

INTRODUCTION.

THE chief incidents of Miss Crawford's life have been dwelt on so frequently in print that by this time the Canadian public are well acquainted with the arid facts in the career of Canada's first woman poet. Her birth in Dublin on the day before Christmas, 1850; the coming of the family to Canada in 1858, where they settled in the village of Paisley, on the Saugeen River, and where her father, a physician of wide reading and culture, waged an unsuccessful war with poverty; the deaths of successive members of a numerous family; the removal, when the twelve children had dwindled to three, to Lakefield, near the Kawartha Lakes, where for eight years the struggle with poverty was intensified; the death of the father and of the idolized younger sister, the disappointments that came in the almost total absence of recognition accorded to the poet's literary ventures, and her own death at the age of thirty-six—all this is an old, hard story sufficiently familiar.

It is a slight outline of seemingly one of the most unfortunate of superbly gifted lives; and yet we who realize that it is the greatest good fortune to be born courageous, and the rarest good fortune to be born a poet, must hesitate to believe that misfortune was the fate of Isabella Valancy Crawford. She was affluent in the possession of a high heart, an intrepid spirit, and that unfailing joy in the music and beauty of nature to which so many of us are mole blind and stone deaf.