

any such advantages. They are not known as they ought to be known. Such an evil, time only and the growth of knowledge, can remedy, as it will one day be remedied. Meanwhile, let all the friends of letters not only aspire to, but also labour to bring about this most desirable consummation.

In naming to you the Poets of Canada, this evening, I shall not pretend to class them according to their merits. Let it suffice for the present, to enumerate them in such order as I have been able, rather hurriedly, to collect their names and some particulars of their lives, I leave it to those dictators in the republic of letters,—the critics,—to assign to each one, his proper place on that far famed hill, the summit of which so few can reach. I would not, however, have it to be understood that I aim at presenting to you a complete Canadian Parnassus. Whilst those Poets only will be noticed whose works are decidedly before the Canadian public, and have attracted more or less critical attention, others of equal merit perhaps, may be omitted, either because they are less known, or because I have not yet become acquainted with them.

PART I.

BRITISH CANADIAN POETS.

Allow me now without further preface, to offer to you a cursory view of our British Canadian Poets. We are all, indeed British Canadians. But you will understand that I speak of such Canadian Poets as have written in English.

MR. ISIDORE G. ASCHER may surely be classed among our Canadian Poets. Although born at Glasgow, Scotland, and now a Citizen of the British Metropolis, he acquired his early knowledge of Letters in Canada, having come, or rather having been brought by his family, to this country when only eight years of age and having spent here about thirty years of his life. The date of his arrival in Canada is 1835. He went to England in 1864. He leads there the life of a literary man contributing to the more celebrated periodicals, &c. Critics speak of his *genuine poetic feeling*, his melody of *diction and happiness of expression*. An edition of his earlier lyrical compositions, together with more recent pieces having been published in 1863, under the title of "VOICES OF THE HEARTH," was speedily exhausted.

Colburn's Monthly says, referring to this work: "We lose ourselves in that indescribable absence from sensual objects which is a vision of our higher humanity."

Henry Giles writes in the *Boston Transcript* that "the moral spirit throughout (this same work) is of the highest."

The later poems of Mr. Ascher give proof of more matured poetic ability. I cannot give a better idea of his style than by quoting one or two pieces. What a beautiful allegory is not "SLEEP AND DEATH?"

The gentle night, tranquil as Eden's calm,
Before the voice of Sin disturbed the air,
O'er crept and nestled to the weary earth.
The moonbeams stole to kiss her loveliness,
And blent their mellowed splendour with the dark,
To beautify the shadows of the world.
And then, the unchanging galaxies of Heaven
Flashed out eternal rays, to stamp the night
With glory and immutability.
Then flew with lightning wing, through quickened space,
Two messengers from Heaven, clad alike
In purity and calm ineffable.
The splendid vesture of the gentle night
Clung to the skirts of both: a crown of stars
Circled the head of one, whose beauty seemed
Diviner than her sister's; soon they touched
The summit of an undulating hill,
Bordering the noisy haunts of busy men:
And the red moon, showering yellow flames,
Illumed the clumps of furze and trailing weeds
To seeming asphodels and amarantus!
With arms enfolded tenderly o'er each,
As if a subtle sympathy of love
Had knit their souls, they hushed their dreamy flight;—
Then sleep, beneficent, scattered abroad
Th' invisible seeds of slumber, taking root
Within the jaded hearts of human kind,
To blossom into gossamer flowers of dreams,
Casting a fragrance through the resting brain
Lightly and fleetly in an aerial maze.
Then puling Infancy, and fretful Age,
And querulous Youth, and sighing Maidenhood,
Lay smiling in the beauty of repose;
And Heaven-born Peace, unconscious of her power
Through shadowy chambers entered noiselessly,
And dimpled Innocence with loveliness,

And flung a chustering calm and tender smile
On faces harsh with cankering toil and care;
Then Sleep, enraptured at her marvellous work,
Like one accused of kindness, who might droop
A lowly glance, unwilling to be praised.
In bright contentment gazed upon the earth,
Upon the happy dwellings wrapt in calm,
And gave her sister Death, this utterance:
"What song exultant can be praise to God
For choosing me to lavish good on man?
When Night, stamping her holiness on earth,
Flies at the tender touch of warbling Dawn,
Men clasp my memory, and bless my name;
What truer recompense can angels know
Than homage of a prayer and grateful love?"
Then Death—a quiet sadness in her tones,
A tender melancholy in her smile,
Her starry eyes suffused with starry tears,
Such as immortals weep—gave answer thus:
"If casting forth the heavenly balm of good,
And earning gratitude of lasting love,
Is even angels' highest privilege,
O would that I might earn a grateful prayer!
Alas! men hate me in their restless fear,
For I am, in their thought, an enemy,—
A cruel, bitter vengeful enemy."
Then Sleep replied:

"What boots it that men fear,
Not knowing what they fear, as children dread
The ominous darkness of a lonely room,
As palsied Age may loathe to scan the past,
The ruined chasm of the buried years,
Filled with a wasted heap of cankering hopes,
Defeated plans and baffled aims of Youth;—
Not deeming Endless Wisdom shattered them.
We both are peaceful messengers from God;
Thy touch may hush, like mine, the sorrowing soul,
And banish evermore the groans of pain;
The peace I breathe is but a fleeting calm,
But thine is like the eternal calm of stars!
My love a boon for earth, but thine for Heaven!
The dead Day summons me to heal men's griefs
The pallid Dawn enfolds me in her arms.
And the world wakes to cares of yesterday;
But thy far reaching endless love, like His,
Which finite wisdom never wholly grasps,
Casts infinite peace upon the soul of man,
Who wakes to bless thee in Eternity!"

The angel ceased, and Death in speechless joy
Drooped on the arm of Sleep, and perfect calm,
Shedding a blissful sanctity o'er each,
Likens the angels to our mortal eyes!

One more Piece from Mr. Ascher and I think I shall have quoted enough to justify public opinion and the eulogies of learned critics.

THE FALLING SNOW.

Fall, like peace, O gossamer snow!
While searching winds are roaming abroad;
Fall, in your wealth, on the world below,
Like a blessed balm from God!

Fall, like kisses upon the earth,
That is cold and cheerless and full of woe,
And fill its heart with a sense of mirth,
Silent and loving snow!

Fall, in your wonderful purity,
Fair as a bride's unsullied dress;
Fall from heaven's immensity,
On our autumn dreariness.

Fall like a lover's phantasy
That the heart of a maiden might yearn to know;
Fall like a loving memory
On a soul o'erladen with woe.

Fall like the light of an infant's smile,
That sweetly beams for a mother alone;
Fall like hope when it dawns awhile
On a doubting heart of stone.