

Poetry and Nature.

POETRY and nature have ever been closely associated. The chosen few have worshipped :—

"Not in that fane where crumbling arch and column
Attest the feebleness of mortal hand,
But in that fane most catholic and solemn,
Which God hath planned ;
In that cathedral, boundless as our wonder,
Whose quenchless lamps the sun and moon supply,
Its choir the wind and waves, its organ thunder,
Its dome the sky."

They have been admitted to her mystic rites and penetrated her inmost recesses ; there is no discord, no jarring note in all the witchery of her music. Harmony is the soul of all things. The poet is nature's own interpreter, she speaks in the tempest and the thunder-cloud, the golden dawn of day and the rosy hues of interest.

Wordsworth says :

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

The bard of Rydal Mount was the first to stimulate a love of nature in all her moods. Tennyson, Longfellow, Whittier and Lowell, have each received

"The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet's dream."

Life to them has been more than a mere mode of existence—it conveys

"A sense sublime of something far more deeply inter-
fused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and the mind of man,
A motion, and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of thought,
And rolls through all things."

Man has performed marvels of skill and ingenuity, but those of nature are incomparably greater. Travellers tell us that the highest tower in Paris, a work representing years of thought and toil, seems but a tiny speck beside the majestic snow-clad Alps towering up to the sky. There are wonders both on sea and land.

The volume of nature holds a complete record of the ages, here are the successive

strata with the inhabitants entombed in the formation, embalmed in her own sepulchre. Who shall estimate the wonders of the great deep and bear away the wealth of ocean treasure ? Life is a modification of various organs to meet external conditions, the life which is protected by fins and scales has been constantly changing from the time of the great Sanrians, a race disappearing with the conditions necessary to its existence. Ocean life presents as fascinating an aspect as the fairy lore of our childhood. Here is life and death in our very midst and yet invisible. The ocean is a vast universe by itself, one single drop of water containing its own population of animalcules.

New beauty is ever apparent in the field of science,—the astronomer sweeps the heavens with his telescope, watches by night the flocks on the hillsides of the heavens, as did the wise men their sheep on the hills of Judea. Or if the microscopic world is laid under contribution, each botanical specimen ever affords fresh instances of artistic structure and developement. Change is stamped on all, Geology teaches that even the "everlasting hills have a birth and a decay" ; nature ever tends to array herself in symmetrical forms, there is no chaos, no confusion, order and harmony reign supreme.

As the purple twilight falls on the hills the shadows deepen and the eternal calm is over all the immensity of space, and the grandeur of the universe dawn on the poet's soul ; the panorama of life and all its cares has vanished, his mind rises to behold the works of the Infinite Mind.

We are constituted differently, both mentally and physically, the mental retina of each reflects different objects, hence Longfellow named the stars "the forget-me-nots of the angels."

Longfellow's intercourse with nature was marked. The children of the forest occupy a prominent place in his poems. The beautiful legends of a dusky race are woven in the thread of Hiawatha, the climax is reached when Hiawatha sets out in the purple mists of evening on his long journey to the portals of the sunset.