

Miss Pauline Johnson's Poems.*

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WE sincerely congratulate the gifted authoress of these charming verses on the publication of her long expected volume which comes into our hands with every recommendation of hand-made paper, admirable printing, pretty and appropriate binding, but, above all, with literary contents not unworthy of the care with which they are thus given to the public.

We think Miss Johnson has been well advised in exercising a very considerable amount of self-repression in giving us this volume. She must have very many poems—many, probably, which have already seen the light—besides those which are here printed. We think she has done wisely in giving those now before us, for they are all of them of a very high order. We have read them all—some of them more than once—and we have not found a bad or indifferent poem in the collection.

Roughly speaking, these poems may be divided into three classes, the first dealing with Indian life, customs, history; the second with nature; the third with human nature. Probably most readers will turn to the Indian poems first and will linger over them the longest, and they will probably be right. Perhaps they may also find the poems dealing with nature the least impressive; but they will probably, in the long run, be struck with astonishment that a writer who possesses the power of passionate expression displayed in some of the earlier poems should be so perfectly and calmly at home among flowers and trees and streams and birds. The poems which we have classed as dealing more particularly with human nature are of a very high order indeed.

The first poem, *Ojistoh*, is evidently a favourite with Miss Johnson, and it will be so with all her readers. She has often recited it in public, notably at the recent meeting of the Royal Society at Ottawa, with immense power and with wonderful success, drawing enthusiastic applause from a crowded meeting, composed of all classes of the community, from the Governor-General to the children of the public schools. It was with some anxiety that we turned to this poem, to read it in cold blood, and it is high praise to say that we were not disappointed. It is admirable, true, picturesque, passionate.

The next poem, "*As Redmen Die*," is full of the spirit of the noble savage who prefers death to ignoble captivity. "*The Pilot of the Plains*" is a story of an Indian iraiden betrothed to a white lover, who failed to return at the expected time. The sad story is sweetly told. It is not quite the same metre as "*Hiawatha*," although it reminds us of it; and we think Miss Johnson will hardly complain of this remark, since we intend no suggestion of imitation, and have always thought *Hiawatha* one of Longfellow's most beautiful poems.

Passing over two excellent pieces we light upon a very charming story of a powerful chief, who loved the daughter of a hostile tribe, and for her sake abandoned his purpose of massacre. *Dawendine* is her name, and the poem ends with these three stanzas:

"*Dawendine, Child of Dawning, hateful are thy kin to me;
Red my fingers with their heart blood, but my heart is red for thee:
Dawendine, Child of Dawning, wilt thou fail or follow me?"*
And her kinsmen still are waiting her returning from the night,
Waiting, waiting for her coming with her belt of wampum white:
But forgetting all, she follows where he leads through day or night.
There's a spirit on the river, there's a ghost upon the shore,
And they sing of love and loving through the starlight evermore
As they steal amid the silence and the shadows of the shore.

"*Wolverine*" brings out the finer side of the Indian character and is a very pathetic story. We ought to mention the remarkable power of lucid, picturesque, forcible expression possessed by Miss Johnson. No one can fail to be struck with the musical rhythm of her lines, and she has great power of rhyming—no slight accomplishment, and one which we venture to think constitutes a very considerable ornament to English poetry. A good example of charming word painting—word music rather—is "*The Song my Paddle Sings*."

We shall probably return to this volume again, as we are now giving but our first thoughts and impressions. We have spoken of the poems on human nature. Here is one of convenient shortness which we give as an example, and which we admire very much.

So near at hand (our eyes o'er looked its nearness
In search of distant things)
A dear dream lay—perchance to grow in dearness,
Had we but felt its wings
Astir. The air our very breathing fanned,
It was so near at hand.

One, many days ago, we almost held it,
The love we so desired;
But our shut eyes saw not, and fate dispelled it
Before our pulses fired
To flame, and errant fortune bade us stand
Hand almost touching hand.

I sometimes think had we two been discerning,
The by-path hid away
From others' eyes had then revealed its turning
To us, nor led astray
Our footsteps, guiding us into love's land,
That lay so near at hand.

So near at hand, dear heart, could we have known it!
Throughout those dreamy hours,
Had either loved, or loving had we shown it,
Response had sure been ours,
We did not know that heart could heart command,
And love so near at hand.

What then availed the red wine's subtle glisten?
We passed it blindly by,
And now what profit that we wait and listen
Each for the other's heart beat? Ah! the cry
Of love o'erlooked still lingers, you and I
Sought heaven afar, we did not understand
'Twas once so near at hand.

* * *
Wolfe.*

JAMES WOLFE was born in the little town of Westerham, in Kent, England, in 1727, and he died on the plains of Abraham, behind the city of Quebec, in 1759, so that, when his heroic soul took flight, he was only thirty-two years old. His father and his uncle were soldiers, and so was his younger brother for the short period of his earthly life. Wolfe himself was a born soldier, and showed his capacity in every department of soldiering from the beginning to the end of his life. He was not only a man of undaunted courage, but he had all the instincts and intuitions of a strategist, and he was, moreover, a diligent student of the art of war, recognizing that English soldiers were generally lacking in this respect. To all, especially to all English-speaking readers, this admirably written memoir will be of deep interest, but especially to Canadians whose destinies have been forever influenced by the great victory of Wolfe.

Wolfe was only fifteen when he entered the army, and he was a captain at the age of seventeen. He was present at the battle of Dettingen, under the command of George II.—the last time that an English sovereign appeared on the field of battle, in the manner so graphically described by Carlyle; and he gives a very remarkable description of the battle, showing that he discerned the ability and the weakness of those in command. It was a surprising set of circumstances. "One hardly knows," says Mr. Bradley, "whether to wonder most at the condition of things which placed the responsibility of a regiment in the van of a great European battle in the hands of a boy of sixteen, or the matter of fact coolness and efficiency with which the gallant stripling performed his task. That he gave satisfaction is conclusively proved by his being regularly commissioned as adjutant immediately after the battle, and promoted to a lieutenancy."

Within three years of the battle of Dettingen Wolfe was again to serve under the Duke of Cumberland, in circumstances no less decisive for the future of the British Empire. Mr. Bradley treats "the bloody Duke" with more tenderness than has been common with historians. His brief sketch of the battle of Culloden, too, gives a very good notion of the fighting on that day of doom for the Jacobite party in Scotland and in Great Britain at large. Whether "Bonnie Prince Charlie" behaved with pusillanimity, or only with prudence and a regard to the interests of his followers, the writer does not decide. Perhaps our judgment must lean to the side of mercy when we remember the state of his troops and his commissariat before the battle.

Passing over the fiasco of Rochefort, we come to the time when Wolfe was sent forth upon what proved to be the great work of his life, in the transfer of Canada from France

* "*The White Wampum*." By E. Pauline Johnson. Price \$1.00
London: John Lane; Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co. 1895.

* "*Men of Action: Wolfe*." By A. G. Bradley. Price 2s. 6d.
London and New York: Macmillan. Toronto: Copp, Clark Co. 1895.