

## PREFACE.

**I**N an essay entitled "The Martial Verse of Canadian Poetesses" (*The Canadian Magazine*, April, 1913) I remarked a unique phenomenon in the literary history of Canada. To Canadian poetesses, not to Canadian poets, belongs the distinction of having written inspirational and commemorative martial verse of such superior quality as to win the admiration and express commendation of authoritative English and American critics and poets. I observe now that literary history in Canada is repeating this phenomenon.

The first, and still the most engaging, volume (booklet) of poems occasioned by the current war and written by a Canadian, is "Grey Knitting and Other Poems" (Toronto, 1914) by Katherine Hale (Mrs. J. W. Garvin), a versatile woman-of-letters, gifted poetess, and incisive critic of the fine arts. Authoritative English and American critics have given the poems in "Grey Knitting" high praise. They are, however, surpassed in vision, beauty and nobility by this author's single-poem volume now in press—"The White Comrade"—a long poem dealing mystically with Christ and the current war and remarkable for fine descriptive passages. Poets and critics who have read the MS. or sheets anticipate that, on publication, "The White Comrade" will be pronounced to be the finest and noblest poem by an English-speaking poet or poetess on a theme suggested by the world-war.

Dr. Thomas O'Hagan's "Songs of Heroic Days" (Toronto, 1916) is the second volume of verse on themes suggested by the war and written by a Canadian. The poems, however, are really popular *jeux d'esprit*, and necessarily lack the spiritual beauty or dignity, the originality of conception and the pure emotional appeal, as well as the fine artistry, of Katherine Hale's tender, moving and noble poetry in her "Grey Knitting" and "The White Comrade." Two other volumes of Canadian verse, more or less directly or indirectly connected with the current war may be noted—"Hearts of Gold" (Toronto, 1915, being reprints of a series of Prize Poems on persons and incidents notable in Canadian history, published in *The Globe*, Toronto, and compiled and edited by Mrs. Jean Blewett; and "A Band of Purple" (Toronto, 1915, being a collection of martial verse, very unequal, if not indifferent, in quality, compiled by Mrs. Lillie Brooks).

On the other hand, genuinely original and finely wrought single poems—quite worthy to stand beside the best work of English and American poets who have written verse inspired by the current war—have been composed by Canadian poets. English and American critics have signalized as authentic poetry Rev. Dr. J. B. Dollard's compellingly beautiful sonnet to the memory of Rupert Brooke, Lieut. Arthur S. Bourinot's fine sonnet on the same theme, and Lieut. Lloyd Roberts's strikingly original and impressive "call to arms" verses, "Come Quietly, England" and his equally original and impressive anti-pacifist verses, "I Must." Fine and moving is Duncan Campbell Scott's noble sonnet, "To A Canadian Lad Killed in the War." Gripping as inspirational martial verse is Douglas Durkin's spirited poem, "The Fighting Men of Canada." Also worth noting, especially after the sadly bathetic performance of the Poet Laureate to memorialize the death of Kitchener, are S. Morgan-Powell's unrhymed iambics "Kitchener's Work," and T. A. Browne's magniloquent, but unfortunately entitled, threnody "Kismet." There are other respectable single martial poems by Canadians. But considering the work of Katherine Hale, Duncan Campbell Scott, Dr. Dollard, Lieut. Lloyd Roberts, Lieut. Arthur S. Bourinot, Douglas Durkin, S. Morgan-Powell and T. A. Browne as representing the qualitative acme of original verse that has been inspired by the current war and that justly can be regarded as authentic poetry, we may truthfully say that the output in this *genre* by Canadians, though sparse, is worthy to be commended, and even signalized, in any general critical review of the martial verse occasioned by the current war.