

of all the tests to be applied to anything calling itself by the name of art. If a poem or a painting, a sonata or a statue, if anything in the realm of art is not spontaneous, it is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. If it is not the outcome of real and intense internal feeling, craving expression and careless of everything but its own instinctive adherence to truth of matter and beauty of form—in a word inspired—it is not art. It is because the poet must sing, not because he is urged to sing, that he sings; and no amount of goading will bring songs out of those who have not the gift of song.

*Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi,*

says Horace:

"They learn in suffering, what they teach in song."

says Shelley, in unconscious iteration;

"Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse!
 young, gay,
Radiant, adorn'd outside, a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within,"

says Matthew Arnold, speaking in the same strain;

"By thine own tears thy song must tears
 beget,
O singer,"

repeats Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

And need we be surprised at this condition precedent of spontaneity, of inspiration? Art, even as exemplified in the wildest chivalric romance or in the most objective natural*description, is the expression of the deep, quiet thoughts of the artist "on God, on Nature, or on human life," and to go about to foster national art for the sake of national glory is exactly to go the right way about exterminating the quintessential attribute of all art.

For how shall a man feel while it is being din'd into his ears that he should feel? or think while there is a clamour for thought? or observe when a crowd obscures his view?

It is difficult to explain exactly why perhaps, but this expressed wish to see instituted a "national" literature always brings to my remembrance the opening sentence of Carlyle's essay on "Characteristics:" "The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick." To desire national traits seems to me to be little different from being cognizant of them: and, certainly, those so cognizant belong to the category of "the sick." To talk of national peculiarities is surely the crudest affectation—like a too precocious child parading silly mannerisms.

But there is another aspect in which this cry for Canadian Literature may be regarded. It may be regarded as a wish to foster, not so much the artistic instincts of the producer, as the artistic instincts of the consumer: that is, to increase the demand for the home product, with the implication that there is a home product worthy the demanding. Of the implication, nothing need be said here. Of the desire to foster the home product surely this is to be said: First, would the producers take such forced demand as a compliment? Second, would they prefer to unload in a limited home market, artificially bulled, rather than in the market of the reading world, where their commodities freely competed with all others? Literature is not a thing of this or that petty province, it is a thing of the world, independent of race or language. Besides, Canadians have again and again, and with success, competed in the market of the world. Not a few of our prose-writers have gained entrance into English magazines of high standing, into the *Contemporary Review*, the *Westminster Review*, *Temple Bar*, the *English Illustrated Magazine*, *Literary Opinion*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, and others