

to doubt it even the heroism of the martyrs had a right so to encourage the violence of their persecutors, and to ask if there was not a weakness on the part of the Society, as well as on that of the Church herself in regard to Pomal and his associates, it is to be remembered that it was persecution that St. Ignatius himself prayed for, the persecution promised to an apostolate, "who should be hated for His name's sake."

THE POEMS OF FATHER ABRAM J. RYAN.

A year ago the spirit of one of the truest of American poets winged its way into eternity. It was Passion week when the wires flashed the news that Father Ryan, the "Poet-priest of the South," whose genius had sung its way into our hearts, was dying at a Convent in Louisville, Kentucky. It was fitting that he who embalmed sorrow with the spirit of his pathetic muse—who wrote :

For ah! the surest way to God
Is up the lonely streams of tears,
That flow when bending 'neath his rod,
And fill the tide of earthly years.
On laughter's billows hearts are tossed,
On waves of tears no heart is lost.

It was fitting that he should return his poetic soul into the hands of his Creator during a time sanctified by the Holy Church and consecrated with the Chalice of Gethsemane and the sorrows of Calvary. The spirit of Father Ryan's muse is eminently that of sorrow. He did not write for fame. As he says in a preface to an edition of his poems, "His feet knew more of the humble steps that lead up to the Altar and its Mysteries than of the steps that lead up to Parnassus and the Home of the Muses. And souls were always more to him than songs." And yet few of the American poets sprang so rapidly into popularity as that Poet-priest of the South. The reason is obvious. The poetry of Father Ryan is genuine—not artificial, nor laboured. It is the outpouring of a heart stirred to its depths by the *divine afflatus*. True, the mechanism of his verse may, in many places, be faulty, yet you cannot but feel the pulse of poetic genius in its every throb. Amongst his minor efforts there is one entitled "Rest," that did not appear in the first edition of his poems, issued by J. L. Rapiet & Co., of Mobile, Alabama. It has always appeared to me a finished gem—full of poetic character—a very condensation of Father Ryan's genius in verse.

REST.

My feet are wearied and my hands are tired,
My soul oppressed—
And I desire, what I have long desired—
Rest—only rest.

'Tis hard to toil, when toil is almost vain,
In barren ways.

'Tis hard to sow and never garner grain
In harvest days.

The burden of my days is hard to bear,
But God knows best;
And I have prayed; but vain has been my prayer
For rest—sweet rest.

'Tis hard to plant in spring and never reap
The autumn yield;
'Tis hard to till, and when 'tis tilled, to weep
O'er fruitless field.

"And so I cry a weak and human cry,
So heart oppressed;
And so I sigh a weak and human sigh,
For rest—for rest.

My way has wound across the desert years,
And cares invest
My path, and through the flowing of hot tears,
I pine for rest.

And I am restless still; 'twill soon be o'er;
For down the west
Life's sun is setting, and I see the shore.
There I shall rest."

I have seen it somewhere said that poetry is the flowering of the soul. The very hues and fragrance of the inner life of the poet are brought to the surface through the medium of poetry. We see this exemplified in the ironical misanthropy of a Byron, the grace and refinement of a Longfellow, and the rollicking conviviality of a Burns. A pure soul will write purely; a sceptic will sear his verse with doubt; a sensuous writer will cause his lines to swell with the blood of passion. It is simple and pleasant as a task to search for a poem which reflects the life and character of an author. Every one recognizes at once in the "Raven" the weird life of Poe. Coleridge's casting about for truth in a sea of doubt is plainly visible in the "Ancient Mariner":—

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide ocean.

Among Moore's Melodies, "The Meeting of the Waters" strikes off the leading element in Moore's character—that of friendship:

'Twas that friends, the belov'd of my bosom were near,
Who made every dear scene of enchantment more dear,
And who felt how the best charms of nature improve,
When we see them reflected from looks that we love.

Taking up a volume of Father Ryan's poems, it is not difficult to select the one which mirrors the poet-priest in spirituality and mystic yearning of heart. "The Song of the Mystic," is a reflex of its author:

I walk down the valley of silence,—
Down the dim, voiceless valley alone!
And I hear not the fall of a footstep
Around me, save God's and my own;
And the hush of my heart is as holy
As hovers where angels have flown.

Long ago—was I weary of voices
Whose music my heart could not win;
Long ago I was weary of noises
That fretted my soul with their din;
Long ago I was weary of places
Where I met but the human—and sin.

I walked in the world with the worldly;
I craved what the world never gave;
And I said: 'In the world each Ideal,
That shines like a star on life's wave,
Is wrecked on the shores of the Real,
And sleeps like a dream in a grave.'

And still did I pine for the Perfect,
And still found the False with the True;
I sought 'mid the Human for Heaven,
But caught a mere glimpse of its Blue;
And I wept when the clouds of the mortal
Veiled even that glimpse from my view.

And I toiled on, heart-tired of the Human;
And I moaned 'mid the mazes of men;
Till I knelt long ago at an altar,
And heard a voice call me: Since then
I walk down the valley of Silence,
That lies far beyond mortal ken.

Do you ask what I found in the valley?
'Tis my trysting-place with the Divine.
And I fell at the feet of the Holy,
And above me a voice said: 'Be mine.'
And there arose from the depths of my spirit
An echo—'My heart shall be thine.'

Do you ask how I live in the valley?
I weep—and I dream—and I pray.
But my tears are as sweet as the dew-drops
That fall on the roses of May;
And my prayer like a perfume from Censers,
Ascendeth to God night and day.

In the hush of the Valley of Silence
I dream all the songs that I sing;
And the music floats down the dim valley,
Till each finds a word for a wing.
That to hearts, like the Dove of the Deluge,
A message of peace they may bring.

But far on the deep, there are billows
That never shall break on the beach;