

of his prophecy: even while he penned those words William Telford—"Lyric Bill," as he loves to call himself—was peddling his poems about the country at the low price of One Dollar per volume!

To those to whom a perverse fate has denied the pleasure of the acquaintance of Mr. Telford or his poems, a brief sketch of our new-crowned king of bards may be acceptable. For details as to our subject's antecedents we are indebted to the biographical sketch of the author "contributed by an admirer" to the volume now before us, and to an able poem entitled "A Poor Scholar; or, My own Difficulties," in which the "pote" (so Mr. Telford pronounces the word) outlines his own past life. We quote:

"Auld Scotia, no doubt, as my birth-place I claim,
In the parish of Eccles, in Leitholm by name;
In 1828, the first month and sixth day
When I gave the first squawk, so my mother did say."

We know little of the poet's after life until he reached the age of ten years; the exact dates at which he encountered the dental and other dangers peculiar to youth must be left for the researches of future biographers to discover. That he went to school we know; as often happens with men of genius, his inborn gifts were not observed; much less appreciated. "The teacher, he says, "called me a thick-headed loon." At ten, however, his "Admirer" tells us, the poet was obliged "to join his brother at work, digging drains in winter and working in a brick and tile yard in summer. But the severe labour William was forced to perform did not crush out his inspirations for mental improvement. He rose superior to his prosaic environments, and the words of Gray, applied to genius, extinguished in undevelopment, could not be applied to him:

Chill penury repressed their noble rage
And froze the genial current of the soul.

He triumphed over conditions which would have brought discouragement or plodding content with ignorance to a less aspiring soul." He had in him, indeed, that which would not down:

"Just then in my head I felt something begin,
Neither teacher nor learning could ever put in;
The young poetic feeling began to diffuse,
Or, as some people call it, the gift of the muse."

But his obstacles were many; his opportunities few. One resource he had—books! And when we read the list of those from which he sipped delight in his young days we cannot wonder at the rich humour which runs through all the poems of his maturer age. "In prose," says the Admirer, "the books to which he had access were such works as Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress'; Baxter's 'Saints' Rest'; 'Man's Fourfold Estate'; 'Josephus' History'; Harvey's 'Meditations'; 'The Afflicted Man's Companion'; and such works."

It is impossible to give in the brief compass of this review a fuller account of the poet's history. We would only add that he has long been troubled with an affection of the eyes, which for a time at least made him almost wholly blind. He came to Toronto for treatment, and his sight was restored. It is with warm acquiescence that we read his poetical epistle to his doctor, wherein he thanks him for the gift of a pair of spectacles; hopes they may enable him to resume writing, and adds:

"If they do, sir, I'll thank you, sir,
With all gratitude I've got;
It would be sad, sir, and too bad, sir,
For my muse to flow unwrote."

Leaving, now, the consideration of our poet's life-history and the progress of his mental and æsthetic development, let us turn to survey the works themselves. His productions are published in a large quarto volume of 156 pages, double-columned and closely printed; handsomely and appropriately bound in green. The subjects chosen are many and varied, covering a wide range of thought, and exhibiting in a marked manner the versatility of Mr. Telford's muse. From "A View of the Name of God on the Scenes around us" to "A View of the Destruction made by the Grasshoppers," is a far cry, yet the poet in dealing with both themes displays equal happiness of treatment and facility of poetic and rythmical expression. In fact we may state at the outset that no theme is too majestic; none too trifling for "Lyric Bill." His sympathy is wide; his eye far-seeing; his judgment impartial.

We regret that we are unable to convey to our readers an idea of the real value of these writings. Our advice to all lovers of true poetry is, Buy and read the book itself. We shall only attempt, in the remainder of this article, to cull a few of the choicest flowers from this truly luxuriant garden of poesy.

Many poets have endeavoured to convey in rime the charms of "Spring." Even so trite a subject does not appal Mr. Telford; and we must concede that his treatment of it is markedly original. The spring of which he writes followed a very long, hard winter:

"But stay, smiling Spring! O, don't fly with affright,
I know those poor pigs are a pitiful sight;
They are thin as a rail, and their weakness intense,
When they stand up to squeal they must lean on the fence."

But Mr. Telford's muse is not always gently pastoral. His spirit shows itself at times truly military. Patriotism is ingrained in his very nature. Witness his "Short Sketch of the Rebellion in the North-West," from which we quote a few specimen couplets:

"Brave volunteers, your honour you maintained,
Fought your first battle and the victory gained.
Our young Dominion is and ought to be
Proud of such true and valiant sons as thee!
Onward they march through water and tough mud,
They powder smelled, now thirst for rebels' blood;
In joke and mirth their glittering bayonets feel,
Hoping ere long to thrust them into Riel."

The following, further on, is quite Homeric:

"The pits are reached where crouching rebels kneel;
Quick through their bodies darts the glittering steel."

And this but caps the climax:

"'Twas nobly done, boys, on your arms now rest,
You crushed rebellion in our fair North-West,
You showed those half-breeds you still are and was
Able and ready to maintain our laws!"

In another poem his patriotism takes another turn. He evidently regards the marriage of Louise to Lorne as a personal affront to himself:

"Fourth daughter of England's pattern sire,
Fair child of that mother we love and admire,
Has that Highlander gained both your heart and your hand
And borne you off from your palace so grand?"

But for descriptive force and tragic interest "The Dummer Murder" is really sublime. We regret that we have space for only one stanza of this powerful "pome."

"O, what is man when all that's good gives way,
Worse than a wild beast prowling for its prey;
The little boy, perhaps a father's pride—
The monster cut his throat from side to side!"

We must sorrowfully omit reference to that exquisite piece, "The Poet's First Encounter with Potato Bugs" and to the classic "Lines on the Re-opening of A. P. Morgan's Hotel." We regret to find that even Mr. Telford is not free from the envious attacks of scoffing critics. He explains their hatred:

"Their reason is just why—
My lines all void of grammar is;
No mark of classic hammer is;
Illiterate—I must die!"

We have room only for one or two more specimens of Mr. Telford's writings. The first is from a poem, "The Unexpected Death of a Neighbour":

"In perfect health he left us here,
To Port Hope took his way
In hopes to reach another sphere—
The State of Iowa."

The other is from one called "Thoughts" on a similar subject:

"Ah, how mysterious are the ways of God,
Our friend had scarcely journeyed half his road,
Some heavenly whisper mortals cannot trace
Said stop at Selwyn—that's your dying place."

And now we must close. We have only to say that these "Poems" are at once the most pathetic and the most deliciously humorous collection that has ever graced the Sanctum table. We congratulate the author, his publisher, and the Canadian public; and we heartily welcome Mr. Telford's great work as a "distinct addition to Canadian literature."