

AN ALGONQUIN MAIDEN: A CRITIQUE.*

The reception by the press and public of "An Algonquin Maiden," must be highly gratifying to the authors. It may not yet be too late, after the first flush of triumph has given place to calm enjoyment, to attempt a critical estimate and determine its place in Canadian fiction.

The writer of historical romance must be granted considerable license in disposing his background, as best subserves the development of his plot, and the lights and shades of his principal characters. Hence, we do not look for more than substantial accuracy in character and surrounding. In the work now under review, while the historical setting is admirably chosen and well fitted to carry even a more ambitious plot, we do not find that attention to truth in detail, which we have a right to expect from Mr. Adam, especially as such fidelity would neither hamper the treatment nor weaken the central figures in his story. In one paragraph the French settlement at Oak Ridges is described as a Huguenot colony of loyalist *Emigres*. The writer confuses two distinct offshoots from old France. The Huguenots and *Emigres* are as widely different as can be imagined. Further, the founder of the settlement at Oak Ridges was a Count de Puisaye, not a de Berczy. It is true that a Pole by the name of Berczy did come to Upper Canada as a colonist, but he had nothing in common with the refugees.

Allan Dunlop, who is in love with Rose, the fair daughter of Commodore Macleod, is the rather common character in the novelist's portfolio—a noble young fellow, handsome, able, and sprung from a poor stock, who fights his way into the esteem of his social superiors. Allan, naturally, is a Reformer; Commodore Macleod, as naturally, is a Tory. Therefore, the troublous time before '37 is sketched in to provide the proper medium. The authors evidently thought that it is better to let sleeping dogs lie, for their references are uniformly conciliatory. The whole effect produced is a life-like description of how a provincial capital is divided by bitter political feeling.

The love of Sir Peregrine Maitland and Lady Sarah Lennox is a charming interlude, and though connected with the main course of the narrative but slightly, yet we would not wish it away.

Thus far the critic's task has been a comparatively easy one. But in approaching Wanda, we acknowledge some hesitation in delivering a dictum. The chapter "Indian Annals and Legends" caused some misgiving lest the ideal Indians of ordinary romance were introduced to moralize on race difference in fantastic dialect. But, on further reading, the chapter seemed even more objectionable, for, though the work of a poet and considered by itself of almost idyllic beauty, it must be held to weaken the conception of Wanda. Amid the easy play of dialogue and repartee that imparts a pleasant grace to the story, the deep tone of tragedy breaks in and hastens to its fateful ending. Wanda has the misfortune to inspire Edward with deep love by her imperious beauty, compelling in its wildness. Fascinated in her turn, she has a brief season of measureless content with her lover of a higher race. The sense of possession is enough satisfaction for the time, but soon Edward finds that a child of nature lacks the countless graces and delicacies imprinted by ages of culture. In his utmost hour of need the want of closer sympathy is felt, and all that is left for Wanda is to lose her grief with her life in the bosom of the tempest-vexed lake. The passing of Wanda is the highest note reached.

With this sketch of the workings of fate in our minds, it seems out of keeping to represent Wanda holding high discourse with an aged savage to this effect:—

"But surely they are not wholly bad," pleaded the girl, her kind heart refusing to accept the belief that even the lowest of humanity could be utterly worthless."

If Wanda was capable of such ethical and ethnological conceptions, then was she a fit companion for the most civilized European, and the after development of the story loses its force.

There are evident marks of haste in the dialogue, and occasionally a straining after point and effect. An example of this is to be found in chapter xvii. Here is the sequence of events.

*An Algonquin Maiden, a Romance of the early days of Upper Canada. By G. Mercer Adam, and A. Ethelwyn Wetherald. Montreal: John Lovell & Son; Toronto: Williamson & Co.

Edward's patience had been tried by Wanda; to compose himself he takes a nap in the woods. By a remarkable coincidence, Helene also feels the necessity of a nap, and takes it quite close to Edward without being aware of his presence. Edward awakes, sees her, stares at her, she oddly enough wakes too. He made some inane remark upon the beauty of the day. She, with much deliberation, says, yes. "Certainly she had the most irritating way in the world of pronouncing the words which usually sound sweetest from a woman's lips." All that is gained here is the slight touch that Helene could say ordinary things in an unpleasant way, and surely was not worth the ingenuity in bringing the parties together in so unconventional a manner.

There are other features worthy of note, and a few that demand the censure of the strict critic, but as the early promise of a rich fruitage in Canadian fiction, "An Algonquin Maiden" is fully worthy of all the kind things that have been said of it.

W. H. H.

TANTALUS.

I've loved her long, I've loved her well,
I've loved her more than tongue can tell;
My heart's wild beat I cannot quell—

I marry her to-morrow!

But, place of rapture, deep, profound,
"Thick darkness" doth my soul surround.

My voice gives forth a hollow sound;

I'm struck with direst sorrow.

And why this change? Doth this great joy,
Which once were bliss without alloy,
From mere *excess* of pleasure cloy?

The reason shortly tell. Oh,

This is the cause,—since you demand

Why thus my tearful eyes expand—

I'm but the village preacher, and

She weds another fellow!

J. D. S.

UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT.

Some six years ago I called the attention of my fellow-graduates to the question of agitating for a Parliamentary representative for the University, but my effort was met with a timid remonstrance, that to give "representation in the Legislature would involve the University in political wrangles,"—and that "from any closer connection with politics it would be sure to suffer."

Parliamentary representation of the Universities in the Old Country has long been recognized as a political right. Prior to 1603, this right was only of fitful enjoyment. Edward I. by whose exercise of the Royal Prerogative the people became entitled to a share in the powers and functions of Government, and whose Parliamentary writs of election were the first authentic documents which prescribed a general system of representation of the people in Parliament, issued in the 28th year of his reign, (A.D. 1300), writs of election to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, requiring them to elect and send to the Great Council of the Kingdom (*Commune Concilium*), as Parliament was then called—the former four or five, and the latter two or three of their '*most discreet and learned lawyers*,' (*de discretioribus et in jure scripto magis expertis*), (1) with full power to appear and consent to what should be ordained; or, as the Parliamentary writs usually ran, "to meet the King to speak with him;" or, that the King desired to have "*colloquium*," or "conference and treaty" with men learned in the law (*jurisperitis*) and others. No further writs appear to have been issued to the Universities until James I. granted to each of them in 1603 the permanent privilege of sending two of their own body "to serve for those students who, though useful members of the community, were neither concerned in the landed, nor the trading interest, and to protect in the Legislature the rights of the republic of letters." (2)

(1) Prynne's Parliamentary Writs, Vol. 1, p. 345; Luders on Parliaments, 266.

(2) Blackstone's Commentaries, Vol. 1, p. 194.