

## JOHN MARTIN ANSTER

John Martin Anster, poet and translator, was born in the County Limerick, near Charleville, in the year 1793. In 1810 he entered Trinity College, where he graduated A.B., in 1816, and LL.D. in 1825.

When only twenty-two he published his first book of verse, and, two years later, was awarded the College Prize for the best poem on the death of Princess Charlotte. About this time he began to work on his magnum opus, a translation of Goethe's *Faust* into English. It first appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1820, and the whole took up so much of Anster's life that the final part was not published until the year 1864. It was the first translation of *Faust* into English and Goethe himself congratulated Anster on the faithfulness of the work to the original as well as on the fine English poetry into which it had been turned. Although many translations of *Faust* have since appeared, Anster's work is still regarded as the standard English version.

He was called to the Bar in 1824, but although he went the Munster Circuit for several years, his success was small. He became Registrar of the Admiralty Court in 1837 and retired with a Civil List pension in 1841. He was appointed Professor of Law in Trinity College in 1850, and retained this post until his death on the 29th of June, 1867, aged seventy-three.

Besides *Faust*, Anster translated many poems from the French and German and was a contributor for many years to the *Dublin University Magazine*, *Blackwood's*, *The North British Review*, etc. His published works are *Poems . . .* 1819, *Faustus, etc.*, 1835, *Xeniola*, 1837, *The Second Part of Faust*, 1864, *Lines on the Death of Princess Charlotte of Wales*. Professor Webb, his successor to the Chair of Civil Law, said of him:—"As a poet he achieved a glory which, from the days of Dryden and Pope, has only been achieved by Coleridge and him. In his marvellous rendering of a wondrous work, he has made a German masterpiece a British classic."

The following short poem is taken from *Xeniola*.

If I might choose where my tired limbs shall lie  
 When my task here is done, the Oak's green crest  
 Shall rise above my grave—a little mound  
 Raised in some cheerful village cemetery—  
 And I could wish, that, with unceasing sound  
 A lonely mountain rill was murmuring by,  
 In music, thought the lost soft twilight hours;  
 And let the hand of her, whom I love best,  
 Plant round the bright green grave those fragrant flowers,  
 In whose deep bells the wild-bee loves to rest.  
 And should the robin, from some neighbouring tree  
 Pour his enchanted song—oh, softly tread,  
 For sure, if aught of earth can soothe the dead,  
 He still must love that pensive melody.