

have been one of those cases in which enterprise and negligence have combined, first to confine and then to let loose, one of the tremendous forces of nature, for human destruction. It is stated that the unhappy residents in the track of the deluge were repeatedly warned of the coming danger, and had time and opportunity to make good their escape. But, unhappily, familiarity breeds contempt of dangers, as well as of dignities. Those who live in constant peril become gradually so used to it that they fail to recognise its presence. This terrible visitation will, no doubt, lead to an investigation with a view to discover to whose negligence, if to that of any one, the catastrophe is due. It will also cause many, and very likely much needed, investigations in other localities in which vast bodies of water are suspended by frail embankments over the heads of the people in towns and villages, with a view to ascertaining what can be done to render such artificial reservoirs perfectly safe. Very likely there are dozens of places in the mountainous districts of the United States and Canada in which the people are exposed to similar dangers, though usually on a smaller scale. The necessity for frequent and rigid Government inspections of all dams and embankments which hold in check large bodies of water, will, it may be hoped, now force itself upon public attention. In the present case, the distress and destitution of survivors must be very great, and the demands upon public liberality will be in proportion. Canadians, we feel sure, will not be wanting in their accustomed generosity.

THE Strasbourg incident the other day must have been startlingly suggestive to the nations of Europe of the thinness of the crust which separates them from the sleeping volcano beneath their feet. The fact that an event so apparently trivial and harmless as the proposed visit of King Humbert to a frontier city should have thrown the whole French nation into a transport of rage shows clearly that the old wound is as sensitive and as far from being healed as ever. The occasion, too, must have given rise to many an uneasy speculation as to what may be expected when the elder Bismarck shall have left the stage, and the restraint of his overmastering presence is no longer felt by the dashing Kaiser. There is, nevertheless, some reason to question whether the bolder action of the young Emperor might not, after all, have been wiser than the temporizing policy of the aged and astute diplomatist. It is wise, sometimes, to take the bull by the horns. If Germany has made up her mind, which no one doubts, to retain permanently the conquered provinces, why should she hesitate to deal with them as with any other of her possessions? Enraged as France would have been had the visit been made, she would scarcely have ventured, in her present unstable state, to throw herself at the throat of either Germany or Italy, for an offence largely or wholly sentimental. However the affair might have galled Gallic susceptibilities, it could hardly have brought war nearer, or if it did, even that might well be thought preferable to longer delay of an event which it would have proved to be inevitable. It is very likely, however, that the real drawing-back was on the part, not of Emperor William, but of King Humbert, who certainly would have nothing to gain, and possibly much to lose, by arousing the fierce resentment of the French people.

A NEW CANADIAN ANTHOLOGY.*

IT has been with anticipations of pleasure that we have looked for some time back for the coming to hand of Mr. Lighthall's collection of Canadian verse, which was being prepared by a London publisher for the markets of this and the Motherland. The book has just been received, and if we had any misgivings whatever as to the character of the work to be submitted to a critical audience in England, or to be accepted in Canada as a representative volume of native poetry, its appearance, and the examination we have been able to give it, dispel our anxiety and enable us to assure readers of THE WEEK that, within the space at the editor's disposal and having regard to the limitations of his aims in making the selection, the work, in our humble judgment, must meet with well-nigh unqualified approval. Mr. Lighthall has not only given Canadians the most important volume yet published representing the native Muse, but he has compiled a work which fitly and worthily represents the poetic gifts of our young nation, and which may confidently be pointed to as evidence of a mental growth and a degree of literary culture far beyond what has been thought the intellectual possibilities of a mere colony. If objection be taken at all to the book, it will be on the score of omission of what

well-read students of Canadian verse expect to find in a work such as this, not on the score of what has the honour to be included in the volume. Naturally enough, there were limitations imposed upon Mr. Lighthall by his publisher, in the matter of space, and there were also limitations in the editor's design in making the compilation. These could not well be exceeded, as has indeed been pointed out, within the compass of a moderate-priced and popular volume. Hence the omissions, both of verse of a subjective and introspective character, and of not a little that we naturally look for within the scope of the editor's design in the preparation of the present work. In compilations of the kind, it is, of course, difficult to meet diversity of tastes; and more difficult still where, in addition to diversity of tastes, the editor is expected to meet the demands of the poets themselves, or of friends in their name, who would monopolize the volume to gratify personal predilection. Fortunately the duties of an editor are real and are not to be thrown over at anyone's expectation or bidding; hence proportion is observed and that neutrality which is among the first essentials in such undertakings. The book, however, has passed the stage of preparation and must now be judged for what it is, not for what it is not. If the reader does not find in it all he would like to find there, he will perhaps reflect that this is a vain expectation; and, we hope, may agree with the dictum, that in this, as in other experiments of the kind, "the half is better than the whole."

Whatever judgment time and a more critical examination may pass upon the book, there will be few readers, we imagine, who will withhold credit from the editor for his share in its preparation. Not to speak of the taste and discretion exercised, the task even of making the collection was no light one. It is culled not only from a large number of writers representing almost every section of the Dominion, but from poets of a widely varied class, whose moods are as diverse as are their themes. "Through them," writes the editor, "you may catch something of great Niagara falling, of brown rivers rushing with foam, of the crack of the rifle in the haunts of the moose and caribou, the lament of vanishing races singing their death-song as they are swept on to the cataract of oblivion, the rural sounds of Arcadias just rescued from surrounding wildernesses by the axe, shrill war-whoops of Iroquois battle, proud traditions of contests with the French and the Americans, stern and sorrowful cries of valour rising to curb rebellion." From this quotation from the introductory preface the reader will discover the scope of the volume, and note, as we already hinted, that it is confined, in the main, to objective verse, dealing with the many and rich phases of Canadian life and scenery. The editor's classification will make this more clear, and at the same time help to guard against disappointment in the search through the volume for what Mr. Lighthall calls "a purely literary anthology," which is not to be found here. The poems are grouped, first under what the editor terms "the Imperial Spirit," and, secondly, under "the New Nationality," embracing subjects (1) common to the Empire, and (2) those of a patriotic character common to the Dominion. Then follow, in succession, the poems dealing with Indian life and legend; with the *voyageur* and *habitant*; with settlement life; with sports, including hunting, camping, canoeing, skating, and snowshoeing songs; with "the Spirit of Canadian History," embracing the battle-songs of the War of 1812 and those dealing with heroic incidents in our early annals. Finally come those delicious bits of verse, the flower of Canadian poetic thought and utterance, grouped under poems of places and of seasons in our great wide Dominion. In this rich array of subjects the revilers of native literature will find enough poetic beauty to disturb their complaisant doubt that any lyric good can come out of the Canadian Nazareth. Despite the causes which tend to narrow the field of poetic expression in Canada, it will amaze these "incredulous Thomases" to see how much the volume contains of genuine verse, kindling no common emotions in the breast of the Canadian who loves his native land, and calculated to fan into fresh flame the torch of literary art in every intellectual centre throughout our fair Dominion.

Of course, it is easy to fall into exaggeration in speaking of such a compilation as this, though it would be a churlish spirit that would refuse to award it high praise. We do not say that all the verse in the volume is unimpeachable, in regard either to subject matter or literary form; nor can we regard Mr. Lighthall's selection, in all departments of his work, as the most happy that could have been made. Its most serious defect is its incompleteness—the omission of names from the volume which had an undoubted right to be there. The character of the volume itself explains many of the omissions, but only in part; and the limits of space, while inexorable, will not wholly relieve the editor from blame. A volume of Canadian verse which includes nothing from such writers, among men, as F. A. Dixon, Philips Stewart, Hereward Cockin, Carroll Ryan, T. O'Hagan, "Sarepta," A. Stevenson, the late Francis Rye, and the late Dr. Mulvany; or, among women, from such writers as Mrs. Seymour McLean, "Esperance," Louisa Murray, Mrs. Traill, Mrs. Edgar Jarvis, Miss Wetherald, Miss Morgan, and Miss Duncan, will scarcely give satisfaction to a wide and catholic taste. The melody and tenderness of Miss Wetherald's verse, as well as its fine thought and felicity of form, should have won it a place in any Canadian collection, and we are surprised not to find it here. Much the same remark applies to the work of other writers omitted from the volume. But, as we have said, it was not the plan of the editor to make a complete anthology—subjective verse and the large

class of poems of an introspective character being excluded from the selection—hence the omission, no doubt, of the many writers we have noted. To the selection of the authors represented in the volume little exception can be taken; while the specimens given us of their work are such as happily exemplify their wide range of cultivation and ready power of expression. Naturally enough, Mr. Lighthall, though he has by no means ignored the older singers, has drawn largely from the younger poets of the Dominion, who have grown up under the influence of the later culture, and whose work shows a higher quality of song. Of the product of the younger men—Roberts, Lampman, Wilfred Campbell, Bliss Carman, Arthur Weir, W. McLennan, and the editor himself—we have large representations, and what we have is, we feel sure, but a prelude to higher and richer notes which we may yet hear struck from their lyre. The influence of the modern spirit is not so noticeable among the women represented as among the men. The women, indeed, have hardly had the justice done them to which they were entitled, the chief singers being limited to "Fidelis," "Seranus," E. Pauline Johnson, and the late Isabel Valancy Crawford. What we have from their pens is all good, though the selection might have been ampler, and we should have had a more generous representation of the sex. Of the older male poets, the reader will be glad to meet with some of the best verse of Reade, Sangster, Kirby, Duvar, Heavyside, George Murray, and Charles Mair. Though the product of Canada in its adolescent stage, and when our writers were less self-conscious than they have now become, the work of these older writers bids fair to hold its own, even in competition with the verbal beauty and verse harmony of latter-day song. There runs through it all a stream of fresh and healthy feeling, while it is rich in patriotic ardour and strong in its flavour of the soil.

He would be an evil prophet who would declare that the future will bring us no accessions to our store of verse more worthy than that enshrined in the volume before us. Canada is no decrepit and decaying State, but a young, lusty and promising Commonwealth, whose sons inherit, with the divine faculty of genius,—the best heritage we derive from our forefathers—the health, mental as well as physical, of a hale and hearty old sire. Set down upon this wide and fair Dominion, with the great stream of Old World culture still flowing in upon us, who shall set limits to the intellectual attainments of our people, or make thin the blood in the strong brood of our poets? No Canadian patriot will regard Mr. Lighthall's volume as a poetic totality, but will see in it the promise of better things yet to come. For what is in it all will at present be thankful, and we trust that the work will meet with such a reception as to make it but the forerunner of still weightier and more generous volumes of Canadian song.

G. MERCER ADAM.

TARO SAN: OUR OFFICIAL FRIEND.

A SKETCH OF A MODERN JAPANESE.

NOTHING has helped us more to understand Japan and the Japanese than our acquaintance with Taro San. It has given us the much-desired glimpse of the inner life of the people which no sojourn in a native family would ever have done. For a sojourn in a native family, we soon learnt, would simply mean a lesson in holding chopsticks and another in squatting on the floor; the opportunity to solve the problem of the domestic relations of a Japanese household, even though a month should suffice, never being afforded a foreigner. But behind society's bows and *arigatos*, which protect its members' feelings and sentiments from intrusion as gracefully, as artistically, and as effectually as screens or paper walls protect their persons, half unconsciously, half because he could not help it, our official friend has allowed us to see more than once what really interests and pleases the Japanese, and what they say only interests and pleases them; what their ambitions are, and their real attitude towards foreigners. The character and the aims of a typical modern Japanese gentleman we have found in the person of Taro San.

Taro San, however, has been by no means an easy subject to study. Even his most intimate foreign friend, the Frenchman who introduced him to us, and who has known him ever since he was a guide, waiting about the hotels in Yokohama, acknowledges, with some irritation, that he puzzles him at times as only a Japanese can. But it is our official friend's capacity to puzzle, to mystify people utterly every now and again, which makes him most attractive.

When we first met Taro San he seemed to us only a nervous creature with a Japanese laugh that shook him all over as if he were sitting on springs. He was at once shy and oddly brusque, though one could easily see that his shyness and his brusquerie came from a chronic state of trepidation lest he should transgress some of the laws of the foreign society in which he found himself. Upon further acquaintance, when he was less embarrassed, and when the Frenchman was not near, we discovered that he possessed a cleverness, a receptiveness, a quick appreciation, which would astonish and charm even in a European. Taro San was a person to know. So it came to pass that we invited him and his sister, Miss Cherry-Blossom, to our Saturday afternoons in our house at Kudan. And he has come not only on Saturday afternoons, but on many other afternoons, to talk and to argue about matters Japanese, and to have an occasional friendly chat about his personal affairs.

* "Songs of the Great Dominion: Voices from the Forests and Waters, the Settlements and Cities of Canada." Selected and Edited by Wm. D. Lighthall, M.A. (Montreal). London: Walter Scott; Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co., and Williamson & Co. 1889.