem, to the calm, clear day of his spiritual and artistic achievements. His sermons, at a time even when his mind was infected with the discontent that permeated Protestantism, were polished, literary, good though elaborated a little too noticeably, in fact, "even to the point of fever-

(I) All for Jesus, Faber, chap. I, page II.
ishness". (I) Before his heart, secure in faith and resting on solid convictions, can pour forth its best, we must wait till the groan and jar of disturbing elements are over.

His Anglican prayer book pleaded quite moderately for a "goodly righteous and sober life", but the Catholic child kneeling before the altar of his first Communion, was wont to ask, "Blood of Christ inebriate me". An abyss therefore separated the two spiritual conditions. So must there be all the differences imaginable between the two respective sources of religious and intellectual adequacy. When Hugh Benson could petition for the soul of Christ to sanctify, and His Blood to inebriate, then would his burning words scorch the page, and his book be called a prophesy; indeed his Catholic literature seems not so much the work of a master-genius, as the spontaneous creation of a quick, responsive, daring and grateful Catholic mind.

Spontaneity and certainty are the fountain of his art; the elements of the ideal lay within him, and where the dull eye, and the heavy hand of a less gifted writer could squander or mis-shape Benson, directed by Faith, found rich material for the expression of beauty. "To depict aright the only real reality, was his idea of the purpose of art", (2) and as a result, his works are signally purposeful. He liked to pursue God's plan through the tangle of unlooked-for circumstances, till the whole system became clear to him. The Catholic Church gave wide field for his imaginative powers for "no imagination can stretch farther than, nor so far, as Catholic

(2) " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " 

Christianity bids it." (1) The spiritual must be helpful, to be at its best, he assured himself; and in the scale of values, Catholic art is at its highest when it is most helpful.

The "Lord of the World" entitled its author to no mean place among literary artists, for the very reason that it "expresses the principles he desired to express, and passionately believed to be true". (2)

Its master-touches reveal his innate love for pageantry, and such pageantry; It is greater than any his Roman tour has ever presents to us. Though his "Initiation" scene in the catacombs is touched with genuine emotion, its spectacular quality is wholly of this world. We can see indeed the shivering soul driven back into itself and its own resources, seeing more deeply into the sacred mysteries of Faith, in proportion as the world of sense darkens about it; but the "Lord of the World" is Benson's Holy City after all things have passed away. Rome was his city of the soul; within it, he anticipated Thabor and Jerusalem. The Faith of Rome awakened in his mind trusty witnesses to new modes of life; it laid firm foundation for a fresh and vigorous genius, and illumined his consciousness by a sort of sensible mysticism. The beauty of Catholic sanctity and the heroism of martyrdom, he would evermore portray, for the sole purpose of inculcating devotion to the Faith, always prolific of Saints and Martyrs. He felt he owed the service of his literary talent, to the Church, which had become his refuge from the annoyances of spiritual doubt and perplexity. His brother writes of him: "He ran to the shelter of the new creed, as a lover to the arms of his beloved." (3)

(2) Lord of the World, Benson, (Preface)
(3) Life of Benson, Martindale, page 234.
When faith had poured its balm upon Hugh Benson's heart, the world received from his literary genius, a wealth of religious thought and sentiment. He deals almost solely with life, modern life, and that well-known phase of religious perplexity affecting deeply the most intellectual among his countrymen. Nearly all his works analyze the mystery of pain, either mental or physical, and show us the place which the harassed human will holds in the process of conversion.

Literature can hardly exhibit more dramatic and passional forces than those which meet, and seem to mingle for an instant, and then separate eternally, in the last passages of "Lord of the World".

There is darkness, while a dying sun casts his last look upon a world torn by evil. The very air appears a dusky shroud, and all things assume the look of unreality. The stillness of death descends upon the world's activities. Earth itself seems like a dissolving image, yet, Mt Thabor stands in the distance, and the last Vicar of Christ is saying earth's last Mass, in a little chapel close by. Six tall candles burn on an altar, a bare altar, on which stands a Monstrance with the Sacred Host. Motionless figures lie around, and no sound breaks the awful silence, save the "exurgat Deus", and the "Gloria in Excelsis Deo"; but the listeners hear as if they heard not, for the world is speechless with the silence of approaching dissolution. Then a frightful clamor bursts in upon the stillness; sin, led on by Satan, is making its final attack on the Church Militant. The Celebrant knows that the hour of doom is about to strike, and gathering all the forces of his strong soul, he sings aloud, "O Salutaris Hostia": and it sounds as if all creation is singing with him, as the world thrills to the hymnful notes. The Pope stands erect, the vestments hanging from his shoulders in spectral folds. Sin and all the hosts of evil, muster
their wild forces against the Blessed Sacrament, but their violence is quelled by the strains of the "Pange Lingua" and by the radiant faces of the Elect. The Sacred Host is borne in procession; banners wave and lights gleam close to the Monstrance which holds high, as on a throne the "White Heart of God". (1) The writer would have God himself share with stricken men the terrors of the final doom. When the world reels and quivers on the edge of chaos, it is Christ only who can meet as victor, the prince of rebels, the exile throughout Eternity. Eternal love, and eternal hate meet on their final battle-ground, and Eternal love must conquer.

We get a few glimpses of the Arch-fiend hurrying to the terrible combat. We hear the great chant that swells around the Tabernacle, and the loud clamor of sound---"only a whisper across the pealing storm of everlasting praise". (2)

The author's appreciation of his own sacred priesthood, sets the stage for the epilogue of the world's last drama, on the same holy ground whereon its most awful tragedy has been enacted. While the earth, pale with age, staggers to its final fall, the "Eternal Priesthood" is finishing its temporal career. By the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Rite of Benediction, the powers of darkness are overcome, and the Word Incarnate gives testimony to the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost, as the "Procedenti ab utroque Compar sit laudatio" is taken up by the nine Angelic choirs, and the glory of earth ends in the victory of the Cross.

The last paragraphs of the last chapter of "Lord of the World"

(1) Lord of the World, Benson, page 351.
(2) " " " " " " " 352.
are possible only to Catholic Faith, to that faith of Dante, Newman, or Benson.

This last great Convert combined the fire and whimsey, the sensitiveness and daring of his nature to vindicate the truth of Catholicity to our skeptical age.

In the literary, social and religious circles of the last century, Sir Aubrey De Vere held a prominent position, both as a convert to the Catholic Faith, and a poet of a very high order. His gift of poetry, he inherited from his father, a talented author and dramatic writer. Like his brother, Sir Stephen De Vere, he was deeply influenced by the leading spirit of the Oxford Movement, John Henry Newman, whom the brothers knew well and reverenced much. Sir Stephen had entered the Faith some years before Sir Aubrey, whose moral earnestness and religious fervor, sought and found in the true church both certainty and reality. Many topics allured the genius of De Vere, who even in early life displayed rare poetic talent; after his reception into the Church in 1857 at Avignon, his poetry always good, grew in excellence and power, and no man ever spoke more gratefully of his conversion, or more reverently of the Church which he had the happiness to enter. His attitude towards Catholic Doctrine can be estimated fairly well from his dramatic work: "Sir Thoman A'Becket" (I) Here he assures us that:

"The Church is God's,
For were it ours, then might we traffic with it.
I say that He,
From His own side in water and in blood
Gave birth to it on Calvary". (I)

After 1857, all his poetry seems christened with the unction of

his inward peace. Faith enhanced his poetic works, for it beautified his mind by its sacramental touch. The realm of immortal spirit rather than the world of sense, became De Vere's chief theme, hence his literature is the result of deep reflection, rather than the creation of fancy. The exactness of his ideas regarding the feverish religious revolt, that robbed England of her Faith, may be learned from his sonnet which begins thus:

"O wilful nature, join with grace divine,
Sun of past years, disperse those modern glooms." (I)

After twenty years' experience of Catholic life, his attestations to the refining, ennobling influence of the Faith runs in this manner: "In the Church I have found a peace ever deepening, a freedom ever widening, a genuine and fruitful method of thought which brightens more and more unto perfect day." (2) The natural talent of De Vere was dedicated in a special way to promulgate the Divine Truths which had brought him such a share of spiritual joy. Fully awakened to the realization of a vast wealth of cultural beauty in the Church of the ages, he turned the power of his literary mind, and the charm of his poetic talent to serve Catholicity, and we have from his pen Catholic traditions enshrined in immortal song. Craving for truth, his soul drank at truth's very source, the beauty of divine revelation, and then gave back to a thirsting world, a tender, thrilling exposition of what Faith had done for him. "The Church itself is the most sacred and the august of poets", (3) said Cardinal Newman, and De Vere's art grew more vigorous, more musical and more remarkably spiritual in the fold of the Church.

(I) Sonnets on Despondency, Aubrey De Vere, page 402.
His Catholic poetry is marked by sublime and serious convictions, as he traces the progress of spiritual thought in the development of the nations. His sonnets are full of spontaneous charm and lyrical grace; his firm conviction was that the Church was the shrine of a mightier power than art; and his musings in the Eternal City, shaped themselves into exultant apostrophes to the Faith of Rome, thus:

"Here is thy Strength, O Rome!

and lo! that Power went forth which conquered Death,

Then Hell gave up her prey;

That hour the kingdoms of the world, became

The kingdoms of the Lord, and of His Christ." (I)

By poetry, essay, historical sketch and biography, he expressed his love for the church which had always taught her poets to regulate their emotions, and to discipline their passions. She was for him the one, true kingdom of Christ on earth; he saw her girt round by the Heavenly Kingdom, imaging its grandeur; and with all the honesty of grateful love, he sang:

"O Church of God, unwrinkled as the ocean;

Wear for aye, thy Pentecostal glory". (2)

Well, did De Vere write of God, of God's Church and of humanity; the definite ideal of spiritual beauty, he kept faithfully before his mind; and he exhausted the resources of poetical appeal, to ratify the clear convincing fact that

"Truth in its unity alone is truth." (3)

He employed the noblest efforts of his mind to delineate the immortal beauty of the Mother and her Child. One beneath the Cross, the other dying upon it—"Twin mirrors of a single woe, made by

(2) Lines Written under Delphi, De Vere, Stanza 8, last line.
(I) Adapted from A Wanderer's Musings at Rome, De Vere, Stanza 12.
reflection infinite." (1)

His poetry, consecrated to so holy a contemplation transcends the merely classical, in purpose and result, as the "Vision of St. Helena" surpasses the "Descent of Odysseus". The reason why it should be so, is told in one of De Vere's best songs of Our Lady:

"Summed up in Thee, our hearts behold
The glory of created things,
And from thy Son's corporeal mould
Looks forth the Eternal King of Kings". (2)

He declares that Christian poetry must ever be a "Rosa Mystica", the palest leaf of which has a suffusion from Calvary, and he continues the same idea when he states that, "Faith offers many subjects too high for poetic art, matter too awful for poetry." (3)

Yes, our Holy Faith gave Aubrey De Vere subjects as sacred as the Incarnation and Calvary, and he sang well of both. The flower of his poetry blossomed for Christ and Our Lady.

Of Joyce Kilmer, we may say what he himself said of Hilaire Belloc: "His part in increasing the sum of the world's beauty would not be the considerable thing it is, were it not for his Faith." (4) Through the Faith which prayer gained for him (for he tells us he had prayed long for it) Joyce Kilmer was led by easy routes to the unapproachable heights where Art, Perfect Art sits evermore sceptered and encrowned. The substance of his best songs is furnished by Faith and prayer; these two became the source of his soul's inimitable poetic power. The very title of many of his works suggests an un-

(1) May Carols, De Vere, page 96.
(2) " " " " II12.
(3) Preface to May Carols, De Vere. (Adapted from pages I-2).
(4) Essays, Kilmer, page 76.
bounded reverence for Catholic truth and devotion. His life was lived on a plane exalted as his poetry, and its purity is only partially revealed in his writings.

"Pray for me, that I may love God more." (1) From the man who finished his letters with this behest, what song should be looked for, but such as might be placed on the lips of the Cherubim? Faith was the hidden fountain of his energy; in it his character found strength and stability; and his art, the rich soil for its perfect flower and fruit. To Yeats, he wrote once to give an estimate of his Faith, declaring that in it he found the "purity and strength which are the guarantees of immortality". (2) Spirituality and sensibility, as well as that sensitiveness which gives aliment to the creative genius, were evident in Kilner's Catholic works, much more so than in the literary productions of his earlier years. He found the Church to be the cultured mother of beauty, the inspirer of the highest art; and in her blessed fold he gave us such poems as, "The Robe of Christ", "The Annunciation", "The Visitation", and the "Blue Valentine". Assuring us that Our Lady of Good Counsel taught him how to distinguish between her own dear Son and the man of lies, he says:

"Disguised with fearful art,
He has the wounded hands and feet
But not the wounded heart."

Kilmer devoted his life and personality to his literary work, and suffered nothing to be wasted in the delight of doing it. He was eminently gifted with spiritual resourcefulness, and men's estimate of Art did not alter his principle regarding the literature of Catholic authors. "The Faith should illumine everything they write." (3)

(1) Letters from the Front, Joyce Kilmer, page 119.
(2) Memoirs, Joyce Kilmer, page 55.
(3) Letters from the Front, Joyce Kilmer, page 56.
said he, in a letter from the battle front; and he expected that the Catholicity, which had done so much for him, to do still greater things for his poet-wife Aline, whom he fondly named his Mistress, in the art of devotion, as in the art of poetry. The whimsical, tender, boyish request to the heavenly Monsignore, St. Valentine, is typical of this poet's love for the Lady of the Blue Mantle. It was She who dubbed him her Knight-Troubadour; and love for this Lady rang from his heart in,

"Music like that God's chosen poet sings." (I)

Só too, the red light before the Altar, annealed the shining armor of his soul, in chivalrous loyalty and love for the Blessed Sacrament. It was Faith in this most Holy Mystery that gave Kilmer his strong, supernatural perception of beauty. He saw it in the bright eyes of children, in tree, sky and sea; but celestial beauty gleamed for him in,

"Happy lamp that serves Thee, with never ceasing light,
   The happy flame that trembles forever in Thy sight."

His wistful, tender farewell to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, can be summed up and understood as it deserves to be understood, in these lines,

"I leave the holy quiet, for the loudly human train,
   And my heart, that He has breathed upon,
   Is filled with lonely pain."

Yes, pain has always been the price of sanctity, as well as of art; and the ready transition from this declaration of pain to the face-to-face impassioned apostrophe:

"O King, O Friend, O Lover, what sorer grief can be,
   In all the reddest depths of Hell,
   Than banishment from Thee!"

(I) The Rosary, from Poems by Kilmer.
shows the very finest kind of that "high seriousness", which Arnold
signalizes as true poetic art. He carried the conviction of his song
in his heart; nor did he fear to speak this conviction, at a time when
to speak an encouraging word for Ireland, was considered treason; and
so he assures the poet-martyrs of Easter-week, 1916, that,

"There is no rope can strangle song,
   And not for long, Death takes his toll;
   No prison bars can dim the stars,
   Nor quicklime eat the living soul."

Truly, Catholic Faith taught Joyce Kilmer how to create forms,
instinct with heavenly loveliness, because the Church, into which
prayer led him, has ever had a sanctifying power over the beauty which
underlies artistic motives.

His "Roses", written for Katherine Bregy, is a true poem; it
teems with beauty, high spiritual beauty, and exquisitely simple art;
it reveals Joyce Kilmer inspired with the spirit of the heavenly Muse.
He is, indeed, the American singer of Christ and Our Lady; and "his
poems rank high in the light of able criticism." (1) Had he lived,
what poetry might not have been ours? How many sparks of flame, might
not his glad genius have stolen from the sun, to brighten the lives
of men, had he not gone so soon, to reclaim from Our Lady his "Blue
Valentine".

Faith, reverence, simplicity, holiness, love, trust! With these
words, a brief account of Michael Williams opens here. If the term
"convert" could be substituted for the kindred expression re-vert, it
would simplify and shorten the necessary explanation, that Michael

Williams was never a protestant. "The High Romance" tells his story from boyhood on, to the blessed day when he left his beggar's song at the gate of Mt. Carmel, got back an answer like a breath from Heaven, and felt the thrill of long-lost joy waken within his soul. In the history of American writers, there is not one to whom Faith was so sorely a need, one whose conversion was so signal and sure. The gate of Mt. Carmel opened to his starving soul, the place of peace and spiritual plenty; and the Little Flower of Jesus took his case in hand. Then a fragrance from the eternal shore drifted into his poor vagrant soul, sick unto death from that enlightenment which is worse than darkness. The story of his contact with this little Saint of God, is as it should be, "a sweet breath from Heaven".

When Michael Williams knelt again at the Altar of God, and became a member of the Third Order of Mt. Carmel, he gave a curious criticism of his own literary art, one of the few things indeed for which he had hitherto cared to live. The fragments of what he had written for twenty long years, he burned. Morbidities he names them in "The High Romance". With them went also a host of vain efforts to express his baffled questionings. To his clearer vision, the literary endeavors of many past years were nothing but "stuff", written during his soul's frenetic period. Self-will was fashioning creeds and "isms", ill-calculated to bring peace to his mind, or rest to his heart. In the comfortable days of unbelief, he had confronted the realities of life, with an almost stoical indifference, like the hero he would wish to be. Journalism was the only "ism" which profited him anything in those days, so he pursued it, for his family's sake, though the dominant quality of his attitude and art was doubt. Crystalizing his experiences, he found the result uncon-
sailing indeed, but modern enlightenment required such crystallization, that it might literary capital out of certain interesting anecdotes. The perfection of his literary art was, at that time, a splendid veil which talent and toil had thrown over the quality of his personal likes and dislikes, yet from his prose works arose the conviction, that something was amiss somewhere; and within his soul, his listening conscience could hear the sound of a poignant grief, like the wail which superstition ascribes to that part of the shore most often strewn with shipwrecks. Spiritual loneliness came then, as a result of his adventures among unbelieving sophists, for the victory of ethics or aesthetics is ever found to be but a poor substitute for the self-conquest of the Saints.

Michael Williams "had wandered from the true road, into a desert of shifting mirages; had come to the fountains of illusion, and the oasis of vain dreams." (1) But God heard the cry of his soul. He was received into the Third Order of Mt. Carmel, and we receive from his hitherto misguided art, those things which forecast "the joy of a soul united with God," (2) literary passages on the love of God, gems of thought on the Sacrifice of the Mass, paragraphs of exquisite tenderness on the Saints, those true poets "who live poetry, because they are saturated with beauty and grace." (3) Then too, we receive from the pen once dry from "stuff, fit but for the fire," that incomparable sonnet to the nuns of Carmel, who stand by the deep wells of holy love,

"In God's most mystic garden close,
A crystal cup in each one's hand,
Sealed with the Cross that bears the Rose." (4)

(1) The High Romance, Williams, page 336.
(2) " " " " " 310.
(3) " " " " " 312.
(4) " " " " " 306.
So too, have we from hispen the "Commonwealth", with its wealth of Catholic literature, and many fine treatises on matters of Catholic concern; as well as some scholarly, satisfying articles on nearly every topic interesting to modern "literary and political life." (1)

Among his finest utterances stands this, "here is the object and purpose of all life and art, the glory of God." This statement worthy of St. Ignatius of Loyola, summarizes the last half of "The High Romance". By it he proves himself to be the possessor of those great qualities, by which this story was begun; they are simplicity, love, trust, holiness and spiritual freedom in the Holy Catholic Church.

Last, but not least, the greatest humorist of the century, has made his confession of the Faith, because

"Nor earth, nor air, nor fire, nor deep
Could lull poor mortal longingness to sleep." (2)

That Mr. Chesterton's art has changed much, because of this confession there need be no dispute or doubt. A few years ago, he was classed among the brilliant writers of the hour; always, his literary brilliancy shone on the side of justice, good sense and better humor. His "Orthodoxy" appeared, and certain critics struggled to express their views on the work. The easily persuaded public, considered him as having no claim to teach our age a serious lesson; he might of course interest us a little in whims and prejudices, by stating them in an extraordinarily clever way, and enforcing them by pithy sayings, that have sometimes the savor of proverbs. To these wise critics, so well able to explain motives to the unthinking mind, Gilbert Chesterton was a master of nonsense; a little silly, though not vicious. In the

(1) America Vol. XIX, page 570.
(2) Poems by Walter de La Mare, page 129.
meantime, regardless of his critics Chesterton kept writing his fantastic pieces, till all England went into raptures over the sportive genius which laughed its loudest in the wisest piece of buffoonery written in a hundred years,

"The gallows in my garden, people say
Is new and neat and adequately tall."

and when he has aroused the interest or curiosity of these modern malcontents, he continues in the same manner, rather an instructive strain,

"I tie the noose on in a knowing way,
But then-----------
The strangest whim has seized me----
After all I think I will not hang myself to-day."

(and this possibly for the best reason modern psychologists could give)

"Tomorrow is the time I get my pay."

In pieces of fun like this, Chesterton can do more, and does more to save his countrymen from the bane of psycho-pathic, introspective and socialistic degeneracy than all the classical critics in England could ever hope to do.

This is the humorous essayist, who in a fit of "mad musing" walked into the Catholic Church and left the Anglican Church quite widowed by his journey. He brought with him too, an almost incredible ability in argument and a chivalrous devotion to the Faith.

England is the happier for his jokes, and the reading world ought to be the wiser for his essays. A glimpse from Heaven came to this leader of modern thought, and now he is foremost among the
defenders of Christianity. There was only one alternative left for him; he chose it and became a member of that Church, in which his talent can be "a centre of joyous energy, a call to battle, a trumpet to victory." (1) Faith has opened to his mind avenues of knowledge and expressions hitherto undreamed of. In answer to the "isms" of the age, his good sense had proclaimed human nature, not sick but healthy; in fact, he declares with Chestertonian judgment, that human nature is "terribly solid," (2) Undoubtedly those philosophers who deal with it in the wrong way, do so because they forget the almost infinite variety of human traits.

Long before G.K.Chesterton entered the Church of Rome, he had felt how sane and consistent are her teachings; he had written "The Everlasting Man" as an argument against many of the false philosophers of the day. Now he defends the Divinity of Christ against vicious attacks from modern blasphemy; he champions our humanity against the huge insult of brute ancestry; he shows how men may be made to see old truths in very modern garments, and he explains as well as a layman can explain, how a creature, called man is an everlasting being, and the Creator Himself as "Everlasting Man".

Chesterton is titled an apologist. He is one in the best sense of the word. His defense of the Church, against her calumniators is a sure mark of his great gratitude to the Mother, whose word has given "his mind felicity and certitude." (3)

What concerns us here is that within the sanctuary of truth, his pen has grown more potent, his style more easy, reliant, humorous and sure. The undecided and contradictory system of Protestant thought,

(2) " " , Oct., 1926, page 160.
could give no sure basis for the play of his splendid talents; but in
the religion of Rome, he has found no hindrance to his literary and
philosophic progress. Since his entrance into the true fold, his
writings gleam with enthusiasm, like old Chaucer of Catholic England,
long-ago. Wit, humor, whimsy, laughter, irony, jest and joke, frisk
and frolic happily, beside the fully-developed product of his mind.
His genius has grown apace with the dignity of the subjects, which the
Church places at his disposal. The pagan outbursts, that harass decen­
cy anywhere and everywhere from pole to pole, cower before the on­
slaughts of his Catholic good sense, his English good humor, and "his
insistence on intellectual definitions". (1)

With the powerful weapon of literary art, Chesterton deals the
death-blow to these doubts and dreams, modulated indeed by the soph­
isty of the hour, and woven into alluring systems of false philos­
ophy. He has discovered that the freedom, which comes from certitude,
encourages the genius of man to attempt all possible heights in lit­
erary art, and to reach them; he has learned too, that the clouds
folded on the mountain's brow, are not more pure than thoughts poured
forth from the soul brightened, mellowed and sanctified by Faith, for
Faith alone,

"A thousand thousand spirits' pictures are
Kenned through the shroud that wraps
The Heaven of heavens afar." (2)

"Chesterton has indeed a place among the prophets." (3)

In conclusion therefore, it is to be remarked that the Church
is, and has ever been, the holy monitress of great poets; that she

(2) Poems, Father Faber, page 69.
offers subjects for the highest poetry, and encouragement to the greatest mental endeavor. Literature has ever enjoyed her queenly patronage, and she has never limited the scope, nor checked the daring of her poets. But hers is the power, and the duty to suppress and denounce that literature, which might prove dangerous to the morals of her children; she cannot tolerate in any art the inculcation of moral evil.

Newman calls the Church, the "great poet full of music to soothe the sad and to control the wayward, wonderful in story for the imagination of the romantic". (I) Indeed, under the sacred auspices of the Church, logic itself becomes poetical. The "Summa" of St. Thomas is set forth in sublimest song by the Florentine mystic, Dante. The "Book-Mark" of St. Theresa, gives a compendium of divine science, in a poetical system of nine lines. It is further to be observed, that souls in whom poetry lies dormant, need but the touch of her hand to awaken them to that exquisite sense of beauty, which was bequeathed to her on the Pentecost of her foundation, and by her Divine Founder Himself.

Manning got the substance of his literary master-piece, in the "Eternal Priesthood" of Christ, and he handles the subject with a master's hand. Newman is supremely poetic in the "Dream of Gerontius"; Faber exhausts the English tongue and all the artistry of prose literature, in praising the Blessed Sacrament, and glorifying the Precious Blood. Note how different the works of his Catholic mind, from the art of former years, when

"God kept shrouded in His ancient gloom,

Watching things travel to his own vast will." (2)

From lakes and pools of solemn beauty, from flowing brooks and dark romantic rivers, from patches of blue rock and bunches of red fern, he lifted his poetic gaze beyond the flakes of sunshine and the toss of

(2) Poems of Father Faber, page 60.
fleecy clouds, until it rested on the beauty of the Face of God. Of Him, he sings in a medium too beautiful to be called prose; too sacred to be reckoned merely human speech.

We find then, that the supernatural does not cripple man's natural powers; rather does it add a supernatural charm, and supplies possibilities for high poetic modes of expression. Neither does Faith pin the genius of her children, to any one scheme of song, or any one scheme or system of thought. It does not bid her seers away from the midnight lamp, but it offers a light to their path, through the infinitudes of knowledge; and preserves their minds from the blight of error; and renders harmless, the lore of ages. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that literary art in the service of divine Faith, grows more tender, more gladsome, more mystic, more forceful and more pure. It must be so, since Divine Truth is the one great life-giving and strengthening force for the human intellect, and has ever been the inspiration of great poets. Indeed the themes which Faith suggests, are of their very nature, noblest matter for the work of genius; and who will deny that, (all other conditions being equal) an exalted subject, wrought to artistic perfection, is a more inspiring revelation of what art should be, than a trifling theme could ever be, no matter how artistically finished? Who would place the grapes of Appelles, with their wealth of Grecian art, or the veil of Parrhasius, above the Christian loveliness of the Sistine Madonna?

"Faith is the most valuable of all possessions, to the man of genius," (1) and so well did Pope Pius IX of blessed memory, understand the truth of this statement, that he ordered the poet-convert, (1) Catholic Mind, America Press, Vol.XXIV, page 261.
Aubrey De Vere, to consecrate his poetic talent to Our Lady. This order, generously executed, resulted in a charming series of poems, the "May Carols" in which the author assures the world that,

"Whatever is musical in mirth,

Whatever is jubilant in song,

Belongs by right to her, who gave us God." (1)

Tenderness, holiness, purity, beauty and vision are the attributes of Faber's mind, when that mind has been quickened by the supernatural light and power of Faith. The same may be said of the gifted writer, Robert Hugh Benson, who after his conversion, spoke with prophetic tongue, in his great Catholic novels. While singing the high praises of Our Lady, De Vere gave vent to his Catholic ardor, in permanent and enchanting poetry. So too of these later apologists who have laid the key of their literary treasure-trove at the feet of the Vicar of Christ; and emboldened with the venturesomeness of charity, wave the sceptred hand of journalistic influence, solely for the sake of Christ and His Church.

In silence and in hope, these great Converts to our Faith, have laid the foundation for habits of thought, which when translated into literature, outweigh the earlier and less serious works of their mind and pen. The genius of the human race has been sanctified by revelation, and that which sanctifies, illuminates also.

"Thy word is a light to my feet, and a guide to my path." (2) Without truth there could be little or no artistic merit in the literature of these writers, because truth touches most closely the laws of the mind. It places its eternal stamp upon that work, which is destined to endure. "No man can safely arrive at conclusions worth

(1) May Carols, De Vere, page 97.
(2) Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost, Manning, page 229. (quoted)
the labor, without the illumination of the spirit of Truth." (1) Thus the intellect sustained in its true poise, by the knowledge of divine Faith, is best prepared to measure artistic values. The purest and truest ideal is the perfection of spiritual beauty; the nearer the mind approaches God, the more valuable its emanations in the form of literature. Lyrical genius of the highest order, may produce only vain or unhelpful work, if religion offers no intellectual inspiration to the lyrist, for,

"Wealth of song pours all its gold in liquid light,
Doubly refined by Faith." (2)

Michael Williams and G.K.Chesterton are with us yet. Their writings manifest their minds in perfect conformity to the light and law of God. From this accordance, comes their capability for discerning what is right, with a facility, the sensual or unbelieving man could never attain. They have learned long ago, that the love of truth saves men from the misfortune of believing a lie; and that Faith predisposes the human mind to see and enjoy verity. Only the actual possession of truth can give complete vent to itself, in artistic expression. Certainty lends the intellect the protection under which it can grow, and growth is itself another form of power.

The record of their literary achievements in the cause of truth and art shall be:

"When time is ripe, a long, long music-strain
Tuning all harmonies, into pews of praise," (3) and gratitude to God, for that Faith which saves the genius of man from error, and tames the recreant intellect.

(2) Cithara Mea, Canon Sheehan, page 230.
(3) Weal in Woe, De Vere, page 369.
Finally, artistic development denotes earnest self-development, and no form of this development can equal the growth, which takes place in the school of the soul, the Catholic Church. Newman says, that the very being of the Church is poetry, and such poets as are born under her shadow, she takes into her service; she bids them write her hymns, compose her chants, embellish her shrines, or determine her ceremonies. He would consider the Church therefore, necessary to artistic expression, and the divine element of poetry an essential property of Catholicism. (I)

The literary artistry of these great Converts, may be concisely expressed in the famous epigram:

"Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem." (2)

(Out of shadows and fancies, into the Truth.)

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