

Literature.

Poems of John Imrie.

JOHN D. ROSS, IN NEW YORK HOME JOURNAL.

Few Canadian poets of today are more popular or better known throughout the great Dominion than is the subject of our present sketch, Mr. John Imrie, of Toronto, Ontario, and the reason of this is at once obvious. Merit will always command attention, and Mr. Imrie is a poet of a very high order of merit. His poems are the outpourings of a heart that is largely imbued with the sensitive and finer feelings of a poet. They are pure, intellectual, vigorous, patriotic and sincere, and in a great number of instances they contain similes and thoughts which are morally and poetically beautiful. His subjects are well chosen and such as he is capable of treating successfully; his sentiment is affectionate and loyal; his versification easy and correct; his style free and simple, his command of language ample for his purpose. Mr. Albert E. S. Smythe of Toronto certainly does not overestimate his abilities when he says:

Imrie, your lyrics pass the laws of kings,
Whose dread decrees but steeled the captive's heart:
Your home-taught lays a softer power impart,—
Love, joy and peace, the might that mercy brings:
And, though your muse lack flight of angel's wings,
To walk and talk with men is no mean art,
Strong in life's straits, secure against death's dart,
Attuned to truth, forerizing hallowed things.
Not of the mockers, nor of those who make
Love's sacrament a feasting, passion-spiced,
Not lucre-thralled, nor cankered with the ache
Of envy: free of aimed deed honor-priced,
Not of the world, but humbly for His sake,
Striving the nobler manhood after Christ.

Mr. Imrie is the author of two volumes of poetry, both of which have been well received by those parties interested, and therefore in a measure able to judge of such works. His latest volume is a handsome 8vo of 350 pages. It contains 206 poems, which are divided into groups as follows, "Patriotic Poems," "Poems of Love, Home and Friendship," "Miscellaneous Poems," "Sacred Compositions," and "Sonnets." It will readily be seen from this that Mr. Imrie is a voluminous writer of poetry, yet he is a man whose business engagements do not permit of his enjoying many leisure hours. The few hours however which he has occasionally spent at the divine shrine of poetry have been happy hours to him. His heart and soul is in poetry and poetical subjects, and being a poet himself by nature his own harp is seldom silent for any great length of time. Among the finest poems in his book is the following:

NIAGARA FALLS.

Oh, Niagara, as at thy brink I stand,
My soul is filled with wonder and delight,
To trace in thee that wonder-working Hand,
Whose hollow holds the seas in balance light.

Worthy art thou to be a nation's pride—
A patriot's boast—a world's unceasing wonder;
Like some bold monarch calling to thy side
Subjects from every clime in tones of thunder.

Deep on my soul thy grandeur is impress'd,
Thy awful majesty—thy mighty power—
The ceaseless tumult and thy great unrest,
Like nations' warring in dread conflict's hour.

Rainbows of glory sparkle round thy shine,
Cresting thy waters with effulgence bright;
And in thy foaming currents intertwine
Rare coruscations of commingled light!

Like roar of battle, or like thunder's call,
Thy deep-toned echoes roll with solemn sound;
Like pillar'd clouds thy vapours rise, and fall
Like sparkling pearls upon the thirsty ground!

Rush on! rush on! in thy unchecked career,
With avalanche power thy course pursue;
While rending rocks quake as with mortal fear,
And stand in awe to let thy torrents through!

Naught but the hand of God could stay thy course,
Or drive thee back to Erie's peaceful keep;
Then onward press with thy gigantic force,
Till in Ontario's bosom lulled to sleep!

Emblem of Freedom! who would dare essay
To bar thy noisy progress to the sea?
Then onward press! while bordering nations pray
For strength and wisdom to be great and free!

Following this poem is one entitled "The Links that Bind Us." This is a very beautiful and touching composition and contains sentiments which at once appeal to the innermost feelings of all classes and conditions of people. It is a warm and affectionate effusion and will do much to perpetuate the memory of the gifted author:

THE LINKS THAT BIND US.

Oh! the fond links that bind us to this earth,
Strong as bands of iron—yet fine as gold;
Partings and tears oft mingle with our mirth—
If loving much love never can grow cold!

Ah! were it not for partings new and then,
Love of home and friends were never tested—
Hardship and trial make the noblest men:
Present pain is future joy invested!

The patriot's wistful eyes are dimmed with tears
When parting from his much-loved native soil,
His heart doth throb with many doubts and fears,
Yet Hope points forward though his soul recoil!

But when the weary years have come and gone,
And o'er the sea he homeward ploughs his way,
He finds his former doubts and fears have flown—
Midnight with him hath changed to dawn of day!

A mother parts with one—her only son;
Each shows but half the anguish that they feel—
The voyage finished, or the battle won,
What depth of love the meeting doth reveal!

methinks such joy is ours when God, at last,
Shall find us gather'd 'neath Heaven's azure dome;
Our journeys, tears, and partings of the past
Will be as naught if we but reach our home!

Next we have a delightful little lyrical piece entitled "The Sweetest Word on Earth is Home," which has been set to appropriate music by Professor J. F. Johnstone, of Toronto, and in this form has attained an extensive scale. The subject, we need hardly remind our readers, is a favorite one with poets, and it is therefore all the more to Mr. Imrie's credit that he has been able to present us with a poem which

compares favorably with other authors' compositions on the same subject.

THE SWEETEST WORD ON EARTH IS HOME.

The sweetest word on earth is home,
To loving hearts most dear;
Where'er our footsteps seek to roam,
Home thoughts are ever near.
The memories sweet of life's spring-day
Keep fresh and green forever,
Like fragrant flowers they scent the way
Adown life's winding river.

CHORUS—The dearest spot beneath the skies
Is that we call "our home!"
'Tis there we look with longing eyes
Though o'er the earth we roam.

Our homes may be where mountains rise
Like dark green clouds to Heaven;
Or where the valley-lily lies
Our humble lot be given;
Or on an island of the sea
Oft by the tempest prest:
No matter where our homes may be,
To each that home is blest.

CHO.—"The dearest spot, etc."

The strongest love within man's breast
Is love of life and home;
Like fledglings hovering round their nest
Our thoughts encircle home;
Our years may reach three-score and ten,
And full of changes be,
Yet scenes of homes will haunt us then
When life was pure and free.

CHO.—"The dearest spot, etc."

Where love hath cast her golden spell
And kindest deeds are done,
Where loving hearts unite to dwell,
'Tis heaven on earth begun;
Then cherish home with jealous care
And let not strife prevail;
Thus for our "heavenly home" prepare,
Secure within the veil.

CHO.—"The dearest spot, etc."

Mr. Imrie is a native of Glasgow, Scotland, having been born there some forty-five years ago. It is therefore not to be wondered at that many of his pieces are in the Scottish dialect. Indeed, as far as we can judge his best pieces are those in which he expresses his thoughts and feelings in the language of Burns and Scott, his own sweet mother tongue. His compositions in this respect are on a wide variety of subjects. We have "Bruce and Ban nockburn," "The Dying Scot Abroad," "The Hielan' Fling," "My Heart is Scotland's Yet," "Scotch Dainties," "Scotty," "The Thistle," "A Bunch o' Heather," "A Scotch Surprise Party," "Hame yet no at Hame," "My Mither's Grave," and various others, all more or less interesting and all showing the handmark of a true poet. We quote the last named piece as a fair specimen of his Scottish muse:

MY MITHER'S GRAVE.

I stan' beside the cauld head-stane,
An' wat it wi' my tears;
An' whisper, "Mither, here's your wean
You hae na' seen for years!"
When last I saw your dear, sweet face,
An' heard your kindly tone,
I little thought that this dread place
So soon would claim its own.

I plann'd to tak' you ower the sea
To comfort and to ease,
Whaur you could end your days wi' me,
An' dae maist as you please;
But, ah! the Lord had ither plans,
An' sent for you Himsel';
His ways are no' aye like to man's,
Yet does He a' things well!

But, though you cannot come to me,
I yet shall gang to you,
When death shall set my spirit free
I'll mount the starry blue,
Where grief an' partings are no more
Nor Death, nor any pain,
You'll welcome me on Canaan's shore,
We'll never part again!