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THE CLOUD SYMBOL.

"What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

As Thou, O Cloud, o'er fraught with bursting rain,
Rumbling and low'ring fiercely, dark'st the sky,
And hurl'st thy flashing bolts down from the high
And awful arch of heaven to the plain;
As with life-giving showers upon the thirsting grain;
Or into blue dissolving, Thou dost fly
With mild and grateful shade, till bye-and-bye,
Resplendent, glorious, Thou dost retain
Far in the West the sun's most beauteous rays;
Symbol art Thou of all the life of man—
Troubled and rack'd with anguish and despair;
Or free from care, and filling all the days
With gracious deeds, till ends life's little span,
Divine approval stamped in light most fair.

BEN STACK.

A CANADIAN POET.

Since our earliest school-days we have heard the saying, oft repeated, that "Poets are born, not made." No one, indeed, would attempt to gainsay the truth of the proverb, although sometimes from the ambiguity of language we seem to make contradictory statements. According to one meaning of the word, "poet" may be applied to an indefinite number, but when the word is used in the sense of the proverb quoted, poets become scarce. This distinction, lost in expression, is clear enough in thought. There is no one who does not appreciate the difference between Milton, Tennyson or Scott and the numerous versifiers who also are called poets. The poems of the latter seem often to be the outcome of groanings of the poetic soul, groanings that apparently have had a narrow escape from becoming unutterable. There is a peculiar want of natural movement in the rhythm and a lack of freshness about the thought and its presentation; defects that mark the poet whose works are temporary from him whose works shall endure. Of course, *time* is the supreme test; verses that have survived the lapse of years and are still popular may surely be considered as classic and the writer as one of those poets who are "born, not made."

Judged by *this* standard, Canada can scarcely claim to have any bards who stand in the front rank. Our numbers are small and our Dominion is yet in its youth, so that we may have to wait many years before this country will give to the world a poet. In the meantime it may be worth while to look about us to see if there are not some who have given proof of possessing that gift of the gods—true poetic genius.

During the Christmas holidays, when we all went home to get a chance to do some hard study, there came into my hands a volume of poems bearing the euphonious title of "The Khan's Canticles." The dedication on the fly-leaf at once aroused my curiosity:—

"I have been a Bohemian for twenty years, and during that time I have found but one friend whom I could trust as far as I could throw a bull by the tail. To that one—to thee, my Mother, I dedicate this book."

On the same page occur two suggestive verses:

"I heard the sudden Binder roar;
I heard the Reaper shout;
God flung me on His threshing floor—
His oxen trod me out!"

"And here I lie, all bruised and brown—
Beneath the trampling feet—
The Ragweed and the Thistledown;
The Cockle and the Wheat!"

I found the same stamp of originality and genius throughout the book, and I am now inclined to think that we have at least one Canadian who is a born poet. Mr. R. K. Kernighan, writing under the *nom de plume* of "The Khan," is I believe, not widely known outside of journalistic circles. While his lighter verse has appeared frequently in the daily papers, few of those whose approval is of value, take time to read the usually vapid effusions of the newspaper poet. This, combined with the fact that his poems have but lately appeared in convenient form for criticism, can be the only reason for the little attention his efforts have received.

The Canadian poets that I have read rarely equal him in the smoothness of rhythm which is found in all he writes.

"O, wonderful congregation,
Who rise in their temple broad,
To thunder a freeman's anthem
Their fathers had learned from God.
The tapering tamaracs tremble;
The far-away prairies ring—
When the song of freedom is sounded,
And a people stands up to sing."

You never feel that the rhymes are made-to-order nor that the lines are padded or stretched to make the syllables fit the metre. You do not hear the sound of the axe and hammer nor see the sweat on the brow of the workman as he raises line by line his temple of Parnassus.

A striking feature of the Khan's verse is its similarity in matter and method to that of Scotland's immortal Burns. They both are rough sometimes, but always fresh and strong. Their poetry affects you like the breath of cool pure air and the beauties of sky and field after the heated atmosphere and forced vegetation of the conservatory. Mr. Kernighan is a farmer's son, and has read Nature in the original and without a "key." Those who have "been there" can appreciate "Wilson Keefer's Thrashing," "My Summer Fallow," "So-Ho Bossy, So-Ho," and the other farm-ballads he writes. I give a verse chosen from "Supper's Ready":

"The horses halt and slack their traces,
The weary workers lift their heads,
Light is on the hired-men's faces,
As through the field the anthem spreads;
The brown-faced girl I love is standing
Tip-toed on the kitchen landing;
She cannot cry nor call in vain,
Her sounding voice rings down the lane—
'Supper's ready!'"