

POETRY AND LIFE.

Unfortunately the spirit of obtaining immediate results so characteristic of the age in which we live has exerted a no uncertain influence in determining the standard by which even literary effects are judged. Prose is preferred to poetry; the real to the ideal, and analysis to creation. The very fact that a poetic form is used as the channel of speech—especially if it contains more than a dozen lines—is enough to disparage an attentive reading. The presentation of an ideal is regarded as an oratorical device adapted to the needs of the school-room or pulpit but not to the requirements of the practical world, the world of facts and figures. An exercise of the imagination is discountenanced as tending to contradict the realities of life. And yet, paradoxical as it may appear, poetry, idealism and fiction are, as a rule, the necessary conditions for what is best in prose, realism and history: the practical supposes the impractical.

To illustrate: when we look about us and see the many persons in various states of life discharging their duties in a cheerless, unchanging, mechanical sort of way we are tempted to exclaim: "How prosaic is not this life". "How monotonous is not its music". "How colourless is not its

picture". But when we penetrate beneath the surface, when we raise that veil by which each individual endeavours to separate and perchance to conceal himself from his neighbor and ascertain the motives which inspire these actions—the plans, the ambitions, the aspirations which prompt these deeds,—we enter upon a new world, a world of poetry, idealism and fiction; a world whose subjects are noble thoughts, whose ruler is charity, whose bond of union is generous self-sacrifice. Then it is that we see life under a different but more pleasant aspect: the prose has become poetry; the colourless picture a beautifully tinted painting; the monotone, a delightful harmony.

The love of man for woman, the devotion of a mother for a child, the allegiance of a patriot to his country, the consecration of one's life to duty are the common themes of the poet. And are they not the ordinary motives for the commonplace actions of life? Observation if not experience assures us of this truth. Just as the heart—the symbol of the impractical, furnishes the strength and nourishment which enable the brain—the symbol of the practical—to operate, so too does the poetry of life furnish the motives

which make possible its prose, its realism and its history.

For this reason we have ever been pained to hear the poet decried as a fanatic and his poems ridiculed as useless; for he typifies that which is noblest in our own lives, that which is responsible for our most lasting achievements and our greatest happiness. We all have poetic thoughts: most of us are influenced by them in our daily lives; a few of us only can express them in a poetic way. There should, therefore, be a bond of sympathy rather than a barrier of opposition between us. They are in a certain sense our representatives before the altar of Nature and Humanity—conveying our messages to them and in turn interpreting their answers to us. Their mission is an exalted one which we should respect in others if we are unable to fulfill it in ourselves.

We are conscious that this idea of the importance of the poet's role is not a new one. It was common enough when life was less rapid but more true than it is at present. Our only excuse for proposing it anew is to react against a tendency which has already gone too far in the wrong direction. Let us therefore, each in his own peculiar way, show our appreciation of the poet and his writings; and perhaps we shall live to see the Muse of Poetry re-

stored, amidst universal rejoicing, to the pantheon wherein men are accustomed to enshrine their greatest benefactors.

Cornelius McCarthy, O. P.

THE WRECK.

Hear the tempest, howling, sighing,
Note the daylight quickly dying,
See the beach-sand drifting, flying, cry-
ing out,

“A storm at sea!”

Hark! the thunder rolling, crashing,
Fiery lightning leaping, flashing,
Waves of ocean rushing, splashing, dash-
ing wild

In maddest glee.

Fishing vessel plunging, rearing,
Fighting bravely, ever nearing
Spray-dashed rocks like wolves appear-
ing, fearing lest

They lose their prey.

Roaring waves leap ever round her,
Driving onward till she founder;
Hungry waters beat her, pound her,
hound her

In the laughing spray.

Spars and masts now trembling,
falling,

Greedy waters breaking, mauling,
On the decks now heaping, sprawling,
calling madly

To the shore.

Fated vessel wildly crashing,
Rising, falling, rolling, splashing,
‘Gainst the rocky teeth now smashing,
dashing down—

To rise no more.

Bartholomew Reilly, O. P.