

## A VERSION OF THE DIES IRAE

*(Dedicated to the prospective translators of the Roman Missal.)*

1. Day of Wrathfulness! That Day  
Shall the world in ashes lay,  
David and the Sibyl say.
2. Who shall tell the shuddering fear  
Waiting till the Judge appear,  
All to try, exact and clear!
3. Lo! the trumpet's shattering tone  
Thrills the tombs in every zone,  
Driving all before the Throne.
4. Death and nature stand aghast  
While Creation rises massed,  
Facing Him, the First and Last.
5. Forth it comes, the written scroll  
Weighty with minute and whole  
Balance-sheet of every soul.
6. When the Judge ascends His throne,  
All things hidden shall be known,  
Guilt unpunish'd shall be none.
7. Wretched me, what answer make,  
Or what pleader shall I take  
When the righteous almost quake
8. King! Tremendous Majesty,  
Saving whom Thou savest, free,  
Well of Pity, rescue me!
9. Gentle Jesu, have in mind  
Why Thou camest of my kind,  
That day cast me not behind.
10. Soughtest me all footsore, fain,  
Boughtest me with crucial pain,  
Let not so great toil be vain.
11. Righteous Judge of dire array  
Grant forgiveness in the way  
Ere the final reckoning-day.
12. Self-accusing, here I sigh  
Crimson with my shame, I cry  
Spare Thy suppliant, God most high!

## *Blackfriars*

13. Soft Thou wast to Mary's tear  
And the thief didst lightly hear,  
Ev'n to me Thou givest cheer.
14. Emptily my prayers aspire,  
Let Thy love put out Thine ire,  
Lest I burn in quenchless fire.
15. Fold me with Thy sheep at last,  
Sort me from the goats outcast,  
On Thy right hand set me fast.
16. When the curst are put to shame,  
Bonded to the bitter flame,  
With the blesséd call my name.
17. Stricken prone, on Thee I call,  
See my heart in ashes fall :  
Keep mine ending in Thy thrall.
18. Oh ! that day of woe and tears  
When from all the mounded years  
Man for trial reappears !
19. This one, therefore, spare, O God !  
Loving Jesu, Master blest  
Grant them Thine eternal rest.

Amen.

JOHN O'CONNOR.

NOTE.—Those who are acquainted with several translations will not need telling that this latest is indebted to several. Unlike any others, it avoids jerks and female rhymes, and aims at faithfulness, literal faithfulness when possible. Others may see in many lines or verses an opening for still greater faithfulness ; they are welcome to suggest as seems good.

Verse 1 is 'lifted' almost without change. Verse 2 aims at rendering the 'est venturus.' Verse 3 deliberately renders *spargens* by *shattering*, which is one and the same word with *scattering*. Verse 6 does not contain a faulty rhyme—the old pronunciation still used in Ireland, of *none*, is long *o*. Verses 7 and 8 atone in perfect literalness for the comparative freedom of 4 and 5. Verse 10 uses *fain* in the more ancient sense of being so low as to be glad of any help. Verse 11 echoes our Lord's own word about being reconciled 'on the way' to court for trial. In verse 17, line 3, those who do not like old words are permitted to suggest as an alternative : 'Keep mine end in Thy control.' I personally prefer what I have written. In hymns one has to keep a very open mind as to diction, and one must tolerate whatever is in reason. The imperfectly instructed are often faddy and fastidious about things that do not matter in the least, because their personal preferences override general broad considerations. I once knew a man who was quite savage at the very mention of Faber's lovely hymn on Our Lady's expectation, such a song as Faber alone could write.