

First Published in 1940, the same year the “Blitz” began. (During World War II, Nazi airplanes kept up a constant bombing campaign against England.)

processions, devotions. Some of these hymns (“Adoro te devote,” “Aue uerum,” “Inviolata,” “O filii et filiae”) have never been forgotten by our people. Some (“Puer natus in Bethlehem,” “Laetabundus,” “O panis dulcissime”) are coming back through the Solesmes editions.

There is room for more. There is room especially for translations of old hymns. In nothing are English Catholics so poor as in vernacular hymns. The real badness of most of our popular hymns, endeared, unfortunately, to the people by association, surpasses anything that could otherwise be imagined. When our people have the courage to break resolutely with a bad tradition, there are unworked mines of religious poetry in the old hymns that we can use in translations. If we do, there will be an end of the present odd anomaly, that, whereas our liturgical hymns are the finest in the world, our popular ones are easily the worst.

When we produce another poet like Prudentius it will be time to think of having new hymns. Till then, why not use the enormous riches we already have? Let us hope that Mr. McDougall’s little collection, with his excellent translations, will be a step towards better Catholic hymns in English.

*ADRIAN FORTESCUE*

LADY DAY, 1916.