

ODE TO A SISTER OF NOTRE DAME

For a brief, happy space—
Yet not too brief for grace
To come to me through your devoted prayer—
I dwelt beneath your care.
Within that lowly school,
Remote from earthly strife,
I and my little comrades learnt the rule
Of faithful Christian life.
Then did we all rejoice,
As at the sound of Gabriel's own blest voice,
When, innocent and fresh, we knelt to say
The *Angelus* each day.

Now that a tyrant world
Bids us abide where Sin
Struts boldly in the noonday, we begin
To feel how precious was that golden time—
By innocence impearled—
Spent at your feet in Virtue's nursing clime.
And you, I have no doubt,
When day is done, all weary oft look out
Upon that world—by you long since forsaken—
Where we our place have taken,
And wonder how all fare
Who dwelt beneath your care
In those bright days gone by.

True, some have wandered far
From the clear light of Bethlehem's glad star;
But unto others faith, hope, love, and truth
Are dear as in their youth.
Yet even for these last
As toilsome years have passed
You may have heaved a sigh,
Thinking you seldom heard
A grateful heart give utterance to a kindly word.

For me, I know—
Fond memory keeps so green the long-ago—
That when I late was told
How you were still at work within the Fold,
It almost seemed that old times had returned:
And as I mused I yearned
To shape the message I have penned to-day
To cheer you on your way.

And if you think these humble words of praise
Have been delayed too long
Among the careless throng
On the world's highways,
Bethink you that your lot—
To seem so long forgot—
Is but the common fate of Mary's daughters,
Who, amid anxious tears,
Do cast the bread of Faith upon life's waters,
Yet find it, gladly, after many years.

OUR LADY OF BLACKBURN.

O Mary ever Virgin,
Most pure of Virgins all,—
The one sweet Virgin-Mother
On whom the Children call:
I love to picture England,
Thy consecrated Dower,
As England was of old-time
Ere Kings abused their power.

The ancient Church of Blackburn—
My own good honest Town—
From days of Saint Augustine
Came sweetly, proudly down:
And oft did dear Paulinus—
Not far from this our home—
Preach that same Faith, in England,
Which Peter preached at Rome.

The Church of Thee, Saint Mary,
Arose in Blackburn Town;
And from its Lady-Altar
Thine image, with its crown,
Looked on our own forefathers
Who age by age knelt there
To seek through thy own Jesus

The wondrous aid of prayer.
When I first knew my Blackburn—
A tiny studious boy—
The Tower of Old Saint Mary's
To my young heart gave joy.
The ancient Church had vanished
Thy Shrine had passed away;
Yet that old dedication
Remains to this our day.

Magnificat is chanted

Each peaceful Sabbath morn
In many a Church at Blackburn—
Brave Town where I was born.
By long-divided Christians
Thy name is honoured yet,
O! never may my Townsmen
Thy wondrous life forget.

A second sweet 'Saint Mary's'
Arose not far away,
Where gentle Father Richard
For England used to pray.
The faithful sons of Ireland
Oft gathered with us there,—
By one glad Faith united,—
To conquer Sin and Care.

O Mary, gentlest Mother,
Thy JESUS loves us all:
True God, true Man, true Brother
He'll hear when thou dost call!
O beg Our Heavenly Father,
In His and thy Son's name,
To save our Christian England
From every deed of shame.

'Tis true we are divided,—
All are not taught to call
Upon thy name, dear Mother,
Who lovest one and all.
Yet never Soul whom JESUS
In mercy would redeem
Was yet by thee forsaken,
Though dark that Soul might seem.

Men call thee Purest Virgin
In many a Church to-day,
Yet I would love and praise thee
In my Forefathers' way.
In Lancashire-the-Loyal
Still lives the Saxon tongue
In which throughout fair England
Thy praises once were sung.

Look down, O Queen of Heaven!
On Mary, England's Queen,
On George our noble Ruler,—
On all who've faithful been.
Win Peace for all thy children,
Beg GOD our cause to aid,
Tread down War's deadly serpents,
O peerless Mother-Maid!