

THE LIBRARY TABLE

CANADIAN POETS

CHOSEN AND EDITED BY JOHN W. GARVIN. Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart.



R. GARVIN has performed a notable service to Canadian letters in presenting to lovers of poetry this handsome anthology. Landor has said that "while sculpture and painting are moments in life poetry is life itself, and everything around us and about us"; and though we know that he is not speaking the truth, and that there are such things as beef-steaks and committee meetings, the emotional rapture that is in the heart of a man who can make such a statement has a value for all who are subject to the appeal of poetry that is far greater than any exact description of phenomena can be.

"What is it to be a poet?" asks Lord Dunsany; "it is to see at a glance the glory of the world; to see beauty in all its forms and manifestations; to feel ugliness like a pain; to resent the wrongs of others as bitterly as one's own; to know mankind as others know single men; to know nature as botanists know a flower; to be thought a great fool; to hear at moments the whisper of God."

It cannot be pretended that this high seriousness of poetry is an easy or popular emotion. The dogmatic journalist who writes on "The Plague of 'Poetry'," and is often associated with a journal that will print anything in the shape of verse so long

as it costs nothing, would probably find little but amusement in Phillips's desire "to give up all the world and live chiefly for that glory in his soul, the glory which he felt had been placed there that he might give it out again as a beauty and protection for the people; as a stimulus for creation and a splendour that would live for ever in the eyes of God", yet such high seriousness is the indispensable condition both for the creation and appreciation of what is great and beautiful in poetry.

Mr. Garvin has been aware for many years that the resources of this country included not only "tillage, crop rotation, marketings and good or evil husbandry of the economic earth" as Carlyle once put it in reviewing the work of the Corn-Law Rhymers—but also a group of singers who have seen something of the glory of the world and are striving to be obedient to the heavenly vision. As a teacher he knows quite well that the only effective way of teaching literature is the communication of an enthusiasm. Experience has taught him, too, that, of all writers, the writer of verse has the least chance of adequate recognition at the time when it is of most use to him. Knowledge and sympathy, love of country, of poetry and of men have gone to the formation of this anthology and without these endowments criticism is but a clanging cymbal.

The volume has sent me to Carlyle's notice of the poetry of Ebenezer Elliott, in *The Edinburgh Review* for 1832, one of the most beautiful specimens of critical writing I have ever