

ly artistic purpose of poetry is to excite pleasant feeling; its method is not to imitate nature but the idea existing in the mind, to call up images—not the particular image of the poet's mind, but general images in the mind of the reader, such as that of a brook, a waterfall, or the face of a beautiful woman. This the poet does by suggestion, by naming the most striking element of the image desired, by the addition of apt metaphor, striking epithet, or by any one of a hundred well-known means. Such description, as it can scarcely stand alone, must attend on a theme of human interest, whether of action or reflection.

Little need be said of the means of the art of poetry. The main theme must be human life. Poetical form, as well as the choice of words and the use of figures, may be left to each writer's judgment. The unerring test will always be the effect produced upon readers of refined feeling.

Tried by these tests, Canadian poetry of the day fails. Campbell, Carman, Lampman and Roberts can hardly be said by the most generous to have written anything of lasting merit. The reader who can twice strain his imagination to the contemplation of their painfully wrought miniatures would indeed be a curiosity. They are not without virtues, and it may be fairly said that they are all men of great talent. They have mastered the mechanics of versification. They have music and a flowing rhythm. They have great elevation of diction, and their patriotic zeal well befits the honourable enterprise in which they are engaged. Action they scarcely attempt, unless it be action to strut before impossible landscapes. Their works are singularly barren of ideas of universal human interest, although there is a constant recurrence to Wordsworth's idea of kind mother earth.

"Songs of the Common Day" is the title of Mr Roberts' latest work, published in 1893. It contains about

forty sonnets and a similar number of what he terms poems, and closes with "Ave; An Ode for the Centenary of Shelley's Birth." A few titles of these verses show fairly the method and content of Mr Roberts' work. The Furrow, The Sower, The Cow Pasture, Frogs, The Cicada in the Firs, The Night Sky, Rain, Mist, Moonlight, and The Night Hawk, do not suggest either ideas or action. One or two feeble attempts at dramatic interest are made in "The Tide on Tantramar," and "A Christmas Eve Courtin'," the latter in dialect, and after the style of Carleton. But the whole is overwhelmed by description, not the suggestion of general images nor literary impressionism but description so minute that a painter, without reflection, might well repeat any scene upon his canvas in every detail of form colour. "The Sower" may be given in full as a fair sample of his work.

A brown, sad-coloured hillside, where the soil,
Fresh from the frequent harrow, deep and fine,
Lies bare; no break in the remote skyline,
Save where a flock of pigeons streams aloft,
Startled from feed in some low-lying croft,
Or far-off spires with yellow of sunset shine;
And there the Sower, unwittingly divine,
Exerts the silent forethought of his toil.

Alone he treads the glebe, his measured stride
Dumb in the yielding soil; and, though small
joy
Dwell in his heavy face, as spreads the
blind,
Pale grain from his dispensing palm aside,
This plodding churl grows great in his em-
ploy;
God-like, he makes provision for mankind.

As description, this is well done. The language is direct, the metaphors natural. The climax of reflection is, however, extremely tame. While one or two expressions are effective to represent the object which the poet had in mind, there is little to appeal to the reader's emotion. Mr. Roberts inverts the relation of poet and reader. The poet should awaken general images in the reader's mind, not force upon him the poet's own particular images. The particular scene here portrayed, may