

Critics learned in the metrical construction of the Sonnet tell us that Milton's poems in that stanza are always correct, and—as we might expect from so learned a student of the Italian language and literature—in strict obedience to the laws prescribed by the example of the great Italian masters; but Wordsworth's so-called Sonnets are said not to fulfil any of the conditions of that mode of versification, except in being confined to fourteen lines, which if not “in-formed” by the laws that should govern them, can no more make a Sonnet than an epic. His long poems divided into stanzas, entitled “Sonnets,” have been especially condemned as barbarous, but he has had many followers in this poetical heresy. Lowell adopted it in the series of poems he wrote after reading the “Sonnets in Defence of Capital Punishment,” mourning that

———“Saddest sight to see,
An old man faithless in humanity;”

and Mrs. Browning in her “Sonnets from the Portuguese,” into which she poured the deepest feeling of her “beautiful soul.”

The Sonnet has not been neglected by our Canadian poets, and many fine lines enclosed within its narrow zone might be selected from the writings of Mr. Heavyside, Mr. Charles Sangster, and others. But there is a Canadian poet less widely known whose Sonnets—never marred by extravagant imagery or ambitious faults of taste—have a sweet, harmonious music and a pensive charm, appealing to all true poetic sympathy. We mean Mr. Spencer, of St. John, New Brunswick. His business affairs may not have allowed him leisure to prepare his poems for publication in a collected form, or, more likely, the contemptuous neglect which Canadians in general show to Canadian literature may have prevented him from making such an appeal to the public; and those who desire to become acquainted with his poetry must search for it through the pages of the MARITIME MONTHLY and other periodicals. That we may do our part in making his genius better known, we will present our readers with three of his Sonnets, which we have selected from many others, almost all of equal merit.

L

Watched by the stars, the sleeping Mayflower lies
On craggy mountain slope, in bushy dell,
Beneath the red and yellow leaves that fell
Ere Autumn yielded to bleak Winter's reign;
But when at Spring's approach the Winter flies,
Our Mayflower wakes, and buds, and blows again.
Queen of the forest; flower of flowers most sweet;
Delight and wonder of a thousand eyes—
Thou dost recall a day that flew too fleet—
A hope that perished in a sea of sighs.
We all have hoped for that which might not be;
But thou, sweet flower, forbidst that we despair;
After the Winter, Spring doth welcome thee,
And ever hoping, we may conquer care.