

with scores of poets and poetesses. But the Homeric savagery of the poem is wholly original and quite unapproached by other modern writers. The strange cry of exultation which rings through all the cruel story could not come from the pen of a poet of white blood. When the white writer of to-day tries to be savage there is ever a strange note of affectation in his attempts, no matter how great his qualities of description may be. The incident which the poem narrates is a true one; the walk upon the coals was a punishment meted out to a great-uncle of Miss Johnson during an Indian war. The poem contains nearly sixty ten-syllable lines and was written in less than forty minutes: a fact which to the reader who has ever written verse may seem incredible, but it is true nevertheless. And it might also be added that but one word in the whole poem was afterwards altered: that the verses do not contain a single clumsy or crude expression is known to most Canadian readers.

There is uncivilized, primitive poetry about "As Redmen Die" that can only elsewhere be found in the Bible, in the Homeric poems, or in the folk-lore ballads of pristine times. It has been customary to refer to such productions as "the lusty product of the youth of mankind; the song and story that come when life is unjaded, faith unsophisticated, and human nature still in voice with universal Pan." These qualities are, in a certain degree, reflected in all Miss Johnson's poems, and especially in her Indian ones; they are regulated by the circumstances that the impulse of expression comes to a race which, instead of being in its youth, is dying out; that our civilization brings a power of expression that is almost wholly subjective, and that Miss Johnson is a woman. Instead of an epic spirit or a lasty faculty of song she has tenderness and delicacy; but she has also a fresh unjaded and primitive freedom—a joyous feel-

ing for nature—and all its wealth and richness of color are reflected in her poetry.

In one of her finest poems, "Shadow River," which possesses a wonderful lyric quality, with grace and delicacy of description, are two stanzas in which she strikes a modern note and says:

"Mine is the undertone;
The beauty, strength and power of the
land
Will never stir or bend at my command;
But all the shade
Is marred or made
If I but dip my paddle blade,
And it is mine alone.

"O! pathless world of seeming!
O! pathless life of mine whose deep ideal
Is more my own than ever was the real;
For others Fame
And love's red flame,
And yellow gold—I only claim
The shadows and the dreaming."

This poem is a wonderful contrast to many of Miss Johnson's other poems, but it illustrates the range of her song. Her muse is not at all a dreamy one in the general sense, but the mood is one that comes to all poets, to everybody, one might almost say. In such a mood Shakespeare wrote:

"We are such stuff as dreams are
made of,
And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

But though this dreaminess has given the world some of its most beautiful poetry, the poets who have claimed "the dreaming" have ever been those whose muse has been the most active; and these restful verses just quoted are indirect proof of the real fire of their author's genius.

As the singer of the joys of canoeing, the sport which was given to the white man by her own red race, Miss Johnson has won the affections of a large portion of young Canada. Her muse and personality peculiarly fit her for such a task, and her canoe songs breathe the freedom and unspoken joy of generations who have loved

"The boat's unsteady tremor as it braves
The wild and snarling waves."