

and immediately after death. It is divided into seven sections, the general contents of which have been thus summarised: 'In the first of these Gerontius lies upon his death-bed in the last moment of his mortal agony;—in the second his liberated soul experiences for the first time the actual separation from the body; in the third he converses with his attendant angel-guardian upon the strangeness of his present existence and approaching meeting with the Almighty Judge; the fourth describes the meeting in the middle region between Heaven and Earth of the bands of demons venting their fury against God and their contempt for man; in the fifth the soul enters amidst the choirs of the angelicals who chant God's praises in the vestibules of Heaven; in the sixth the soul appears before the throne of God for judgment; the seventh and final part pictures the consignment of the soul to the Angels of Purgatory who shall guard it until the angel guardian shall return to reclaim it for the courts of light.' As a sample of the vivid and impressive writing with which the poem abounds we quote—from the opening lines—this powerful description of the approach of death:

Jesu, Maria—I am near to death,  
And thou art calling me; I know it now—  
Not by the token of this faltering breath,  
This chill at heart, this dampness on my brow,  
(Jesu, have mercy! Mary, pray for me!)—  
'Tis this new feeling, never felt before,  
(Be with me, Lord, in my extremity!)  
That I am going, that I am no more.  
'Tis this strange, innermost abandonment,  
(Lover of souls! great God! I look to Thee,) This emptying out of each constituent  
And natural force, by which I come to be.  
Pray for me, O my friends; a visitant  
Is knocking his dire summons at my door,  
The like of whom, to scare me and to daunt,  
Has never, never come to me before;  
'Tis death,—O loving friends, your prayers!—'tis he! . . .  
As though my very being had given way,  
As though I was no more a substance now,  
And could fall back on nought to be my stay,  
(Help, loving Lord! Thou my sole Refuge, Thou,)  
And turn no whither, but must needs decay  
And drop from out the universal frame  
Into that shapeless, scopeless, blank abyss,  
That utter nothingness, of which I came:  
This is it that has come to pass in me;  
O horror! this it is, my dearest, this;  
So pray for me, my friends, who have not strength to pray.

Again, take this dramatic description of the fading away of the senses as death approaches:

I can no more; for now it comes again,  
That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,  
That masterful negation and collapse  
Of all that makes me man; as though I bent  
Over the dizzy brink of some sheer infinite descent;  
Or worse, as though down—down for ever I was falling  
through  
The solid framework of created things,  
And needs must sink and sink  
Into the vast abyss. And, crueller still,  
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill  
The mansion of my soul. And, worse and worse,  
Some bodily form of ill  
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse  
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and flaps its hideous  
wings,  
And makes me wild with horror and dismay.  
O Jesu, help! Pray for me, Mary, pray.  
Some angel, Jesu! Such as came to Thee in Thine own  
agony.

The poem affords ample scope for every variety of musical expression; and its rendering by this exceptionally skilled choir should prove a rare treat. Both for the sake of the intrinsic merits of the poem, and for the greater enjoyment in following the performance, intending patrons should procure copies of the words, which may be obtained at any Catholic bookseller's for a few pence.

### The Financial Relations Committee

Some short time ago we quoted from the *Liverpool Catholic Times*—a strongly Nationalist paper—a statement to the effect that the personnel of the new Financial Relations Committee, set up to clear the ground on the financial side of the Irish question had given general satisfaction to the friends of Home Rule. In one sense the statement is correct enough. There is no actual personal objection to any one member of the Commission. But a very strong—and very natural—objection exists in Ireland to the

overwhelming preponderance of sympathy and of voting power which has been assigned to the 'predominant partner' in the composition of the Commission. The Childers Commission of 1894 consisted of fifteen members—of whom seven were Irishmen. The recently appointed Committee consists of five Englishmen, one Irishman, and a seventh member (Lord Pirie) who was born in Canada of Irish parents, but who lives mostly in England. Moreover the Royal Commission of 1894 was a public commission; the Committee now appointed is to be, it seems, a private committee covering the same ground. The following comments, from representative Irish papers, give a tolerably clear indication of the state of feeling in Ireland on the subject.

The *Kilkenny People* says: 'It is not too much to say that the Financial Committee or Commission, call it what you will, that has been appointed to determine the fiscal responsibilities of Great Britain and Ireland has caused serious misgiving in Ireland. And no wonder. How can any respect for or confidence in its findings be anticipated when, with the single exception of the Bishop of Ross, who can hardly be regarded as a financial expert, there is no man on the Committee whose sympathies, when the interests of Ireland and of the "predominant partner" are in conflict, lean to the weaker side. It is essential that Ireland should have at least one strong, able, experienced, and clear-headed man on the Committee. One name at once suggests itself—that of Mr. Thomas Sexton. If the Government were really anxious to have Ireland's case fully and fairly presented, they would, without a shadow of doubt, have added Mr. Sexton to the Financial Committee. That they have not done so almost inevitably suggests a desire on their part to secure a verdict for England. We have had no definite information—only vague hints—as to the views of the Irish leader on the character of the Committee, on its fitness to make an impartial report, and, above all, on the omission from that body of Mr. Sexton, whose superb handling of the delicate and vastly important questions that presented themselves in connection with the Financial Relations Commission is a lasting monument to his genius. We think the country should know whether Mr. Redmond and the Irish Party are satisfied with the Committee as at present constituted.'

The *Sligo Champion* makes the following pertinent comparison: 'One would imagine that "the financial relations between Ireland and the other component parts of the United Kingdom" had been already determined by a Royal Commission. On the threshold of Home Rule, as we are given to believe we stand, it is very extraordinary if the whole question is to be re-opened, and what else are we to gather from the statement, above quoted, of the scope of the inquiry at present proposed? If the report of the Royal Commission on the financial relations is not to be revised, or, at all events, called into question, what is the meaning of the above statement of the objects of the present Committee? The Royal Commission of 1894 was a public commission. The Committee now appointed is to be, it seems, a private committee covering the same ground. That any committee, whatever its constitution, should be empowered in private conclave to set aside the findings of the Royal Commission is calculated to cause much anxiety in Ireland, and such anxiety is not allayed by the consideration of the constitution of this Committee. . . . So that this Committee, whose findings, we may expect, will be the basis for Home Rule Finance, consists of five Englishmen, one Irishman, and Lord Pirie, who may probably regard matters from the Irish point of view. Accepting Lord Pirie as an Irishman, we have five expert English financiers pitted against two Irishmen on a Committee to investigate a question of the gravest concern to Ireland. And the Committee so constituted is to sit in private on, amongst other things, a question already decided by a Royal Commission composed of eight Englishmen and seven Irishmen. Replying to Mr. Ginnell in the House of Commons the other day, Mr. Birrell declared that the Government would not withhold information from anyone seeking knowledge on the subject of the financial relations. But this is not the point. If the question is to be re-opened it should be in the full light of day, and the verdict of the committee should be based on evidence properly tested and subject to public scrutiny. The scope of any financial inquiry, at present, should be to ascertain how much money the Government is spending on Ireland. We know the annual Irish Estimates, but whether or not the money voted is actually spent we have no means of finding out. Public bodies throughout Ireland should hasten to express their dissatisfaction with the constitution of this committee, and agitate for a full and open inquiry into Irish expenditure by a body on which Irish interests will be adequately represented by Irish financiers.'

And the *Kerry Evening Star* contains this strong and outspoken criticism: 'It would be futile to deny that a great deal of dissatisfaction exists in Ireland regarding the

"Sweet as Mountain Heather."—Scotchmen are connoisseurs in Tea. Cock o' the North is prime favorite.

"Fresh as the Shamrock."—The Sons of Erin are great consumers of Ceylon Hondai Lanka Tea; 1s 6d to 2s 2d.