

Christian centres that were built the first hospitals and refuges for orphans and widows, for the blind and the aged. Here the slave, the debtor, the threatened virgin, and the oppressed matron, found an inviolable asylum. The Church was truly, in every land, the city of God amongst men, the last resort in the dark night of revolution and strife, of all that was lovely and unworldly, pure and elevated, pitiful and self-sacrificing. What wonder then, that even the Protestant historian, Gibbon, is forced to admit: "All that the world has to-day of ancient art was treasured for 1000 years in the cloisters of the Catholic Church." "The Popes," says Roscoe, another Protestant historian, "were the patrons of the arts. They were men vastly superior to their time. Learning was on the eve of perishing from the face of the earth: civilisation was about to be swallowed up in the overwhelming deluge of barbarism. The Church, alone, survived the universal wreck. She alone, by her powerful influence, stemmed the rushing torrent and prevented learning and art from being utterly and hopelessly destroyed."

THE RENAISSANCE.

Yes, the Church struggled manfully on through the bleak winter of opposition and persecution born of ignorance and malice, and the spring-time came, the renaissance, when she put forth into leaf and flower, a thousand forms of her artistic fertility. It was an age of poetry, of painting, of sculpture, of architecture, of religious enthusiasm, for the Church was enthroned with the nations at her feet and she was free to exercise her heaven-sent mission. It was the age of Fra Angelico, of Botticelli, of Raphael, the protege of Leo X. of Fra Bartolomeo, Andrea del Sarto, of Dante, of Leonardo di Vinci, of Tintoretto, and towering above all, of Michael Angelo, the greatest artist of all time. And, as the ages sped along, new sons of the Church arose in every country of Europe, filled with the inspiring genius their Mother had breathed upon them, and in gratitude hastening to pour out the wealth of their talents in the adornment of her sanctuaries. But, there is one art, the first of arts, which is pre-eminently the Church's art, the Church's pride and her crowning glory—the architecture, now called Gothic,—but which, more correctly should be called Church architecture, for it was not conceived in the frozen North, but comes to us from the Syrian Orient, where its elements and the laws of its being are first met with in the ecclesiastical buildings of that ancient Christian land. True, the ancients had their mighty temples and palaces, but they were not the Church's ideal. They were of the earth, earthly; inspired by pagan ideals they could not rise above the ideals that inspired them. Then, let there be a new, and, as yet, undreamed of, style of architecture, a monument, which in every detail will proclaim that the ultimate term of Christian hope, is the vision of the Eternal Truth and Ancient Beauty in the Heavenly Sion.

GOthic ARCHITECTURE.

Was the Church at last found wanting in realising this mighty project. No! a thousand times, no! for look across the face of the earth, and see springing up, as in the fable the palaces sprang up, when the earth was struck with the magic wand, the magnificent Gothic cathedrals and churches, with their pointed arches and their vaulted roofs, with their fretted domes and flying buttresses; a thousand sculptured statues of the Church's heroes—her virgins, her martyrs, her doctors, crowning countless turrets, and surmounting all, the emblem of the Church, the secret of her power, the fountain of her grace, the token of her divine espousals, the Cross of Jesus Christ. "The undying glory," says Cardinal Newman, "of giving Gothic architecture to the world belongs indisputably to the Catholic Church, and it will never be surpassed till we attain the Celestial City. What beauty and mystery in the long-drawn aisles, where the evershifting lights of day recall the solemn march of life, from the cradle to the grave. What loftiness and inviolable sanctity in the great white walls that loom up from afar, and emphasise the purity of Christian life! What stability and permanence about these structures, whose foundations are knit into the bedrock of the world, as those of the Church itself are inseparably cemented upon the rock, which is Christ."

MOTHER OF THE ARTS.

But, while the Church built up the walls of the city of God amongst men, and especially whilst doing so she

cherished the greatest of all the arts, their mother and their mistress, she did not neglect the others. The painter, the sculptor, the jeweller, the goldsmith, the engraver, the illuminator, the carver, the worker in glass, and the weaver of delicate tissues and embroideries, in and through the Church, all these found employment, sympathy, and encouragement. One art, the Church especially fostered—the divine art of music. To her anxiety to brighten her ceremonial, and lift the hearts of her children heavenward, we possess to-day the thrilling music of the "Te Deum," the "Exultet," the majestic Prefaces, than which no holier, sublimer, note ever echoed among mortal men: the tuneful, piercing chant of the "Liberia," and the countless masses and canticles that exhaust the gamut of human feeling and evoke from us all, that is tragic or tender in human experience, and all that is sacred and sublime in divine revelation. Who can describe the glories of the Church's temples? The grandest triumph of the world's architecture is fittingly St. Peter's at Rome. But to behold the Church's triumphs in the realms of architecture and art, you must cross every line of latitude, every meridian that encircles the globe, you must traverse every year of every century of her long-drawn history, and one and all will raise its voice and proclaim the truth, that Catholicity has in itself the secret of the highest art and the purest morality, that Catholicity is the summing up of all the art, of all the history, of all the uplifting and regenerating influences of the world for the last 1900 years. When Northern Europe threw off the yoke of allegiance to the Church's authority, the chisel and the palette dropped from her hands. When the scourge of Jansenism afflicted the Church in France, priceless stained glass windows were removed from the churches; the frescoed walls were plastered; paintings were ruthlessly destroyed. Art advances or declines with the advance or decline of Catholic Faith. Whenever liberalism and irreligion gain control of a country, their first acts are to suppress the monasteries which have ever been the nurseries and the schools of art. Whenever there has been a revival of Catholicity, art has never failed to receive a quickening impulse. It was a handful of converts from Lutheranism that at the beginning of last century started the now famous art schools of Munich and Dusseldorf. In England, where there had been practically no art since the days of the so-called Reformation, the Oxford movement was quickly followed by the pre-Raphaelite movement in art, which derived all its inspiration from mediæval Catholic ideals.

ST. MARY'S—OLD AND NEW.

But why go so far afield? Have we not here in your own city a further proof of the undiminished power of the Catholic Church, to inspire in her worthy sons a sense of what is most grand, most artistic, most worthy of the Great God, who, in His boundless love for human souls, has condescended to dwell a Prisoner of love on our altars. Well nigh four years have passed since old St. Mary of the Angels was destroyed by fire. And, as we gazed on the ruins of that venerable pile round which for so many of us were wreathed sacred and most tender memories, a sense of loneliness came o'er us, and a pang of grief tore at the fibres of our heart, akin to that which death inflicts, when it wrenches from our embrace the soul of a friend. But wonderful are the designs of God. In the very hour of seeming disaster, there arose before the mind of one—the pastor of this parish—a vision radiant and fair, the vision of a stately temple rising from the ruins, richer and more resplendent than any in the land, dedicated to the living God, under the patronage of His August and Immaculate Mother. This vision he communicated to his ecclesiastical superiors, who approving the work of its realisation, bade "God-speed" to the noble, if hazardous enterprise. The Society of Mary, rejoicing in the prospect of a glorious monument to their Queen and first Superior, gave ready sanction and hearty encouragement. Catching a spark of the holy enthusiasm that radiated from the pastor's soul, a devoted and generous people rallied to his side. For all but four long years, the task of realising that lofty ambition has gone on. Never for an instant did the vision fade from the sight of him, to whom, as to Solomon of old, had God entrusted its materialisation. Never for an instant did he falter, never did he despair. Difficulties, disappointments, thwartings of innumerable kinds, and from incredible sources, these did but plume his courage, did but steel his determination to achieve what