

instrumental in bringing the author fairly and publicly into notice. When the first edition appeared, so strangely unequal was the work, Canadian readers solemnly shook their heads; the critical were fairly nonplussed by its unevenness, and passed it by almost in utter silence. Still it lived through this worse than Siberian winter of coldness, general indifference and occasional assault, until the *North British Review*—thanks to that brilliant and keen-sighted American thinker and idealist, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who received the rare volume in England—pointed out the fact, and made it patent to the world, that the sun of a great dramatic poet, a resident of Canada, had just risen above the horizon, and was wending slowly but surely up to the zenith of certain popularity and fame. “Saul” soon came out in a corrected and improved form, with all the honours of a second edition. Even then, certain parts of this drama were provokingly hard to read, and the author had no small amount of literary labour in store for him, before he could make it worthy of his genius. But the third and latest (the American) edition shows the great work well-nigh complete.

In this new edition more action has been imparted to the drama; whole scenes and sentences have been transposed, or omitted, or rewritten; there is a better choice of words in almost every instance where corrections were necessary, hundreds of which may be noted by comparing it with the second edition of 1859; many gaps in the dialogue have been filled up; while, on the other hand, scores of the best passages come to us untouched—fine, glowing, familiar lines and images which had fixed themselves in the memory, and which, it is a pleasure to know have been left as originally written.

The author adheres strictly to the biblical history of “Saul,” and the drama begins at the time when the stately shepherd and future king goes to seek the strayed asses of his father;

“But a diadem  
Has found instead of finding them,”

as Zephio informs the demons who have met upon “the Hill of God,” whither Saul and a company of prophets are hastening to implore Jehovah for deliverance from the enemies of Israel. In addition to Saul, Jonathan, Abner, Samuel and other prophets, David, and the members of the families of Saul and David, there are certain spirits, good and bad, who perform a most important part in the progress of events, and the consummation of the tragic end of the king of Israel. Saul’s evil spirit, Malzah, and his guardian angel, Zoe, are of these; the former of which, Malzah, is said by a writer in the *North British Review* to be “depicted with an imaginative veracity which we do not exaggerate in saying has not been equalled in our language by any but the creator of Caliban and Ariel.” The story, then, without these additions, is familiar to most readers, and it only becomes necessary to give such quotations as will lead to prove the high character of the work, as well as to “illustrate the oddity, subtlety and originality of the writer’s language;” simply premising, in regard to Malzah, that he is “a living character, as true to supernature as Hamlet or Falstaff are to nature; and by this continuation, as it were, of humanity into