

## THREE SONNETS.

## I.—THE MAIDEN.

THE melody of birds is in her voice,  
The lake is not more crystal than her eyes,  
In whose brown depths her soul still sleeping lies.  
With her soft curls the passionate zephyr toys  
And whispers in her ears of coming joys.  
Upon her breast red rosebuds fall and rise,  
Kissing her snowy throat, and lover-wise  
Breathing forth sweetness till the fragrance cloy.

Sometimes she thinks of love; but, oftener yet,  
Wooing but wearies her, and love's hot phrase  
Repels and frightens her. Then, like the sun  
At misty dawn, amid the fear and fret,  
There rises in her heart, at last, some one,  
And all but love is banished by his rays.

## II.—THE WIFE.

There stands a cottage by a river side,  
With rustic benches, sloping eaves beneath,  
Amid a scene of mountain, stream, and heath.  
A dainty garden, watered by the tide  
On whose calm breast the queenly lilies ride,  
Is bright with many a purple pansy wreath,  
While here and there forbidden lion's teeth  
Uprear their golden crowns with stubborn pride.

See! there she leans upon the little gate,  
Unchanged, save that her curls, once flowing free,  
Are closely coiled upon her shapely head,  
And that her eyes look forth more thoughtfully.  
Hark to her sigh! "Why tarries he so late?"  
But mark her smile! She hears his well-known tread.

## III.—THE MOTHER.

Beneath the eaves there is another chair,  
And a bruised lily lies upon the walk,  
With the bright drops still clinging to its stalk.  
Whose careless hand has dropped its treasure there?  
And whose small form does that frail settee bear?  
Whose is that wooden shepherdess and flock,  
That noble coach with steeds that never balk?  
And why the gate that tops the cottage stair?

Ah! he has now a rival for her love,  
A chubby-cheeked, soft-fisted Don Juan,  
Who rules with iron hand in velvet glove  
Mother and sire as only baby can.  
See! there they romp, the mother and her boy,  
He on her shoulders perched and wild with joy.

Montreal.

ARTHUR WEIR.

## SAUNTERINGS.

THE publication of a Canadian work of poetry or fiction, or any of the lighter arts of literature, by a Canadian firm, among Canadians, is apt to be received with peculiar demonstrations. Their facial form is that of an elongation of the countenance, a pursing of the lips, a lifting of the eyebrows. This is usually accompanied by the little significant movement of the shoulders which we have borrowed from our French-Canadian relations-in-law expressly for use in this regard. We pick up the unfortunate volume from the bookseller's counter to which its too trustful author has confided it, and we turn its leaves in a manner we reserve for Canadian publications—a manner that expresses curiosity rather than a desire to know, and yet one that is somehow indicative of a foregone conclusion. Our other affairs are of so overwhelmingly important a character that our daily journals have no space for book reviews except at so much per agate line; and have too much to do in "encouraging" the industries to pay much attention to the arts. Commercial, agricultural, and sporting editors abound, but the literary editor is an unknown quantity, to be represented by *x*, who might multiply himself by himself even more frequently than that, as a general thing, without producing any appreciable result. Conversationally we carefully follow the example set us by the newspapers, and ignore the native-born person who has had the audacity to make a votive offering to the literary divinities, and the temerity to print it. If by any chance we refer to him or to his production it is in terms that suggest the dreariness of the void he has attempted to fill, and the futility of his attempt at filling it. As a general thing, however, we relegate them to the list of illustrations which will go to support our position at the next meeting of the Debating Club when Canadian letters form the subject of

discussion. There are a great many debating clubs in Canada. It seems the favourite form of our mental activity. They are usually established to promote the humanities among us; and the growth of Canadian literature is a subject much preferred by the members, on account of its pathetic and facetious opportunities, these making an oratorical combination which is known to be irresistible. The conclusion is usually, I believe, that, owing to the obscure operation of some natural law, it is not indigenous to our country—that Canada, like the Congo State and other districts known to us chiefly through the pen of the explorer, must contribute to literature objectively.

It will not be the business of this paper to discover the reason of these extraordinary manifestations, and to set it up for the edification of all present and future debating societies. We will take it for granted that there must be a reason, that such a very distinct and widespread animus against Canadian literary efforts could hardly have taken possession of the compatriot breast without more or less adequate cause. The instinct that so readily guides our hands and eyes to the literary products of the country to the south of us must have sprung from conditions which it is possible to understand. But in view of the fact that such an instinct does control our book-buying operations and our literary appreciation to so great a degree, it is a little surprising that the authors of "An Algonquin Maiden" did not adopt the *ruse* of introducing it to their fellow-countrymen under the disguise of the imprint of Boston or New York. Great caution would doubtless have been necessary to prevent the fact of its home manufacture from prematurely leaking out, a difficulty which would have been enhanced by the reputation in letters which one of the volume's sponsors already possesses. Still, one is convinced that it might have been done; and while it is quite impossible to predict the precise effect of such a course upon the success of the novel, there are few who will deny that its circulation would have been "boomed" to an extent that would have more than counteracted the import tax. It is saddening to think that such an admirable opportunity for duping our hard-headed, political, prohibitionistic, excellent public into commendation of a book of its own has been lost, to say nothing of the tremendous joke of exploding the thing afterwards. Unless "An Algonquin Maiden" changes the situation very materially, however, the opportunity will still exist; and for the benefit of any future Canadian novelist who may not wish his work condemned on that account, I may add that this suggestion is not copyrighted.

How futile is the attempt to make broad highways in any department of literature, and say dictatorially to them that travel in that direction "Walk therein"! True, a general literary movement unfailingly controls the masses, who trot after established leadership with the docility and unanimity of certain quadrupeds; yet the beaten track is as conspicuous for the paths that lead deviously away from it, as for anything else. This is especially true of fiction, the art of which, having for its shifting and variable basis, humanity, is bound to present itself in more diverse forms than any other—constantly to find new ones, constantly to recur to old ones. Yet in fiction, rather more than anywhere else, are autocrats to be found, who announce to their scribbling emulators the only proper and acceptable form of the modern novel, announce it imperiously, and note departures from it with wrath. Hardly more months than one could reckon on one's fingers, and hardly years enough to reckon at all, have gone by since we became familiar with the principles and practice of the realistic school, for instance. We know the true definition of realism to be the everlasting glorification of the commonplace. If the commonplace and the remarkable could, by some reversion of natural laws, change places, we should immediately, we are told, become enamoured of the latter and indifferent to the former to such an extent that societies would have to be formed with the object of bringing the everyday extraordinary under public notice, and exciting public interest in familiar phenomena. Life under these conditions would be one long deification of the commonplace. In the meantime it springs all about us, vital and fragrant, and flowering as some weeds, but neglected—except by the realists—because it is a weed. Gentlemen of the realistic school, one is disposed to consider you very right in so far as you go, but to believe you mistaken in your idea that you go the whole distance and can persuade the whole novel-writing fraternity to take the same path through the burdocks and the briars. Failing this, you evidently believe that you can put to the edge of the sword every wretched romancist who presumes to admire the exotic of the ideal, and to publish his admiration. This also is a mistake, for both of the authors of "An Algonquin Maiden" are alive, and, I believe, in reasonable health; and "An Algonquin Maiden" is a romance, a romance of the most uncompromising description, a romance that might have been written if the realistic school had never been heard of. One need go no further than the title to discover