

natural. Though the range of his ideas is not very wide, there is an earnest tone in his poetry which, in itself, wins our sympathy, and makes us hope that he will do more than any of the writers mentioned. But this everlasting plague of description among our Canadian poets, how tiresome and oppressive it becomes! From bombast to doggerel, it runs through everything. Open any volume, at any page, and the golden haze, the rock-ribbed coast, the sighing south wind, the grey monotony start upon us. Human associations which alone can make description an avenue to the heart are forgotten in the affected joys of colour and landscape.

"Low Tide on Grand Pré, a Book of Lyrics" is the title of a volume published by Mr. Bliss Carman. The poems in this volume, he tells the reader, have been collected with reference to their similarity of tone. They are variations of a single theme. They are in the same key. The words, tone, theme, and key are terms of the language of music, and their use implies a similarity between the range of the human feelings and the musical scale. The tone of his poems is weird. The feelings excited are subdued feelings of gloom and foreboding. Although they respond readily, they are of a very limited range and afford a very slight foundation for a great reputation. It is possible, of course, to produce a masterpiece in a minor key. An ambitious composer one would expect to play upon a wider range of feeling. There is nothing definite about Mr. Carman's verse. His themes are vague. His narrative must be largely supplied by the reader, and with painful effort. His scenes are quite unlike those of Roberts and Lampman. They are personified outlines, stalking shadows, which suggest vague and threatening presences. It is perhaps safe to say that the chief artistic effect of his writing lies in the ghostly suggestions of dark corners. Although he is a descriptionist, he is often more effec-

tive than Roberts or Lampman. As for example:

Outside a yellow maple tree,
Shifting upon the silvery blue
With small, innumerable sounds,
Rustles to let the sunlight through.

Throughout his verse, it must be said in his favour, there is a voice of human interest, vague and limited though it be.

And all the world is but a scheme
Of busy children in the street,
A play they follow and forget,
On summer evenings, pale with heat.

"Behind the Arras" is a later publication, which shows his style to have become more defined. There is the same weird and grotesque vagueness, the same slipping of persons into shadows, the same incongruous conjunction of the limits of time and space. Such a fantastic style is not to be imitated. It cannot possibly be made the means of a great utterance. The human voice of Shakespeare, or Milton, or even Tennyson, could hardly struggle through it. And yet most readers will turn from Roberts and the others to Carman for relief. He is a greater artist; he writes to affect our imaginations, not to teach them the images of his own. He deals with life, vague and fantastic though it be.

"The Dread Voyage" is one of the latest publications of William Wilfred Campbell. If description be the crowning effort of poetry, he is entitled to take his place beside Ariosto and Bombastes. A new order of beings must be created to appreciate him, for, surely, there is not in all the stores of imagination the material of his fancy. He is always at full steam; everything is in the superlative degree or at the point of climax. His chief endowments are of the eye and ear. The most striking characteristic of his work is the want of refinement of taste, the inability to discern fine shades of feeling or to know when he pleases or offends. In his description he continually mars his effects by using words and comparisons which