

the lakes" is justly entitled to a place beside Roberts, Heavysege and Mulvany. His latest production "The Mother" has been placed in the same category with Milton's most sublime hymn "To the Nativity," Hamlet's "Soliloquy upon Man," Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" and Shelley's "Skylark." This one little poem, says the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, which will probably share the common fate of current literature, in its precipitate march to the grave, touches a finer chord in the human heart, than was dreamt of in the poetry of Homer.

The literature of America like that of Canada is practically in its infancy, and in judging or comparing both, we must consider the capabilities of living writers, rather than the works of the dead. In this difficult task we are not safe in relying exclusively on the judgment of foreigners, for the most intelligent Europeans, often make the most astonishing errors concerning literary matter here. Victor Hugo, once declared "that Poe was the Prince of American literature, while at the same time he professed total ignorance of the name of Emerson, when the name was mentioned." Some English critics have raised Longfellow to the very highest pinnacle of fame, while others have dismissed him as the poet of the commonplace, an educated gentleman, who made fair translations, and neatly copied foreign models for the home public and less cultured class.

American stories, we are told by London Journals "are the best in the world, and that this or that new American novel, is sure of a prominent place in the language." Thirty years ago, Washington Irving was still living, honored and read by all, and by Englishmen placed at the head of American writers. Whiteman is regarded by one critic "as a Homer-Shakespeare with improvements, while another deems him an impostor in the garb of a poet." Would any American, who pretends to know anything about the literature of his country, take as his standard such conflicting opinions as these? Foolish patriotism, local pride, the influence of popular enthusiasm and prejudice may, and often do sway our judgments, but the best and most reliable criticism: of a writer's merits, is the verdict of his countrymen. Poe, although he will ever be regarded as one of the world's men of

genius cannot be called the prince of American literature, "for princes govern as well as dazzle." Where is his answer for life's great struggle, or his lofty conceptions of faith and morals? "Occasionally" says an American critic "as in Annabel Lee, he rises to half-religious heights,—but generally he gives us nothing but weird fancies and sweetly melodious music." Longfellow's place at the head of American poets is secure. "He is," says Cardinal Wiseman, "to the laboring classes of America, what Goethe is to the peasant of Germany." Bryant, although a poet of lofty thoughts, austere mind and commanding expression cannot claim first place, because he lacked that fire, that breadth of view, that wide sympathy with human nature which so characterize the writings of Longfellow. Emerson, despite his inconsistencies, obscurities of style, and real narrowness of mind, must be accorded a high rank among American writers. Dana, too, as author of that most philosophical tale in verse, "The Buccaneer," has proved himself to be possessed of more than ordinary poetical abilities. Whittier, the Quaker poet of New-England and fierce denouncer of anything Catholic and Southern, though he has written much bearing a truthful expression of American physical life, still has given us very little of an exalting or ennobling nature. Thus we see, that although in this first and most important department of literature, both Canada and United States have made considerable progress, during the last half-century, still, while we cannot fail to admire the unaffected simplicity and purity of Longfellow or Campbell, the highly finished pictures of woodland scenes of Bryant and Sangster, yet for that poetry of the passions and of the human heart, that poetry of the affections and desires, that poetry which reflects the spirit of the age, as did that of Shakespeare, Milton or Dryden, that poetry which while it softens the heart, instructs the mind, we may search in vain.

Of history I have already spoken. As Canadians, we cannot point with pride to a single work worthy of that title. We have Hannah's "History of Acadia," a small work on a small province; Watson's "Constitutional History of Canada," a work which was never finished; Jeffer's "History of the Dominion," a good text-book for junior