

Literary Notes

THE LAST ROBIN.

THE publication of a volume of verse by Ethelwyn Wetherald is a pleasing event to all interested in Canadian letters. Miss Wetherald has a genuine lyric note which finds expression in songs, which, like the Irish poet's harp, have a wild sweetness all their own. In the prefatory note the author says: "Nearly one-half of the within poems appear in book form now for the first time; the rest are selected from previously published volumes."

The greater portion of this latest book is devoted to lyrics which are followed by a collection of twenty-nine sonnets. There is a lucid directness of expression in the former which finds its most valiant utterance in "My Orders," a poem which appeared in "Varsity" several years ago.

"My orders are to fight.
Then if I bleed, or fail,
Or strongly win, what matters it?
God only doth prevail.

"The servant craveth naught
Except to serve with might.
I was not told to win or lose,—
My orders are to fight."

The Canadian poet's love for the life of outdoors breathes in these brave songs. But Miss Wetherald is not content with mere sensuous enjoyment of the blue sky of spring or the acrid vigour of burning autumn glories. She finds in nature the strength and solace which only a strong nature can gather from mountains, streams or spreading elms, for Coleridge was right when he said:

"O Lady, we receive but what we give
And in our life alone doth Nature live."

The quatrain is a jewel four lines long which requires dainty craftsmanship. Mr. William Watson, of all poets of this generation, has succeeded in bringing the most delicate skill to this verse of the lapidary. Miss Wetherald gives us several fine-faceted specimens of this carefully-wrought form.

"He failed in all he strove to do;
Then, when his life was over,
Out of his bitter heart there grew
A lucky four-leaved clover."

The sonnet, that sweetness or subtlety packed in fourteen lines, is a form of poetry in which Miss Wetherald gives us some of her rarest work. "Tangled in Stars" has been selected by several critics as her most musical sonnet achievement. But "At Waking" is the one which you may find repeating itself most persistently with its haunting, wistful note of human regret:

"When I shall go to sleep and wake again
At dawning in another world than this,
What will atone to me for all I miss?
The light melodious footsteps of the rain,
The press of leaves against my window-pane,
The sunset wistfulness and morning bliss,
The moon's enchantment, and the twilight kiss
Of winds that wander with me through the lane.

Will not my soul remember evermore
The earthly winter's hunger for the spring,
The wet sweet cheek of April, and the rush
Of roses through the summer's open door;
The feelings that the scented woodlands bring
At evening with the singing of the thrush?"

"The Last Robin" is a volume containing much that is true poetry, the melodious utterance of a gifted nature which finds the Forest of Arden, even in the crude Canada which is in so great a hurry to build railways, work mines and become very, very rich. These lyrics and sonnets are such as will be read again by the light of a red winter fire or the lingering gleam of a June twilight. They may even go with you on an August holiday and be in harmony with the ripples of a northern lake. And what better fate could poet desire?
Toronto: William Briggs.

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CHRISTMAS CANADIAN MAGAZINE.

THE year 1907 will hardly be celebrated in the literary history of the country. The number of books is large, but none of them stand out as striking literary achievements. Even the "Canadian Magazine" has published little that is striking, though much that has been entertaining. The Christmas number of that periodical is, however, quite literary in tone and contains contributions which reflect the literary life of this new people. The place of honour is assigned to Sir James Le Moine, the veteran French-Canadian author. Sir James writes better in French than in English, but it is through his writings that Canada has become familiar with the folk-lore and local history of the province in which he has lived since February 25th, 1825. Sir Gilbert Parker is represented by a short story, Wilfred Campbell by a poem, and Louis Frechette by an inadequate bit of folk-lore. The gem of the issue is a play by Charles Gordon Rogers, a writer with much art but a slightly earthy imagination. This is one of his best conceptions. Our good old friend, Judge Savary of Annapolis, tells of Col. Fanning again in the scholarly way which is characteristic of the Sage of Annapolis Royal. Dr. Colquhoun has an admirable review of Justin Smith's book on the campaign against Canada, done in that fresh, crisp, good-natured style which makes Dr. Colquhoun's articles seem all too brief. Mr. Acland's "Current Events," and Mr. MacTavish's "The Front Window" have that pleasant tone which is necessary for those who conduct regular departments in a magazine. And in closing this brief notice, one is reminded that the "Canadian Magazine" is now in its thirtieth volume. Mr. Best, the publisher, who has guided its destiny from the beginning, is to be congratulated on its steady and continued progress.

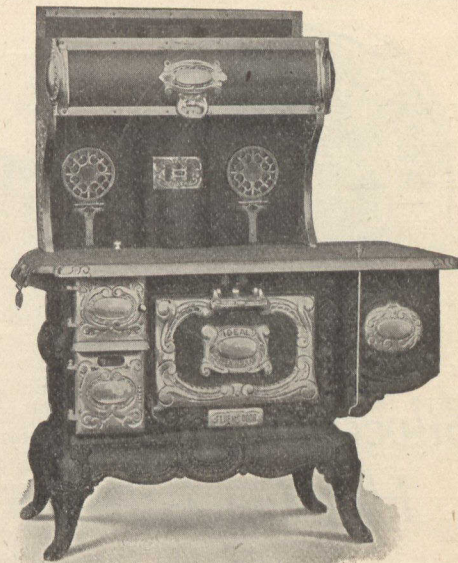
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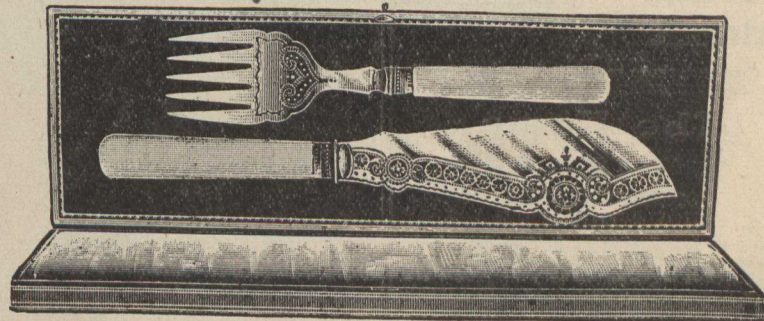


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