

AT EVENTIDE.

WELCOME! calm twilight hours! once more ye come
 Gray-eyed, with silent tread, and gently soothe,
 With soft and cooling touch, the fevered brows
 And throbbing pulses of earth's weary ones.
 Fair handmaidens of fairest Peace, ye bring
 A respite to my soul from all the cares
 That vex'd it thro' the day; and, like a bird
 Set free by kindly hands, my spirit soars
 Homeward on eager wing, o'er ocean wastes,
 To scenes afar, yet ah! so well beloved,
 Where, like a blissful dream, too swiftly passed
 The golden hours of Life's bright yesterday.
 Once more I see, outgleaming thro' the trees,
 The dear old walls that 'neath their gabled roof
 Long shelter'd me and mine; around them clings
 (Sweeter than perfume born of Orient's clime)
 The blessed fragrance of the name of Home.
 There, while the gloaming deeper grows, I see—
 By mellow rays from Memory's lamp illum'd—
 The forms of those whose love, in life's sweet spring,
 Was sunshine to my heart's unfolding flower;
 And when, as oft the tears of Heaven beat down
 Into the cold dark earth the tender bud,
 They came with Sympathy, whose gentle hand
 Raised, and caressed, and made it bloom again.
 No stranger guest, in truth, was Sympathy;
 Through their "soul's windows" ever sweet she smiled,
 And cast, o'er e'en their simplest deeds and words,
 Her gracious influence. Across the sea,
 As the strong cable joining land to land,
 Reaches her unseen power, and firm unites,
 In tend'rest union, kindred hearts and minds.

Twilight has fled; banish'd by thy decree,
 O, queenly Night! thou monarch absolute!
 Thy crown (yon orb), high in the star gemm'd sky,
 Shines in clear radiance calm. Nor faintest sound
 Disturbs the stillness of the ambient air,
 Save the sweet cadence of the whispering trees;
 From out their leafy midst I seem to hear
 A low clear voice speak to my restless soul—
 "O, spirit feeble, faint! live not in dreams,
 Nor ever in the Past: the Present calls
 To thee with clarion voice, bidding thee rise
 And patient tread the path appointed thee;
 Beside it lie (oh! strive to make them fair!)
 The paths of those whom Heaven hath given thee,
 To love, to soothe, to comfort, and to serve."

Toronto.

HELEN HOLTON.

SAUNTERINGS.

We are still an eminently unliterary people.

Another Canadian summer has waxed and waned; mysterious in our forests, idyllic in our gardens, ineffably gracious upon our mountains. Another year of our national existence has rounded into the golden fulness of its harvest time. The yellow leaves of another September are blowing about our streets; since last we watched their harlequin dance to dusty death a cycle has come and gone. And still the exercise of hope and faith—charity we never had—continue to constitute the sum of our literary endeavour. We are conscious of not having been born in time to produce an epic poet or a dramatist; but still in vain do we scan the west for the lyricist, the east for the novelist whose appearing we may not unreasonably expect. Our bard is still loath to leave his Olympian pleasures; our artisan in fiction is busy with the human product of some other sphere.

And we look blankly at each other at every new and vain adjustment of the telescope to the barren literary horizon, and question "Why?" And our American cousins with an indifferent wonder, and a curious glance at our census returns, make the same interrogatory; whereupon one of them tarries in Montreal for three days, ascertains, and prints in *Harper's Magazine* that it is our arctic temperature! And in England, if our sterile national library excites any comment at all, it is only a semi-contemptuous opinion that it is all that might be expected of "colonials."

Mr. Warner's idea that the Canadian climate reduces the Canadian brain to a condition of torpor during six months of the year may be dismissed with something of the irritation which it inspired in every Canadian who read it, that a writer who observes so keenly in his own country could be led to such an absurd and superficial conclusion in ours. One would naturally suppose that climatic influences which produce the bodily results to be found in the average Canadian, at least conduce toward giving him an active mind as well. Physically, Canadians compare with Americans

to the great disadvantage of the latter; that they do not intellectually, alas! is not the fault of the climate.

Nor can we place the slightest responsibility for our literary shortcomings upon our educational system. On the contrary, our colleges and public schools are our pride and glory. We point boastfully to the opportunities for intellectual elevation Ontario offers to the children of her navvies and farm labourers; and the ease with which Canadian graduates obtain all sorts of American degrees testifies to the thoroughness of our university training. So great indeed are our facilities for education that our farm lands lie untilled while our offices are filled to unprofitable repletion, and grave protest is arising in many quarters against the State's present liberal abetment of this false adjustment of national energy to national needs. Clearly, Nature and the Hon. G. W. Ross can do no more for us. We are a well-developed and well-educated people; but we do not write books.

"No, for we are not rich enough," you say. "The cultivation of letters demands wealth and a leisure class. We have a professional market in view for our hard-bought college training. We cannot afford to offer it up in unremunerative libations to the muses. We choose between the rustic homespun and the academic bombasin, but there the alternative ends. It is hard work thenceforward in either case. For Canadians to 'sport with Amaryllis in the shade, or with the tangles of Neræa's hair' is an idyllic occupation which, for financial reasons, must be sternly ignored."

This is a comfortable way of relegating the responsibility for our literary inactivity to an economic dispensation of an overruling Providence which finds favour with a great many people. The disabilities of poverty are so easy to assume! But the theory is too plausible to be tenable. A wealthy public is necessary perhaps to the existence of authors who shall also be capitalists. A leisure class is a valuable stimulus to literary production. But money and the moneyed can neither command nor forbid the divine afflatus. The literary work produced solely by hope of gain is not much of an honour to any country. While authorship is a profession with pecuniary rewards like any other, those who are truly called to it obey a law far higher than that of demand and supply. Genius has always worked in poverty and obscurity; but we never find it withdrawing from its divinely appointed labour, and taking to law or merchandise on that account. When the great Canadian *litterateur* recognises himself he will not pause to weigh the possibilities of Canada's literary market before he writes the novel or the poem that is to redeem our literary reputation. Let genius be declared amongst us, and the market may be relied upon to adjust itself to the marvellous circumstance, for a great deal of the talk of Canadian poverty is the veriest nonsense. Riches are relative. We have no bonanza kings; but our railroad magnates are comfortably, not to say luxuriously, housed and horsed and apparelled. We work hard, but the soil is grateful; we are not compelled to struggle for existence. The privations of our Loyalist forefathers do not survive in us. We are well fed, well clad, well read. Why should we not buy our own books!

We would buy them if they were written. That they are not written is partly our own fault and partly that of circumstances. We cannot compel the divine afflatus; but we can place ourselves in an attitude to receive that psychological subtlety should the gods deign to bestow it upon us. But the Olympians, bending Canada-ward, hear no prayer for their great guerdons. We are indifferent; we go about our business and boast of the practical nature of our aspirations; we have neither time nor the inclination for star-gazing, we say. The Province of Ontario is one great camp of the Philistines.

Apart from the necessarily untrustworthy testimony of one's own more or less limited acquaintance, there is but one proof of this—the newspapers; and in a free and enlightened country there is no better exponent of the character of the people than the character of its press. The influence of the daily newspaper upon public opinion is not greater than the influence of public opinion upon the daily newspaper. In a very great measure we dictate what manner of editorial we shall take with our coffee; and either of our great morning dailies is eloquent of our tastes. Politics and vituperation, temperance and vituperation, religion and vituperation; these three dietetic articles, the vituperative sauce invariably accompanying, form the exclusive journalistic pabulum of three-quarters of the people of Ontario. No social topics of other than a merely local interest, no scientific, artistic, or literary discussions, no broad consideration of matters of national interest—nothing but perpetual jeering, misconstruction, and misrepresentation for party ends of matters within an almost inconceivably narrow range.