

**THE RELIGIOUS
POEMS OF RICHARD
CRASHAW**

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The religious poems of Richard Crashaw by Richard Crashaw & R. A. Shepherd

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RICHARD CRASHAW & R. A. SHEPHERD

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The Catholic Library—10

THE RELIGIOUS POEMS
OF
RICHARD CRASHAW

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THE RELIGIOUS POEMS

OF

RICHARD CRASHAW

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY

BY

R. A. ERIC SHEPHERD

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INTRODUCTION.

I. BIOGRAPHICAL.

"POET and Saint" is how Cowley, Crashaw's elegist, salutes the dead poet; and in this case there is more truth in the words than in many similar compliments. That Crashaw was a poet is too obvious to need comment: that he was a saint is true in the broader sense that Crashaw's was a most holy, humble and genuine soul. Born in 1613 and dying in 1649, the poet lived but thirty-six years, most of which were spent in quiet and reflective retirement as a Fellow at Cambridge. Into the last six years of his life is crowded really all the incident that it contains; and during these years were written, following upon the great crisis of the poet's life, almost all the poems with which in this book we are concerned.

Richard Crashaw was born in London, where his father, William Crashaw, was a Puritan preacher of some note. About the poet's father not much is known beyond that he cherished a quite special grudge against the Pope, and inveighed against his son's future "chief shepherd" to the extent of some dozen volumes. He seems, however, to have been a man of some education, for we hear of him addressing some Latin verses to his son's tutor, while the poet was at school. What is most important to know about him, we do know, namely that he was a good father; and had his son's present welfare at heart no less than the Pope's future. (??)

About the poet's mother, not even the efforts of the most indomitable editors have availed to discover anything beyond that she died in her son's infancy, and was replaced by William Crashaw a few years later. His second wife appears, however, by no means