

TRIBUTES OF PROTESTANT POETS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

SOME SWEET FLOWERS OF RESPECT AND VENERATION.

AN esteemed young correspondent from Southland sends us (N.Z. TABLET)—very appropriately for the month of May—the following hymn to the Blessed Virgin from the pen of the American poet, Edgar Allen Poe:—

'At morn, at noon, at twilight dim,
 Maria! thou hast heard my hymn!
 In joy and woe, in good and ill,
 Mother of God, be with me still!
 When the hours flew brightly by,
 And not a cloud obscured the sky,
 My soul, lest it should truant be,
 Thy grace did guide to thine and thee;
 Now when storms of Fate o'ercast
 Darkly my Present and my Past,
 Let my Future radiant shine
 With sweet hopes of thee and thine!'

Our Southland friend inquires if Edgar Allen Poe was a Catholic. Whereunto we make reply and say that Poe never was a Catholic, nor made much, if any, profession of any religious belief during the course of a life which was cut short in 1849 by drink and other excesses. Poe had, however, his saner and more repentant moments. They brought to him whirlwinds of bitter remorse, gave him bright glimpses at the beautiful world of virtue that lay off his track, and resolutions that melted before temptation like the morning mist before the sun. In this respect he resembled the unfortunate, but more gifted, Irish poet, James Clarence Mangan, who died in the same year, and like Poe, in a public hospital. It is possible that in his better moods Poe may have recognised the beauty and elevating character of Catholic devotion to Our Lady. Many Protestant poets have penned lines of great beauty in her honour. Cesare Cantù, the distinguished Italian historian, quotes in his discourses a poem in honour of the Blessed Virgin written in Italian by Byron at Ravenna. The poem, which lies before us, is a gem of devotional feeling, but as far as we have been able to discover, it is not included in any of his collected works.

In the third canto of his *Lady of the Lake*, Sir Walter Scott puts the following evening hymn into the mouth of the fair Ellen as she and her father are about to spend their first night in the Goblin-cave:—

'Ave Maria! Stainless styled!
 Foul demons of the earth and air,
 From this their wonted haunt exiled,
 Shall flee before thy presence fair.
 We bow us to our lot of care,
 Beneath thy guidance reconciled;
 Hear for a maid a maiden's prayer,
 And for a father hear a child.'

Wordsworth, who was a thorough-going member of the Church of England, went farther and did better than Scott in the famous lines which he addressed to Our Lady in one of his ecclesiastical sonnets:—

'Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncroft
 With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
 Woman! above all women glorified,
 Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
 Purer than foam on central ocean tost,
 Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn
 With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon
 Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast,
 Thy image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,
 Not unforgiven, the suppliant knee might bend,
 As to a visible power, in which did blend
 All that was mixed and reconciled in thee,
 Of mother's love with maiden purity,
 Of high with low, celestial with terrene.'

Side by side with Wordsworth's lovely sonnet (says the late Father Bridget, C.S.S.R.) must always be placed the lines in which Southey has depicted devotion to the Blessed Virgin, as the effect and climax of scenic beauty:—

'How calmly, gliding through the dark-blue sky,
 The midnight moon ascends!
 The watchman on the battlements partakes
 The stillness of the solemn hour; he feels
 The silence of the earth, the endless sound
 Of flowing waters soothes him, and the stars
 Which in that brightest moonlight well-nigh quenched,
 Scarce visible, as in the utmost depth
 Of yonder sapphire infinite, are seen,
 Draw on with elevating influence
 Towards eternity the attempered mind.
 Musing on worlds beyond the grave he stands,
 And to the Virgin Mother silently
 Breathes forth her hymn of praise.'

In some of his prose Southey was strongly anti-Catholic. His better and finer sentiments came out in his poems. Longfellow and other poets might also be quoted for their sense of the spiritual beauty and worth of devotion to Our Lady. But we have contented ourselves with referring to four such representative British poets as Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, and Southey. It is beyond the scope of these brief lines to refer to the manner in which, during the past fifty years, devotion to the Blessed Virgin has spread among a large and steadily growing section of the Anglican Church. The old Catholic sentiment was, perhaps, never quite dead in the Establishment. Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656)—who was much

persecuted for his supposed leanings to Puritanism—gave expression to it over two and a half centuries ago in the following remarks on the words which the Angel Gabriel said to Mary:—

'But how gladly do we second the Angel in his praise of her, which was more ours than his! How justly do we bless her, whom the angels pronounced blessed! How worthily is she honoured of men, whom the Angel proclaimed beloved of God! O blessed Mary, he cannot bless thee, he cannot honour thee too much, that defies thee not! That which the Angel said of thee, thou hast prophesied of thyself; we believe the Angel said of thee: "All generations shall call thee blessed," by the fruit of whose womb all generations are blessed.'

Diocesan News.

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON.

(From our own correspondent).

May 6.

THE largest congregation ever assembled in a Catholic church in Wellington was present in St. Joseph's on Sunday evening on the occasion of the closing of the mission, every available space being utilised. After the Rosary had been recited the Ven. Archdeacon Devoy, on behalf of himself and the parishioners, thanked his Grace and the Rev. Father Ainsworth for conducting the mission, the result of which had far exceeded his expectations, and which would bring down on the parish innumerable blessings and favours from Almighty God. His Grace, on his own account and on behalf of Father Ainsworth, by whom, he said, he had been most ably assisted, congratulated one and all on the great success which had attended the mission. They were shortly leaving Wellington to conduct similar missions throughout the archdiocese, and he hoped the people of Te Aro parish would pray that those might be as successful as their own had been. He also thanked them for the generous manner in which they had responded to his appeal for subscriptions towards the Cathedral Fund. If the other towns did proportionately well he would, at a time not so far distant as many supposed, have the privilege and honour of laying the foundation stone of a cathedral which would accommodate 3,000 people. That such a building was an absolute necessity anyone in the church that evening could readily see. The subject of the final sermon was Perseverance—'He that persevereth to the end shall be saved.' In it his Grace urged the absolute necessity of persevering to the end, and said Christ had shown the necessary means in His words 'Watch and pray'—watch that we may know the dangers that continually surround us, and pray for grace and strength to overcome them. He concluded by exhorting all to join the Sacred Heart Society, for there was no better means of ensuring perseverance than by being a practical member. Before Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament his Grace conferred on those present the special blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff. At Benediction his Grace was the celebrant, with Father Mahoney deacon, and Father Maloney sub-deacon. Congregational singing was the rule on every evening of the mission.

The Very Rev. Dr. Pestre, S.M., Provincial of the Marist Order in New Zealand, has taken up his residence in Te Aro, where he will stay for a lengthened period.

As a result of the entertainment recently given by the Te Aro Dramatic Club, in aid of the Sisters of Compassion, the nuns have received a cheque for the handsome sum of £41 odd. The club is to be congratulated on the financial success of the venture.

On Tuesday Dr. Mackin held a housewarming in his new residence, 'Rostrevor,' in Marion street. The house is a spacious one containing over twenty rooms. A breakfast was given in the morning, and in the evening, Dr. and Mrs. Mackin's hospitality was again shown to their many friends, and a delightful evening was spent. Among those present were his Grace Archbishop Redwood and some of the local clergy.

It was announced in the churches on Sunday, that, although the matter is not yet finally decided, the new Cathedral will in all probability be situated in Buckle street. Mr. M. Kennedy, whose generosity is proverbial, has given the authorities the offer of a site extending from St. Joseph's Church to Tory street, in lieu of his promised donation of £1,000. Had we a few more citizens such as he, the building would be very soon erected. The advisability of securing a site such as this must be apparent to all who have resided in Wellington. It is in a position almost central and in a few years' time will be right in the heart of the city.

His Grace Archbishop Redwood, accompanied by Rev. Father Ainsworth, left by the Haurangi on Thursday evening for Nelson to continue their missionary work.

At a meeting of St. Joseph's Choir it was unanimously decided to ask the Rev. Father O'Shea to accept the office of president of the choir, rendered vacant by the resignation of the Rev. Father Ainsworth.

St. Joseph's Choir has accepted Father Lane's invitation to sing the Mass on the occasion of the opening of the church at Petone on the 11th inst.

The Rev. Father O'Shea, who has been away on a holiday, returned during the week much benefited by his trip.

A church is to be built at Pahiatua. The contract for its erection has been let, and the Rev. T. McKenna expects the building to be completed in about four months.

Rev. Brother Mark, Superior of the Marist Brothers in New Zealand, is visiting the South Island on a tour of inspection.

The Rev. Father Power, of Hawera, paid Wellington a flying visit this week. He was down on business.