

'there is nothing secular but sin,' and he has certainly striven to show this in his books. Taking a wide range of three centuries, he has painted for us dozens of men and women, exceptional in strength or weakness, or merely 'average' men, and he has shown us the interior working of Christ and the Church in their souls. No book of his was written without a purpose, and a very definite purpose. Indeed it is probable, as the *Manchester Guardian* said, that 'he might have been a considerable influence in literature had he been less concerned with literature as a means, and more concerned with literature as an end.' Being, as he was, concerned only with literature as a means, he has succeeded in attaining a considerable influence in a higher sphere than that of literature. His pen was to him only the tool with which he could depict Christ and Christianity to the world: losing that power, one feels that it would have lost its attraction for its possessor. Yet his was the gift of an extraordinarily effective and vivid style: he was ultra-modern in his methods, terse, concise, pictorial, and powerful, and his books possess for us Catholics of to-day a unique charm, combining as they do the presentation of the ancient and well-loved ideals of our faith with all the attractions of the modern school of literature. Monsignor Benson was, like all our present-day writers, an impressionist: he wrote for a generation which has no time to study miniature paintings; his novels and even his more serious works grip the reader from the first page.

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It is perhaps difficult for us, whose only acquaintance with the illustrious convert was through his books, to realise that his literary work was only one department of a very busy life. For us, the author not unnaturally obscures the hard-worked parish priest, accessible to the least of his flock, and the earnest preacher, well-known in English pulpits. But a contributor to the *London Tablet* pays him a graceful tribute of praise, and makes us realise the wide scope of his activities, when he says: 'Failure of the heart was the one final paradox in the history of a man whose heart had never failed him before, were a soul to be healed, or even a trivial kindness to be done.' And his last words emphasise the fact that this brilliant author of whom we are proud, was essentially a childlike Catholic, removed from the average Catholic only in his more perfect and docile acceptance of Catholic faith and practice. For his last words were but the words with which the little Catholic child lies down to sleep: 'Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.' It was thus that Robert Hugh Benson laid down to sleep. No wonder that Archbishop Vaughan declared a childlike simplicity to have been the characteristic which led him into the Church, and which had governed his life ever since. Simplicity, too, was the keynote of his funeral ceremonies, for by his own request he was buried in the orchard of his own house. The Requiem Mass was sung in his private chapel, adorned as it was by the work of his own hands in carved wood, and the music was rendered by the boys of the Westminster Cathedral Choir, in which he had taken a special interest. After Mass, the coffin was borne out of the little chapel into the loveliness of an autumn day, across the grass of his lawn, and past the rose-beds he had planned and tended, to the orchard where the open grave was ready. There the joyful song of the lark blended with the chanting of the boy choristers, as his body was committed to the ground. Is it fanciful to detect in this simple, almost joyous interment, amid the fresh beauties of the garden, a symbol of that which lived and blossomed in Robert Hugh Benson? Surely he stood above all else, for the Catholic England of three centuries ago, for the 'Dowry of Mary,' the England of simple Catholic piety and unprofaned altar-shrines. Newman spoke of the wonderful movement of his own day as 'The Second Spring' of English Catholicism, and it was indeed marvellous with all the miraculous re-birth an inexplicable vitality of spring. But in Benson have not we of a later generation seen for the first time the beautiful summer-tide of English Catholicism? He has held up to his compatriots, as to the world, the picture of what they were

in the sixteenth century, before the breath of the Protestant Reformation swept over the land, withering the fair flowers of simplicity, spontaneity, and devotion. English Catholicism as a national religion is but approaching full flower in our own day, and producing again its ancient beauties. For centuries the national flower has sheltered below the soil of England from the frosts of persecution, though its seeds have lived in the invincible faith of individual families. Benson has done very much to depict its former beauties, and to bring to-day's blossom to perfection. Above all, he has made real to us what he writes of as 'a matter of literal history,' the personal love of Christ, 'so deep in the better and unspoilt English nature,' and evidenced still in non-Catholic England, despite the present English tradition of reticence and restraint, by 'the marked popularity of such hymns as "Jesu, Lover of My Soul" and "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me."' His finest woman character is a young English girl, who plays a heroic part during the great darkness of the penal days, and whose inmost thoughts and motives are thus described by Benson: 'It was the Person of Jesus Christ that was all her religion to her: it was for this that she was devout, that she went to Mass and the Sacraments when she could: . . . But the other talk that she had heard sometimes,—of the place of religion in politics, and the justification of this or that cause of public action—well, she knew that these things must be so: yet it was not the manner of her own most intimate thought, and the language of it was not hers.' Benson has given us a book of ancient English devotions, collected and arranged by himself, and all breathing this theme, and among his more serious works, his volume of sermons, entitled *The Friendship of Christ*, is admittedly unequalled for beauty of thought and expression. Through his own veins ran the warmth and joy of an English summer, and it is not unlikely that the future will declare this reversion to spontaneity and the enthusiasm of simple faith and piety to have been his message to his fellow countrymen.

Notes

Father Bernard Vaughan's Methods

In an article in the *Ecclesiastical Record* Mr. Horace Foster tells how news items should be written so as to secure publicity in the American daily press. Among other things he tells us how Father Bernard Vaughan manages to get reported at such length. When Father Vaughan (he says) preached in Lent in St. Patrick's Cathedral two years ago, nearly every New York newspaper carried long accounts of his sermons, quoting *in extenso*. Father Vaughan understood metropolitan newspaper conditions. He knew what he wanted and knew how to get it. On Saturday afternoon the papers and the news services, Associated Press, United Press, etc., received envelopes containing the full text of Father Vaughan's sermon marked 'for release Sunday afternoon.' The sermon was printed on galley proofs, so that it could be pasted up and cut with the least possible trouble. Besides the full text of the sermon there was a resume of the same written in the third person, also printed. The concentrated sermons would read something like this: 'Father Bernard Vaughan preached yesterday morning before an audience that crowded St. Patrick's Cathedral. The speaker dealt with the question of Socialism as it concerns the home. He pointed out the dangers of the new Socialist programme,' etc. There was no chance to go wrong. If the city editor wanted a comprehensive report of the sermon there it was, columns of it, the address in full. If he wanted a short summary, he had it.

French Patriotism

There is no question of the patriotism of the citizens of France. We have seen how, from the ends of the earth, French priests, even those exiled as mem-