

never rise above self-seeking and party spirit, political and religious, into the *nation* which we hope Canada is predestined to become. With our racial differences and warring factions we can never be fused into one people without the love of country which it is one of the highest offices of poetry to foster. And the true poet will consider it no mean privilege to help to make the songs which most truly mould a nation's life by sinking deepest into the heart as no outward force can ever do. Those who make the songs of a nation must in time influence its laws.

AGNES M. MACHAR (FIDELIS).

Some persons there are who are perpetually deluding themselves with the idea that there is something magic about the literature of a country; that it is a mysterious thing and dependent upon some wonderful agencies and impulses which cannot be seen or defined. In my view this is quite a delusion. The literature of the country is the thought and essential outgrowth of the national life. The literature of a country becomes great and heroic when the people of the country become great and heroic. The need of Canadian literature, as, indeed, the need of Canadian politics, is comprised in one word—men. A whole nation is vivified and uplifted by the influence of one great mind, one which is broad and elevated, which has the capacity to inspire and impel. Canada has got quite a list of very promising and clever men in the literary field, especially in poetry. Whether the great voice which is to give the cue to the literary characteristics of the nation that is, or, at all events, is to be, it is too early to pronounce an opinion.

Halifax, N.S.

J. W. LONGLEY.

### NATURE'S COMFORTING.

O Soul, arise and come with me!  
God's world is very beautiful to-day.  
And then, thy dead are dead, they will not wake,  
Or kiss thee on the lips, though thou for aye  
Dwell by the tomb—dwell till thy face  
Has lost its rounded grace;  
And thy wet eyes have grown too dim to see  
The very ghosts that grin and mock at thee.

Throw off the crape about thy hair;  
Let the glad sunlight play upon thy brow;  
The past is past, the future vague and far;  
Only the birds sing and the flowers bloom now.  
Come! and take back thine olden faith  
In God. Forget the wraith  
Which haunts thee here—the hopes, he  
dreams, forsooth,

That clung about the gown of thy lost youth,  
And died with it. Ah! they were fair!  
And yet, my Soul I know could they arise  
From their long sleep and come to thee,  
Thine eyes would greet them with a sad surprise

That they were changed—behold  
The face, the form, of old!  
And still thy blood is calm; why mourn with tears  
Thy quiet pulse? The change is thine, not theirs.

The wild unrest, the eager pain  
Of passion comes to thee no more. And so,  
My Soul, we have grown greater, thou and I,  
And wiser;—happier? I do not know—  
Perhaps—But, let thy dead ones be!  
Arise, and come with me,  
Where we can watch the length'ning shadows glide  
Over the fields and up the mountain side;—  
Until the emerald foliage shows  
Like human life, half sunshine and half gloom.  
Aha! Thou smilest, is Jehovah's world  
Better than that dark, sorrow-curtained room

Where thou hast dwelt so long? How fair  
That black and scarlet butterfly looks, dear!  
And how the noisy crickets, as we pass,  
Shout their shrill love-call from the bending grass!

Soothed by the scented wind unto  
Half dreams, we start to hear the mournful plaint

That from yon elm the 'prisoned dryad pours  
In wildwood language, beautiful and quaint.  
For sympathy the very leaves  
Sigh too. "The morning breeze  
Swaying the branches!" cries a passer-by.  
But we, we understand, my soul and I.

All of her tender story. How  
Long centuries ago, in yonder grove,  
When Jove was king, from far Elysium  
Apollo came and wooed and called her love,  
Long before Christ was born. Ere we  
Had learned to bend the knee  
Unto one God—that unknown God, to whom  
The old Athenians prayed, before they knew  
His Godhood. See! the skies are one  
Vast sea of pearl; thro' tiny rifts we trace  
The blue beyond—e'en as a baby smiles  
Through half-closed lids into its mother's face.  
While that great dragon-fly, whose wings  
Gleam in the sunlight, brings  
Sweet promises to us—it crawled one time  
A loathsome thing, amid the river's shine.

And we are growing glad again;  
Not with the smiles of June, the rose is meet  
Only for youthful hearts. We choose instead  
The purple pansy and white marguerite;  
Feeling that God has grown more dear  
To us, has drawn more near,  
Than when we made our idols out of clay  
And kneeled by them to worship, not to pray.

VIVIEN.

### THE POETRY OF WILLIAM WATSON.

A little over a year ago the literary world was startled by the rumour that William Watson, a poet who was till that time almost unknown, was likely to have bestowed on him the laurel that had so lately graced the brows of Tennyson. Had the rumour been realized the laureate of the present hour would certainly have been immeasurably inferior to the great master; and none would have been more ready to admit this than Mr. Watson himself. But if we glance our eye over the Swinburnes, the Dobsons, the Langs, the Morrisons of to-day, and then examine Mr. Watson's works we will be compelled to admit that the humble young singer has in his poetry certain enduring qualities that are not met to the same extent in the work of most of his contemporaries. And while he lacks the fine finish, the flawless and sustained art of many of the moderns, his poems have perhaps more earnestness of purpose than is to be found in any other English poet that is attracting attention at present.

The words "humble young singer" have been used advisedly, for if we examine his work we find that a great deal of his genius lies in this very quality of humility, and in his reverence for the kings of English song, from Chaucer to Tennyson. He is a Wordsworthian, and his poem "Wordsworth's Grave" is a noble tribute to a poet who has perhaps been oftener sung and praised by his enthusiastic disciples than any other of our poets save Shakespeare. It was on this poem, too, that Mr. Watson's fame rested until the death of his friend Tennyson called forth the "Lachrymæ Musarum" that made him known to every lover of the Laureate's work. It is, perhaps, not a mark of the strongest genius to devote its best energies to lauding other men; but in an age when reverence for past things and sentiment are either dead or kept under, it is a grand thing to find a young man worth-

ily thankful to the men who have helped him to see and to sing. It is something, too, to be able to praise well two such poets, the one simplicity personified, the other the first artist of our English speech; the one living, breathing life and Nature, the other writing with his feelings ever kept under subjection to his art.

Nor are these the only two poets that he has praised. He shows the critical faculty to a very great degree; but this is not to be wondered at in an age when our poets are our critics, and when there is no poet who has browsed in the meadows of song but has taken an excursion into the fields of criticism. But his criticism is not of the professional critic kind. It is intuitive; such criticism as we find in Shelley's "A wonder of this earth, like one of Shakespeare's women." He is able to give us in one understanding phrase, in one sympathetic word, more insight than can be garnered from whole volumes of "Studies in Literature."

In Shelley, "the cloud-begotten," he sees "dazzling glow," "thunderous haze," or "flush of rose on peaks divine;" he sees the weakness, but he sees likewise "the glorious yearning" that makes Shelley more admirable than millions who ran the race of life successfully, and apparently grasped the prize at the end. He sees, too, Byron's "tempest anger, tempest mirth;" Coleridge's "wizard twilight;" Gray's "frugal note;" Goldsmith's "cadence soft as summer rain;" Milton's "keen translunar music;" and Shakespeare's "cloudless, boundless human view." His judgment, too, of Longfellow, that he was no puissant singer,

"No singer vast of voice: yet one who eave  
His native air the sweeter for his song,"  
is a judgment in which every student of verse must acquiesce. Of course the critic will say that there is nothing strikingly original in these criticisms. It is true that these points of view are held by our ablest minds, but they are here presented in a manner that shows them to have been discovered by sudden intuitive flashes of poetic light, and not by the groping method of the professional critic.

If Watson is a true critic of poetry he is that from the very fact that he is himself a true poet, a strong singer, and strong through his very power of self-criticism. In his "Prelude" he points out that his inspiration is fitful, not steady and sustained, that the "Muse capriciously" touches him to song, and then "leaves him to lament her flight." So, if we would find him at his best, we must study him in his lyrics and odes, or dwell on the passages of his longer poems where he is possessed by the lyrical Muse. His music, while an echo now of Wordsworth, now of Tennyson, now of Keats, and again of Shelley, at times is strikingly his own. After four or five centuries of rhyming on Autumn it is hard to say anything new on that subject, or to put what one has to say in a new manner; and yet the thought and workmanship of his "Autumn" are original and fine. "Wordsworth's Grave," too, while written in the old fashioned iambic pentameter quatrain of Gray's elegy, has a simple grandeur befitting the theme, and a sweep, ease, and plasticity not to be found in the work of the elder poet. In "Lachrymæ Musarum" we rise to a still higher plane. Here we find a master musician sitting at the instrument; at his touch it sends forth a deep note of mourning, and as he plays, the might of the singer, the sorrow of the nation, the unutterable feeling that the loss is irreparable, that the one who has been taken was the greatest