

The specimens of remarkable poetical ability we have now before us—in almost every instance produced in Canada—must be a source of great pride and self-gratulation to its people. Few there are of the pieces in this volume but may be expected to secure and maintain a permanent place in poetical literature. They possess so very slight a tinge of the crudity and roughness that might naturally have been expected from the present stage of advancement of the colony, that a stranger glancing through these pages would never imagine them to have been produced in a province of such comparatively recent growth. Comparisons are generally odious, but it may be pardonable in this case to declare our opinion that the selections here given are, as a rule, on a level with any of the many multifarious volumes of a similar aim, that the mother country has produced. We do not of course allude to isolated instances of those who have reached the very pinnacle of fame. Those great masters of poetry, the halo of whose genius rests not so much upon their country as upon the world—upon the age in which they lived; excepting these however, the vigor and originality displayed in this instalment of Canadian song, generally equals, and in some instances surpasses any of the similar volumes issued from the English press, and amply atones for the slight occasional absence of that high refinement and elaborate polish so strongly recommended by Horace in his famous epistle, as necessary to attain that highest degree of finished elegance, required in a perfect poem. The high excellence of the present volume is the more flattering to Canada, as the popular poetry of a people is generally acknowledged to be the truest index and the fairest exponent of national character and of their degree of progress in the great onward march of civilization. From the time that blind old Homer, in his stirring lays so faithfully portrayed the domestic habits as well as the more public deeds of his countrymen, even unto the present day, the poetry of a nation will be found, the quickest, and in general the most correct mode of arriving at that nation's inner life, and as regards its mental and moral advancement.

No small meed of praise is due to the gifted compiler of these selections. He has succeeded in a task that no one unless endowed with a strong natural aptitude and love for the subject need have attempted. The labor he must have had to go through must have been very considerable, and the fact of his materials having had to be gleaned from the productions of living writers, rendered it a work calling for a remarkable amount of delicacy and tact.

In his introductory essay, which forms a most fit and appropriate preface to the subject matter of the book—and indeed in his notes throughout, no one can accuse him of too great a partiality, in passing judgment on the poetical pieces he has deemed worthy of a place in his collection;—in some instances, we think he rather seems to underrate them. If we might be pardoned the suggestion, it might have been better if a number of selections already published by the different authors in a collected form, and easily accessible to the public had been omitted, and greater prominence given to some of those fugitive pieces, of unquestionable merit so frequently appearing in the Canadian press, and the authors of which may not yet have had

time or opportunity given them to display their powers in such a manner as to give them full justice. We would not have ventured on this remark, if it had not been mentioned in the preface as a special object of the book "to rescue from oblivion some of the floating pieces of Canadian authorship worthy of preservation in a more permanent form." Looking over the former numbers of this magazine for example, may be observed some very beautiful effusions from the pen of Mr. George Martin, that would have been well worthy of a place, alongside even the best poems in the present volume, and that are in our estimation decidedly superior to those under the same name in the selections. We cannot refrain from mentioning, that one in last month's number, called "The Change on the Ottawa," which for deepening feeling, and eloquent powers of description is unrivalled by anything of a similar style, we remember having read. We have also reason to regret that Mr. Dewart has not deemed fit to favor us with more frequent opportunity of admiring his own classic purity of style and elegance of diction. It may still take some considerable time, but those who have already laid there poetical contributions before the public in a collected form, may feel confident that the increasing literary culture and taste of the Canadian people, will at length gain them a fitting tribute of applause for the genius which inspired and the courage that animated them to such worthy pioneering in the pleasant though arduous paths of literary labor. To enter into any kind of criticism on the comparative merits of the different contributors to the work, is as foreign to our intention as it would be unjust to the individuals to attempt such a thing with the limited material at our command,—we can only say that nothing would give us greater pleasure than to become better acquainted with the works of many if not all of those who have so handsomely come forward to Mr. Dewart's assistance to aid him in laying such a stepping stone to the further progress of a national literature for Canada. In the literature of every country, poetry has in most part been the precursor of prose, and we have reason to hope that with a herald of such good taste, such true feeling, and so much patriotic fervor as the present volume displays, that this is the dawning of a brilliant future for Canada, when fresh and enthusiastic minds will no longer lie dormant and rely for intellectual nurture on what the old country may dole out to them, but will spring up and by united, though emulous effort, aspire to form a literature for themselves worthy of the land of which they will become the moving power, and capable of throwing a reflecting lustre on the noble country from which they originally sprung. We earnestly hope that the Canadian public will welcome this volume as no common boon granted to them as a people, but that each individual will receive it and treasure it as an earnest of the future triumphs of the bright era of which we hope it may prove the advent. In this matter the public have evidently a duty to perform, and if they are lethargic in responding to the call, they will retard a progress which without their aid, no mere individual effort can greatly facilitate. If these selections meet with the success they merit, either a considerably enlarged edition, or a second series cannot fail soon to be called for.