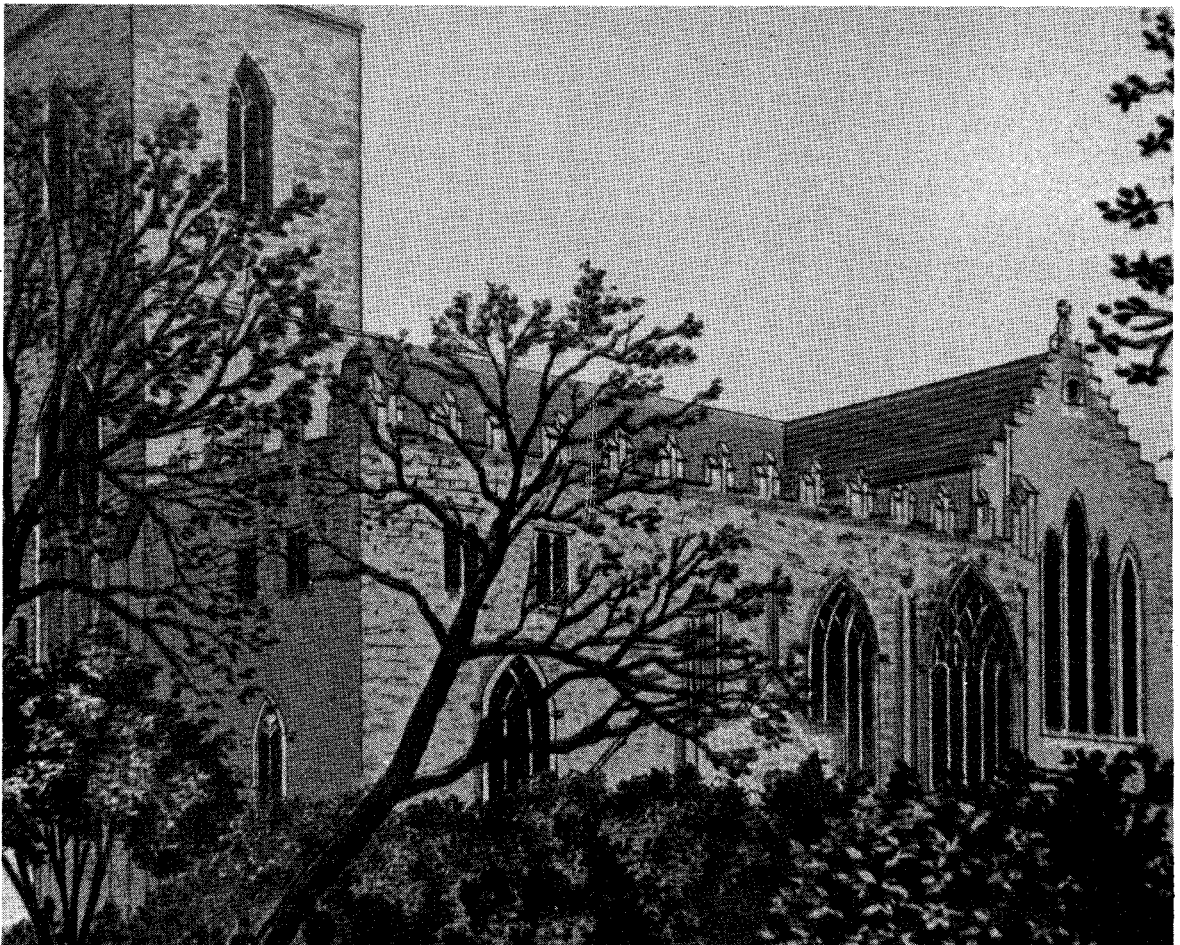


Women in Cathedral Grounds

SEAMUS O CINNEIDE

The hill outside the grey cathedral is steep, slowing the swallow speeding bike, and I look through simulated Gothic gate, past the notice board with services for Church of Ireland members, and visitors from allied communions. It's Indian summer weather, but it can't resist autumn's take-over bid, and trees arching the graves in the grounds show golden leaves on their branches, or like gamblers drunk at cards scatter their guineas on the ground. Maybe the year, too, thinks it wiser to spend its gold before it goes, winter, as the grave, the same welcome gives to rake, rich man, and miser. Above the graves and about them a citizen's wife and her daughter tenderly lay flowers, or tidy the wreaths relatives laid there. The mother, because of age and piety,

seems native here, where headstones and tombs, in plenty, are eloquent of death's landlordship, and our final tenantry of graves, in his demense. But that girl, whose salient beauty is alien in such a place, bending now beside her mother, ripe, inviting, she looks in face, in breasts, and opulent leg. I, forgetful, do not search the pigeon-grey hull of the cathedral, or superstructure of its tower, for the mind's delight, but push on praying though, much as I understand, her parental environment-born piety, the spring of wooing, its summer, and all due seasons, joys and fruits, maidens wish for, be her's soon, exiling her, delightfully, from care of the dead, until she, in time teaches piety's continuity to her daughter.



St. Mary's Cathedral.

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