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THE
MONTH OF MARY.

Mrs Charles Norton

from her husband's old friend

Anby de Vere

August 25. 1860

Sara Norton,

with her Father's love.

February 21, 1890.

THE MONTH OF MARY.

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THE
MONTH OF MARY.

BY
AUBREY DE VERE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Poems are a selection from the Author's "May Carols," and include about half that volume.

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INTRODUCTION.

The wisdom of the Church, which consecrates the fleeting seasons of Time to the interests of Eternity, has dedicated the month of May (the birthday festival, as it were, of Creation) to her who was ever destined in the Divine Counsels to become the Mother of her Creator. It belongs to her, of course, as she is the representative of the Incarnation, and its practical exponent of a world but too apt to forget what it professes to hold. The following Poems, written in her honour, are an attempt to set forth, though but in mere outline, each of them some one of the great Ideas or essential Principles embodied in that all-embracing Mystery, the Incarnation. On a topic so comprehensive, converse statements, at one time illustrating the highest excellence compatible with mere creaturely existence, at another, the infinite distance between the chief of creatures and the Creator, may seem, at first sight, and to some eyes, contradictory, although in reality, far from being opposed to each other, they are mutually

correlative. On an attentive perusal, that harmony which exists among the many portions of a single mastering Truth, can hardly fail to appear—and with it the scope and aim of this Poem.

With the meditative, descriptive pieces have been interspersed. They are an attempt towards a Christian rendering of external nature. Nature, like Art, needs to be spiritualised, unless it is to remain a fortress in the hands of a Pagan Imagination. The visible world is a passive thing, which ever takes its meaning from something above itself. In Pagan times, it drew its interpretation from Pantheism: and to Pantheism—nay, to that Idolatry which is the popular application of Pantheism—it has still a secret, though restrained tendency, betrayed by not a little of our modern literature. A World without Divinity, Matter without Soul, is intolerable to the human mind. Yet, on the other hand, there is much in fallen human nature which shrinks from the sublime thought of a Creator, and rests in preference on that of a sheathed Divinity diffused throughout the universe, its life, not its maker. Mere personified elements, the Wood-God and River-Nymph, captivate the fancy, and do not over-awe the soul. For a bias so seductive, no cure is to be found save in authentic

Christianity, the only practical Theism. The whole truth, on the long run, holds its own better than the half truth; and minds repelled by the thought of a God who stands afar off, and created the universe but to abandon it to general laws, fling themselves at the feet of a God made Man. In other words, the Incarnation is the *Complement* of Creation. In it is revealed the true nature of that link which binds together the visible and invisible worlds. When "the Word was made Flesh," a bridge was thrown across that gulf which had else for ever separated the Finite from the Infinite. The same high Truth which brings home to us the doctrine of a Creation, consecrates that Creation, reconstituting it into an Eden meet for an unfallen Adam and an unfallen Eve; nay, exalting it into a heavenly Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of the Lamb and of the Bride. It does this, in part, through symbols and associations founded on the all-cleansing Blood and the all-sanctifying Spirit—symbols and associations the reverse of those in which an Epicurean mythology took delight, and which the very superficial alone can confound with such. This is perhaps the aspect of Religion least above the level of Poetry.

THE MONTH OF MARY.

I.

Who feels not, when the Spring once more,
Stepping o'er Winter's grave forlorn
With winged feet, retreads the shore
Of widowed Earth, his bosom burn?

As ordered flower succeeds to flower,
And May the ladder of her sweets
Ascends, advancing hour by hour
From scale to scale, what heart but beats?

Some Presence veiled, in fields and groves,
That mingles rapture with remorse;—
Some buried joy beside us moves,
And thrills the soul with such discourse

As they, perchance, that wondering pair
Who to Emmaus bent their way,
Hearing, heard not. Like them our prayer
We make:—"The night is near us....Stay!"

With Paschal chants the Churches ring ;
Their echoes strike along the tombs ;
The birds their Hallelujahs sing ;
Each flower with floral incense fumes.

Our long-lost Eden seems restored ;
As on we move with tearful eyes
We feel through all the illumined sward
Some upward-working Paradise.

II.

All but unutterable Name !
Adorable, yet awful, sound !
Thee can the sinful nations frame
Save with their foreheads to the ground ?

Soul-searching and all-cleansing Fire !
To see Thy countenance were to die :
Yet how beyond the bound retire
Of Thy serene immensity ?

Thou mov'st beside us, if the spot
We change—a noteless, wandering tribe ;
The orbits of our life and thought
In Thee their little arcs describe,

In the dead calm, at cool of day,
We hear Thy voice, and turn, and flee :—
Thy love outstips us on our way :
From Thee, O God, we fly—to Thee.

Dei Genitrix.

III.

I see Him: on thy lap He lies
 'Mid that Judæan stable's gloom:
 O sweet, O awful Sacrifice!
 He smiles in sleep, yet knows His doom.

Thou gav'st Him life! But was not this
 That life which knows no parting breath?
 Unmeasured life? unwaning bliss?
 Dread Priestess, lo! thou gav'st Him death!

Beneath the tree thy mother stood:
 Beneath the cross thou too shalt stand:—
 O Tree of Life! O bleeding Rood!
 Thy shadow stretches far its hand.

That God who made the sun and moon
 In swaddling bands lies dumb and bound!—
 Love's Captive! darker prison soon
 Awaits Thee in the garden ground.

He wakens. Paradise looks forth
 Beyond the portals of the grave.
 Life, life thou gavest! life to Earth,
 Not Him. Thine Infant dies to save.

Virgo Virginum.

—

IV.

When from their lurking place the Voice
Of God dragged forth that fallen pair,
Still seemed the garden to rejoice;
The sinless Eden still was fair.

They, they alone, whose light of grace
But late made Paradise look dim,
Stood now, a blot upon its face,
Before their God; nor gazed on Him.

They glanced not up; or they had seen
In that severe, death-dooming eye
Unutterable depths serene
Of sadly-piercing sympathy.

Not them alone that Eye beheld,
But, by their side, that other Twain,
In whom the race whose doom was knelled
Once more should rise; once more should reign.

It saw that Infant crowned with blood ;—
And her from whose predestined breast
That Infant ruled the worlds. She stood,
Her foot upon the serpent's crest ! •

Voice of primeval prophecy !

She who makes glad whatever heart
Adores her Son and Saviour, she
In thee, that hour, possessed a part !

V.

Ascending from the convent-grates,
 The children mount the woodland vale.
 'Tis May-Day Eve; and Hesper waits
 To light them, while the western gale

Blows softly on their bannered line:
 And, lo! down all the mountain stairs
 The shepherd children come to join
 The convent children at their prayers.

They meet before Our Lady's fane:
 On yonder central rock it stands,
 Uplifting, ne'er invoked in vain,
 That cross which blesses all the lands.

Before the porch the flowers are flung;
 The lamp hangs glittering 'neath the Rood;
 The "Maris Stella" hymn is sung;
 Their chant each morn to be renewed.

Ah! if a secular muse might dare,
 Far off, the children's song to catch;
 To echo back, or burthen bear!—
 As fitly might she hope to match

The linnet's note as theirs, 'tis true:
 Yet, now and then, that borrowed tone,
 Like sunbeams flashed on pine or yew,
 Might shoot a sweetness through her own!

Adolescentulæ amaberunt te nimis.

VI.

“ Behold !—the wintry rains are past ;
 The airs of midnight hurt no more :
 The young maids love thee. Come at last :
 Thou lingerest at the garden-door.

“ Blow over all the garden ; blow,
 Thou wind that breathest of the south,
 Through all the alleys winding low,
 With dewy wing and honeyed mouth.

“ But wheresoe’er thou wanderest, shape
 Thy music ever to one Name :—
 Thou too, clear stream, to cave and cape
 Be sure thou whisper of the same.

“ By every isle and bower of musk
 Thy crystal clasps, as on it curls,
 We charge thee, breathe it to the dusk ;
 We charge thee, grave it in thy pearls.”

The stream obeyed. That Name he bore
 Far out above the moon-lit tide.
 The breeze obeyed. He breathed it o’er
 The unforgetting pines ; and died.

Mater Christi.—
VII.

Daily beneath His mother's eyes
Her Lamb matured His lowliness:
'Twas hers the lovely Sacrifice
With fillet and with flower to dress.

Beside His little cross He knelt ;
With human-heavenly lips He prayed :
His Will within her will she felt ;
And yet His Will her will obeyed.

Gethsemané ! when day is done
Thy flowers with falling dews are wet :
Her tears fell never ; for the sun
Those tears that brightened never set.

The house was silent as that shrine
The priest but entered once a year.
There shone His emblem. Light Divine !
Thy presence and Thy power was here !

Mater Christi.

VIII.

He willed to lack ; He willed to bear ;
He willed by suffering to be schooled ;
He willed the chains of flesh to wear :
Yet from her arms the worlds He ruled.

As tapers 'mid the noontide glow
With merged yet separate radiance burn,
With human taste and touch, even so,
The things He knew He willed to learn.

He sat beside the lowly door :
His homeless eyes appeared to trace
In evening skies remembered lore,
And shadows of His Father's face.

One only knew Him. She alone
Who nightly to His cradle crept,
And lying like the moonbeam prone,
Worshipped her Maker as He slept.

Water . Creatoris.

IX.

Bud forth a Saviour, Earth ! fulfil
 Thy first of functions, ever new !
 Balm-dropping heaven, for aye distil
 Thy grace like manna or like dew !

“ To us, this day, a Child is born.”

Heaven knows not mere historic facts :—
 Celestial mysteries, night and morn,
 Live on in ever-present Acts.

Calvary's dread Victim in the skies
 On God's great altar rests even now :
 The Pentecostal glory lies
 For ever round the Church's brow.

From Son and Father, He, the Lord
 Of Love and Life, proceeds alway :
 Upon the first creative word
 Creation, trembling, hangs for aye.

Nor less ineffably renewed
 Than when on earth the tie began,
 Is that mysterious Motherhood
 Which re-creates the worlds and man.

Mater Dolorosa.

—

X.

She stood: she sank not. Slowly fell
 Adown the Cross the atoning blood.
 In agony ineffable .
 She offered still His own to God.

No pang of His her bosom spared ;
 She felt in Him its several power.
 But she in heart His Priesthood shared :
 She offered Sacrifice that hour.

“Behole thy Son!” Ah, last bequest!
 It breathed His last farewell! The sword
 Predicted pierced that hour her breast.
 She stood: she answered not a word.

His own in John He gave. She wore
 Thenceforth the Mother-crown of Earth.
 O Eve! thy sentence too she bore ;
 Like thee in sorrow she brought forth.

Water Vivinæ Gratia.

—

XI.

“ They have no wine.” The tender guest
 Was grieved their feast should lack for aught.
 He seemed to slight her mute request :
 Not less the grace she wished He wrought.

O great in Love! O full of Grace!
 That winds in thee, a river broad,
 From Christ, with heaven-reflecting face,
 Gladdening the City of thy God:—

Be this thy gift: that man henceforth
 No more should creep through life content
 (Draining the springs impure of earth)
 With life's material element.

Let sacraments to sense succeed:
 Let nought be winning, nought be good
 Which fails of Him to speak, and bleed
 Once more with His all-cleansing blood!

XII.

When April's sudden sunset cold
Through boughs half-clothed with watery sheen
Bursts on the high, new-cowslipped wold,
And bathes a world half gold half green,

Then shakes the illuminated air
With din of birds ; the vales far down
Grow phosphorescent here and there ;
Forth flash the turrets of the town ;

Along the sky thin vapours seud ;
Bright zephyrs curl the choral main ;
The wild ebullience of the blood
Rings joy-bells in the heart and brain :

Yet in that music discords mix ;
The unbalanced lights like meteors play ;
And, tired of splendours that perplex,
The dazzled spirit sighs for May.

XIII.

As children when, with heavy tread,
Men sad of face, unseen before,
Have borne away their mother dead—
So stand the nations thine no more.

Years pass: Self-Will and Passion strike
• Their roots more deeply day by day ;
Old servants weep ; and “ how unlike ”
Is all the tender neighbours say.

And yet at moments, like a dream,
A mother's image o'er them flits:
Like her's their eyes a moment beam ;
The voice grows soft ; the brow unknits.

Such, Mary, are the realms once thine,
That know no more thy golden reign.
Hold forth from heaven thy Babe divine !
O make thine orphans thine again !

Marie Cliens.

—

XIV.

A little longer on the earth
That aged creature's eyes repose
(Though half their light and all their mirth
Are gone); and then for ever close.

She thinks that something done long since
Ill pleases God:—or why should He
So long delay to take her hence
Who waits His will so lovingly?

Whene'er she hears the church-bells toll
She lifts her head, though not her eyes,
With wrinkled hands, but youthful soul,
Counting her lip-worn rosaries.

And many times the weight of years
Falls from her in her waking dreams:
A child her mother's voice she hears:
To tend her father's steps she seems.

Once more she hears the whispering rains
On flowers and paths her childhood trod;
And of things present nought remains
Save the abiding sense of God.

Mary ! make smooth her downward way !
Not dearer to the young thou art
Than her. Make glad her latest May ;
And hold her, dying, on thy heart.

XV.

Not yet, not yet! the Season sings
Not of fruition yet, but hope ;
Still holds aloft, like balanced wings,
Her scales, and lets not either drop.

The white ash, last year's skeleton,
Still glares, uncheered by leaf or shoot,
'Gainst azure heavens, and joy hath none
In that fresh violet at her foot.

Yet Nature's virginal suspense
Is not forgetfulness nor sloth :
Where'er we wander, soul and sense
Discern a blindly working growth.

Her throne once more the daisy takes,
That white star of our dusky earth ;
And the sky-cloistered lark down shakes
Her passion of seraphic mirth.

'Twixt barren hills and clear cold skies
She weaves, ascending high and higher,
Songs florid as those tracteries
Which took, of old, their name from fire.

Sing! thou that need'st no ardent clime
To sun the sweetness from thy breast ;
And teach us those delights sublime
Wherein ascetic spirits rest!

XVI.

I saw—in countenance like a child—
 (Three years methought were hers, no more)
That maid and mother undefiled
 The Saviour of the world who bore.

A nun-like veil was o'er her thrown ;
 Her locks by fillet-bands made fast,
Swiftly she climbed the steps of stone ;—
 Into the Temple swiftly passed.

Not once she paused her breath to take ;
 Not once cast back a homeward look :—
As longs the hart his thirst to slake,
 When noontide rages, in the brook,

So longed that child to live for God ;
 So pined, from earth's enthrallments free,
To bathe her wholly in the flood
 Of God's abysmal purity !

Anna and Joachim from far
 Their eyes on that white vision raised :
And when, like caverned foam or star
 Cloud-hid, she vanished, still they gazed.

Fest. Purificationis.

XVII.

Twelve years had passed, and, still a child,
 In brightness of the unblemished face,
 Once more she scaled those steps, and smiled
 On Him who slept in her embrace.

As in she passed there fell a calm
 Around: each bosom slowly rose
 Like the long branches of the palm
 When under them the south wind blows.

The scribe forgot his wordy lore:
 The chanted psalm was heard far off;
 Hushed was the clash of golden ore;
 And hushed the Sadducean scoff.

Type of the Christian Church! 'twas thine
 To offer, first, to God that hour,
 Thy Son—the Sacrifice Divine,
 The Church's everlasting dower!

Great Priestess! round that aureoled brow
 Which cloud or shadow ne'er had crossed,
 Began there not that hour to grow
 A milder dawn of Pentecost?

XVIII.

The sunless day is sweeter yet
Than when the golden sun-showers danced
On bower new-glazed or rivulet ;
And Spring her banners first advanced.

By wind unshaken hang in dream
The wind-flowers o'er their dark green lair ;
And those thin poppy cups that seem
Not bodied forms, but woven of air.

Nor bird is heard ; nor insect flits.
A tear-drop glittering on her cheek,
Composed but shadowed, Nature sits—
Yon primrose not more staid and meek.

The light of pensive hope unquenched
On those pathetic brows and eyes,
She sits, by silver dew-showers drenched,
Through which the chill spring-odours rise.

Was e'er on human countenance shed
So sweet a sadness? Once: no more.
Then when his charge the Patriarch led
Dream-warned to Egypt's distant shore.

Down on her Infant Mary gazed ;
Her face the angels marked with awe ;
Yet 'neath its dimness, undisplaced,
Looked forth that smile the Magians saw.

Legenda.

XIX.

As, flying Herod, southward went
 That Child and Mother, unamazed,
 Into Egyptian banishment,
 The weeders left their work, and gazed.

The bright One spake to them and said,
 "When Herod's messengers demand,
 "Passed not the Infant, Herod's dread,—
 "Passed not the Infant through your land ?

"Then shall ye answer make, and say,
 "Behold, since first the corn was green
 "No little Infant passed this way;
 "No little Infant we have seen."

Earth heard; nor missed the Maid's intent—
 As on the Flower of Eden passed
 With Eden swiftness up she sent
 A sun-browned harvest ripening fast.

By simplest words and sinless wheat
 The messengers rode back beguiled;
 And by that truthfullest deceit
 Which saved the little new-born Child!

Conserbabat in Corde.—
XX.

As every change of April sky
Is imaged in a placid brook,
Her meditative memory
Mirrored His every deed and look.

As suns through summer ether rolled
Mature each growth the spring has wrought,
So Love's strong day-star turned to gold
Her harvests of quiescent thought.

Her soul was as a vase, and shone
Translucent to an inner ray ;
Her Maker's finger wrote thereon
A mystic Bible new each day.

Deep Heart! In all His sevenfold might
The Paraclete with thee abode ;
And, sacramented there in light,
Bore witness of the things of God.

XXI.

Stronger and steadier every hour
The pulses of the season's glee,
As toward her zenith climbs that Power
Which rules the purple revelry.

Trees, that from winter's grey eclipse
Of late but pushed their topmost plume,
Or felt with green-touched finger tips
For spring, their perfect robes assume.

Like one that reads, not one that spells,
The unvarying rivulet onward runs :
And bird to bird, from leafier cells,
Sends forth more leisurely response.

Through the gorse covert bounds the deer:—
The gorse, whose latest splendours won
Make all the fulgent wolds appear
Bright as the pastures of the sun.

A balmier zephyr curls the wave ;
More purple flames o'er ocean dance ;
And the white breaker by the cave
Falls with more cadenced resonance ;

While, vague no more, the mountains stand
With quivering line or hazy hue ;
But drawn with finer, firmer hand,
And settling into deeper blue.

Hymns.

XXII.

Not for herself does Mary hold
Among the saints that queenly throne,
Her seat predestined from of old ;
But for the brethren of her Son.

Pure thoughts that make to God their quest,
With her find footing o'er the clouds ;
Like those sea-crossing birds that rest
A moment on the sighing shrouds.

In her our hearts, no longer nursed
On dust, for spiritual beauty yearn ;
From her our instincts, as at first,
An upward gravitation learn.

Her distance makes her not remote :
For in true love's supernal sphere
No more round self the affections float—
More near to God, to man more near.

In her, the weary warfare past,
The port attained, the exile o'er,
We see the Church's barque at last
Close-anchored on the eternal shore !

XXIII.

Three worlds there are :—the first of Sense—
 That sensuous earth which round us lies ;
 The next of Faith's Intelligence ;
 The third of Glory, in the skies.

The first is palpable, but base ;
 The second heavenly, but obscure ;
 The third is star-like in the face—
 But ah ! remote that world as pure !

Yet, glancing through our misty clime,
 Some sparkles from that loftier sphere
 Make way to earth ;—then most what time
 The annual spring-flowers re-appear.

Amid the coarser needs of earth
 All shapes of brightness, what are they
 But wanderers, exiled from their birth,
 Or pledges of a happier day ?

Yea, what is Beauty, judged aright,
 But some surpassing, transient gleam ;
 Some smile from heaven, in waves of light,
 Rippling o'er life's distempered dream ?

Or broken memories of that bliss
 Which rushed through first-born Nature's blood
 When He who ever was, and is,
 Looked down, and saw that all was good ?

XXIV.

Alas! not only loveliest eyes,
And brows with lordliest lustre bright,
But Nature's self—her woods and skies—
The credulous heart can cheat or blight.

And why? Because the sin of man
'Twixt Fair and Good has made divorce;
And stained, since Evil first began,
That stream so heavenly at its source.

O perishable vales and groves!
Your master was not made for you;
Ye are but creatures: human loves
Are to the great Creator due.

And yet, through Nature's symbols dim,
There are with keener sight that pierce
The outward husk, and reach to Him
Whose garment is the universe.

For this to earth the Saviour came
In flesh; in part for this He died;
That man might have, in soul and frame,
No faculty unsanctified.

That Fancy's self—so prompt to lead
Through paths disastrous or defiled—
Upon the Tree of Life might feed;
And Sense with Soul be reconciled.

Idolatria.

—

XXV.

The fancy of an age gone by,
When Fancy's self to earth declined,
Still thirsting for Divinity,
Yet still, through sense, to Godhead blind,

Poor mimic of that Truth of old,
The patriarchs' hope—a faith revealed—
Compressed its God in mortal mould,
The prisoner of Creation's field.

Nature and Nature's Lord were one !
Then countless gods from cloud and stream
Glanced forth ; from sea, and moon, and sun :
So ran the pantheistic dream.

And thus the All-Holy, thus the All-True,
The One Supreme, the Good, the Just,
Like mist was scattered, lost like dew,
And vanished in the wayside dust.

Mary! through thee the idols fell :
When He the nations longed for* came—
True God yet Man—with man to dwell,
The phantoms hid their heads for shame.

His place or thine removed, ere long
The bards would push the sects aside;
And lifted by the might of song
Olympus stand re-edified.

* "The Desire of the Nations."

Stella Matutina.

XXVI.

Shine out, O Star, and sing the praise
 Of that unrisen Sun whose glow
 Thus feeds thee with thine earlier rays—
 The secret of thy song we know.

Thou sing'st that Sun of Righteousness,
 Sole light of this benighted globe,
 Whose beams, reflected, dressed and dress
 His Mother in her shining robe.

Pale Lily, pearled around with dew,
 Lift high that heaven-illumined vase,
 And sing the glories ever new
 Of her, God's chalice, "full of grace."

Cerulean Ocean, fringed with white,
 That wear'st her colours evermore,
 In all thy pureness, all thy might,
 Resound her name from shore to shore.

That fringe of foam, when drops the sun
 To-night, a sanguine stain shall wear:—
 Thus Mary's heart had strength, alone,
 The passion of her Lord to share.

"Janua Cœli."

XXVII.

The night through yonder cloudy cleft,
With many a lingering last regard,
Withdraws—but slowly—and hath left
Her mantle on the dewy sward.

The lawns with silver dews are strewn ;
The winds lie hushed in cave and tree ;
Nor stirs a flower, save one alone
That bends beneath the earliest bee.

Peace over all the garden broods ;
Pathetic sweets the thickets throng ;
Like breath the vapour o'er the woods
Ascends—dim woods without a song :

Or hangs, a shining, fleece-like mass
O'er half yon lake that winds afar
Among the forests, still as glass,
The mirror of that Morning Star

Which, halfway wandering from the sky,
Amid the crimson dawn delays
And (large and less alternately)
Bends down a lustrous, tearful gaze.

Mother and home of spirits blest!
Bright gate of Heaven and golden bower!
Thy best of blessings, love and rest,
Depart not till on earth thou shower!

XXVIII.

If sense of Man's unworthiness

With Nature's blameless looks at strife,
Should wake with wakening May, and press
New-born contentment out of life :

If thoughts of sable breed and blind

Should stamp upon the springing flower,
Or blacker memories haunt the mind
As ravens haunt the ruined tower :—

O then how sweet in heart to breathe

Those pure Judean gales once more ;
From Bethlehem's crib to Nazareth
In heart to tread that Syrian shore !

To watch that star-like Infant bring

To one of soul as clear and white
May-lilies, fresh from Siloa's spring,
Or Passion-flower with May-dews bright!

To follow, earlier yet, the feet

Of her the " hilly land " who trod
With true love's haste, intent to greet
That aged saint beloved of God.

Before her, like a stream let loose,

The long vale's flowerage, winding, ran :
Nature resumed her Eden use ;
And Earth was reconciled with man.

Stella Maris.

—
XXIX.

I left at morn that blissful shore
O'er which the fruit-bloom fluttered free ;
And sailed the wildering waters o'er,
Till sunset streaked with blood the sea.

My sleep the hoarse sea-thunders broke,
And sudden chill. Their feet foam-hid,
Huge cliffs leaned out, through vapour-smoke,
Like tower, and tomb, and pyramid.

In the black shadow, ghostly white
The breaker raced o'er foaming shoals :
From caverns of eternal night
Came wailings, as of suffering souls.

Sudden, through clearing mists, the star
Of ocean o'er the billow rose :
Down dropped the elemental war ;
Tormented chaos found repose.

Star of the ocean ! dear art thou,
Ah ! not to earth and heaven alone :
The suffering Church, when shines thy brow
Upon her penance, stays her moan.

The Holy Souls draw in their breath ;
The sea of anguish rests in peace ;
And, from beyond the gates of death,
Up swell the anthems of release.

Mystica.

XXX.

As pebbles flung for sport, that leap
Along the superficial tide,
But enter not those chambers deep
Wherein the beds of pearl abide ;

Such those light minds that, grazing, spurn
The surface text of Sacred Lore,
Yet ne'er its deeper sense discern,
Its halls of mystery ne'er explore.

Ah ! not for such the unvalued gems ;
The priceless pearls of Truth they miss :
Not theirs the starry diadems
That light God's temple in the abyss !

Ah ! not for such to gaze on her
That moves through all that empire pale ;
At every shrine doth minister,
Yet never lifts her vestal veil.

“ The letter kills.” Make pure thy Will ;
So shalt thou pierce the Text's disguise :
Till then, revere the veil that still
Hides truth from truth-affronting eyes.

Expectatio.**XXXI.**

A sweet exhaustion seems to hold
In spells of calm the shrouded eve:
The gorse itself a beamless gold
Puts forth:—yet nothing seems to grieve.

The dewy chaplets hang on air ;
The willowy fields are silver-grey ;
Sad odours wander here and there ;—
And yet we feel that it is May.

Relaxed, and with a broken flow,
From dripping bowers low carols swell
In mellow, glassier tones, as though
They mounted through a bubbling well.

The crimson orchis scarce sustains
Upon its drenched and drooping spire
The burden of the warm soft rains ;
The purple hills grow nigh and nigher.

Nature, suspending lovely toils,
On expectations lovelier broods,
Listening, with lifted hand, while coils
The flooded rivulet through the woods.

She sees, drawn out in vision clear,
A world with summer radiance drest,
And all the glories of that year
Which sleeps within her virgin breast.

XXXII.

Still on the gracious work proceeds ;—
The good, great tidings preached anew
Yearly to green enfranchised meads,
And fire-topped woodlands flushed with dew.

Yon cavern's mouth we scarce can see ;
Yon rock in gathering bloom lies meshed ;
And all the wood-anatomy
In thickening leaves is over-fleshed.

That hermit oak which frowned so long
Upon the spring with barren spleen,
Yields to the holy Siren's song,
And bends above her goblet green.

Young maples, late with gold embossed,—
Lucidities of sun-pierced limes,
No more surprise us—merged and lost
Like prelude notes in deepening chimes.

Disordered beauties and detached
Demand no more a separate place :
The abrupt, the startling, the unmatched,
Submit to graduated grace ;

While upward from the ocean's marge
The year ascends with statelier tread
To where the sun his golden targe
Finds, setting, on yon mountain's head.

XXXIII.

In vain thine altars do they heap
With blooms of violated May
Who fail the words of Christ to keep ;
Thy Son who love not, nor obey.

Their songs are as a serpent's hiss ;
Their praise a poniard's poisoned edge ;
Their offering taints, like Judas' kiss,
Thy shrine ; their vows are sacrilege.

Sadly from such thy countenance turns :
Thou canst not stretch thy Babe to such
(Albeit for all thy pity yearns)
As greet Him with a leper's touch.

Who loveth thee must love thy Son.
Weak Love grows strong thy smile beneath :
But nothing comes from nothing ; none
Can reap Love's harvest out of Death.

XXXIV.

The golden rains are dashed against
Those verdant walls of lime and beech
With which our happy vale is fenced
Against the north ; yet cannot reach

The stems that lift yon leafy crest
High up above their dripping screen :
The chestnut fans are downward pressed
On banks of bluebell hid in green.

White vapours float along the glen,
Or rise from every sunny brake ;—
A pause amid the gusts—again
The warm shower sings across the lake.

Sing on, all-cordial showers, and bathe
The deepest root of loftiest pine !
The cowslip dimmed, the “ primrose rathe”
Refresh ; and drench in nectarous wine

Yon fruit-tree copse, all blossomed o'er
With forest-foam and crimson snow—
Behold ! above it bursts once more
The world-embracing, heavenly bow !

Fest. B. V. M. de Monte Carmelo.

XXXV.

Carmel, with Alp and Apennine,
 Low whispers in the wind that blows
 Beneath the Eastern stars, ere shine
 The lights of morning on their snows.

Of thee, Elias, Carmel speaks,
 And that white cloud, so small at first,
 Thou saw'st approach the mountain peaks
 To quench a dying nation's thirst.

On Carmel, like a sheathed sword,
 Thy monks abode till Jesus came ;
 On Carmel then they served their Lord ;—
 Then Carmel rang with Mary name.

Blow over all the garden ; blow
 O'er all the garden of the West,
 Balm-breathing Orient! Whisper low
 The secret of thy spicy nest.

“ Who from the Desert upward moves
Like cloud of incense onward borne ?
Who, moving, rests on Him she loves ?
Who mounts from regions of the Morn ?

“ Behold! The apple-tree beneath—
There where of old thy Mother fell—
I raised thee up. More strong than Death
Is Love ;—more strong than Death or Hell.”*

* Cant. viii. 5.

Thronus Trinitatis.

—

XXXVI.

Each several Saint the Church reveres,
 What is he but an altar whence
 Some separate Virtue ministers
 To God a separate frankincense?

Each beyond each, not made of hands,
 They rise, a ladder angel-trod:
 Star-bright the last and loftiest stands—
 That altar is the Throne of God.

Lost in the uncreated light
 A Form all Human rests thereon:
 His shade from that surpassing height
 Beyond creation's verge is thrown.

Him "Lord of lords, and King of kings,"
 The chorus of all worlds proclaim:—
 "He took from her," one angel sings
 At intervals, "His Human frame."

Fest. S. S. Trinitatis.

XXXVII.

Fall back, all worlds, into the abyss,
 That man may contemplate once more
 That which He ever was Who is :—
 The Eternal Essence we adore.

Angelic hierarchies! recede
 Beyond extinct creation's shade !
 What were ye at the first? Decreed :—
 Decreed, not fashioned ; thought, not made !

Like wind the untold Millenniums passed.
 Sole-throned He sat ; yet not alone :
 Godhead in Godhead still was glassed ;—
 The Spirit was breathed from Sire and Son.

Prime Virgin, separate and sealed ;
 Nor less of social love the root ;
 Dimly in lowliest shapes revealed ;
 Entire in every Attribute ;—

Thou liv'st in all things, and around ;
To Thee external is there nought ;
Thou of the boundless art the bound ;
And still creation is Thy Thought.

In vain, O God, our wings we spread ;
So distant art Thou—yet so nigh.
Remains but this, when all is said,
For Thee to live ; in Thee to die.

XXXVIII.

Where is the crocus now, that first,
When earth was dark and heaven was grey,
A prothalamion flash, up-burst?
Ah, then we deemed not of the May!

The clear stream stagnates in its course ;
Narcissus droops in pallid gloom ;
Far off the hills of golden gorse
A dusk Saturnian face assume.

The seeded dandelion dim
Casts loose its air-globe on the breeze ;
Along the grass the swallows skim ;
The cattle couch among the trees.

Yet ever lordlier loveliness
Succeeds to that which slips our hold :
The thorn assumes her snowy dress ;
Laburnum bowers their robes of gold.

Down waves successive of the year
We drop ; but drop once more to rise,
With ampler view, as on we steer,
Of lovelier lights and loftier skies.

Fest. Puritatis.

XXXIX.

Far down the bird may sing of love ;
 The honey-bearing blossom blow :
 But hail, ye hills that rise above
 The limit of perpetual snow !

O Alpine City, with thy walls
 Of rock eterne and spires of ice,
 Where torrent still to torrent calls,
 And precipice to precipice ;—

How like that holier City thou,
 The heavenly Salem's earthly porch,
 Which rears among the stars her brow,
 And plants firm feet on earth—the Church !

“ Decaying, ne'er to be decayed,”
 Her woods, like thine, renew their youth :
 Her streams, in rocky arms embayed,
 Are clear as virtue, strong as truth.

At times the lake may burst its dam ;
Black pine and rock the valley strew ;
But o'er the ruin soon the lamb
Its flowery pasture crops anew.

She too, in regions near the sky
Up-piles her cloistered snows, and thence
Diffuses gales of purity
O'er fields of consecrated sense.

On those still heights a love-light glows
The plains from them alone receive ;—
Not all the Lily ! There thy Rose,
O Mary, triumphs, morn and eve !

Respexit Humilitatem.

—

XL.

Not all thy purity, although
 The whitest moon that ever lit
 The peaks of Lebanonian snow
 Shone dusk and dim compared with it ;—

Not that great love of thine, whose beams
 Transcended in their virtuous heat
 Those suns which melt the ice-bound streams,
 And make earth's pulses newly beat :—

It was not these that from the sky
 Drew down to thee the Eternal Word :
 He looked on thy humility ;
 He knew thee, " Handmaid of thy Lord."

Let no one claim with thee a part ;
 Let no one, Mary, name thy name,
 While, aping God, upon his heart
 Pride sits, a demon robed in flame.

Proud Vices, die! Where Sin has place
 Be Sin's familiar self-disgust.
 Proud Virtues, doubly die ; that Grace
 At last may burgeon from your dust.

XLI.

Brow-bound with myrtle and with gold,
Spring, sacred now from blasts and blights,
Lifts in a firm, untrembling hold
Her chalice of fulfilled delights.

Confirmed around her queenly lip
The smile late wavering, on she moves ;
And seems through deepening tides to step
Of steadier joys and larger loves.

The stony Ash itself relents,
Into the blue embrace of May
Sinking, like old impenitents
Heart-touched at last ; and, far away,

The long wave yearns along the coast
With sob suppressed, like that which thrills
(While o'er the altar mounts the Host)
Some chapel on the Irish hills.

XLII.

Pleasant the swarm about the bough ;
The meadow-whisper round the woods ;
And for their coolness pleasant now
The murmur of the falling floods.

Pleasant beneath the thorn to lie,
And let a summer fancy loose ;
To hear the cuckoo's double cry ;
To make the noon-tide sloth's excuse.

Panting, but pleased, the cattle stand
Knee-deep in water-weed and sedge,
And scarcely crop the greener band
Of osiers round the river's edge.

But hark ! Far off the south wind sweeps
The golden-foliaged groves among,
Renewed or lulled, with rests and leaps—
Ah ! how it makes the spirit long

To drop its earthly weight, and drift
Like yon white cloud, on pinions free,
Beyond that mountain's purple rift,
And o'er that scintillating sea!

XLIII.

Sing on, wide winds, your anthems vast!

The ear is richer than the eye:

Upon the eye no shape can cast

Such impress of Infinity.

And thou, my soul, thy wings of might

Put forth:—thou too, one day shalt soar,

And, onward borne in heavenward flight,

The starry universe explore;

Breasting that breeze which waves the bowers

Of Heaven's bright forest never mute,

Whereof perchance this earth of ours

Is but the feeblest forest-fruit.

“The Spirit bloweth where He wills”—

O Effluence of that Life Divine

Which wakes the Universe, and stills,

In Thy strong refluxence make us Thine!

Cæli enarrant.—
XLIV.

Sole Maker of the Worlds ! They lay
A barren blank, a void, a nought,
Beyond the ken of solar ray
Or reach of archangelic thought.

Thou spak'st ; and they were made ! Forth sprang
From every region of the abyss,
Whose deeps, fire clov'n, with anthems rang,
The spheres new-born and numberless.

Thou spak'st :—upon the winds were found
The astonished Eagles. Awed and hushed
Subsiding seas revered their bound ;
And the strong forests upward rushed.

Before the Vision angels fell,
As though the face of God they saw ;
And all the panting miracle
Found rest within the arms of Law.

Perfect, O God, Thy primal plan—

That scheme frost-bound by Adam's sin :
Create, within the heart of Man,
Worlds meet for Thee ; and dwell therein.

From Thy bright realm of Sense and Nature,
Which flowers enwreath and stars begem,
Shape Thou Thy Church ; the crowned Creature ;
The Bride ; the New Jerusalem !

Caro factus est.

—

XLV.

When from beneath the Almighty Hand
The suns and systems rushed abroad,
Like coursers which have burst their band,
Or torrents when the ice is thawed ;

When round in luminous orbits flung
The great stars gloried in their might ;
Still, still, a bridgeless gulf there hung
'Twixt Finite things and Infinite.

That crown of light creation wore
Was edged with vast unmeasured black ;
And all of natural good she bore
Confessed her supernatural lack.

For what is Nature at the best ?
An arch suspended in its spring ;
An altar-step without a priest ;
A throne whereon there sits no king.

As one stone-blind that fronts the morn,
The world before her Maker stood,
Uplifting suppliant hands forlorn—
God's creature, yet how far from God!

He came. That world His priestly robe;
The Kingly Pontiff raised on high
The worship of the starry globe:—
The gulf was bridged, and God was nigh.

XLVI.

No ray of all their silken sheen
The leaves first fledged have lost as yet :
Unfaded, near the advancing queen
Of flowers, abides the violet.

The rose succeeds—her month is come :—
The flower with sacred passion red :
She sings the praise of martyrdom,
And Him for whom His martyrs bled.

The perfect work of May is done :
Hard by a new perfection waits :—
The twain, a sister and a nun,
A moment parley at the grates.

The whiter Spirit turns in peace
To hide her in the cloistral shade :—
'Tis time that you should also cease,
Slight carols in her honour made.

