

but he perilously near places himself on the positive side by citing as an example of dignified current poetry, and in connection with citations from Swinburne and Milton, a poem entitled "At Midnight," by Virna Sheard, which appeared first in *The Canadian Magazine*. We should not overlook the fact that Mr. Haultain comes from a very severe and exacting school. We know of none severer or more exacting. He is also a very keen critic. Long ago he reached the stage of keenness in criticism of his own work, and but for that he might now be regarded as a prolific writer. Unfortunately his is the practice of but few.

The opinion that we have no literature at all is scarcely worth considering; it is not even intelligent. For we *have* a literature, a very creditable and improving literature; but when it comes to its standing as a national endowment we must reiterate our inability to judge. We do not even possess the right or privilege of judging. We may feel sure that one or another poem or story or essay is as good as anything of the kind being produced in the English language, but just whether or not it will live and attain national importance and significance we cannot say. We may think that it will, but what seems great to us may be merely local or transient. Many persons who are falsely patriotic in their feelings towards Canadian literature resent this attitude, and they seem to think that *The Canadian Magazine* is the last place in which a confession of this kind should be made. But, in all good faith, we think that it is the very first place in which it should be made. To assume that we have a national literature, and to hold fast to that assumption, may give an impression of patriotism, but it is false patriotism, an evil that should never be condoned. Good literature cannot be national simply because of its goodness. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" may not only be false as to fact but it may be

bad writing. Nevertheless, whether we like it or not, it is a contribution to the national literature of the United States, simply because it has been cherished and perpetuated by the people. Milton's "Paradise Lost" was by no means as great in literature in its author's day as it is now, because then the great mass of the people were unable to read it. Nor had it lived through centuries and gained in comparison with most of what had been written before or has been written since. One might as well say that stock in some manufactory was worth just as much a year ago at ten dollars a share as it is to-day at fifty dollars. In inverse ratio, Marconi's invention is a great boon to humanity now, but ten years hence it may be discarded to give place for something as yet beyond our comprehension. The reaper was a long step in advance of the cradle and the scythe, but is it now a national implement? And so we must regard literature: as something whose greatness in either a lasting or national way only time and posterity can establish.

But to give assurance that real current literature is making in Canada, we need not be confined to one poem or one author, and perhaps it will not be regarded as egotistical of us to reprint the following from *The Canadian Magazine* of December, 1907:

THE VISION

By Virna Sheard.

Long had she knelt at the Madonna's
shrine,
Within the empty chapel, cold and
gray;
Telling her beads, while grief with mar-
ring line
And bitter tear stole all her youth
away.

Outcast was she from what Life holdeth
dear,
Banished from joy that other souls
might win;
And from the dark beyond she turned
with fear,
Being so branded by the mark of sin.