



Mr. Carman's
Novel.

SINCE Dr. Algic wrote his "Houses of Glass," no Canadian novel has stirred the waters as deep as "The Preparation of Ryerson Embury," by Mr. Albert W. Carman, of Montreal, a son of the Rev. Dr. Carman, General Superintendent of the Methodist Church (Publishers Syndicate). Everywhere the book is being well received by people who are capable of doing the least unbiassed thinking on religious and social questions. The problem it deals with is not new, nor is the solution it offers new. But the book is original for all that; and, moreover, it is Canadian—not in a forced sense, the characters being merely so many nondescripts transplanted to a Canadian setting—but in truth and fact. Here is what one reviewer, who usually hits the nail on the head, has to say of it:

"Ryerson Embury is interesting, because he is a typical Canadian youth, born of and reared by the straightest of his sect. Both as a lad and a young man he is self-conscious, somewhat crude, and more than slightly disturbed by yearnings which are partly selfish and partly the growing pains of his mind. He is not altogether beautiful, but he is honorable, interesting and natural, and in his hopes and strivings nearly every strong-minded Canadian youth who has had a fervidly religious upbringing will recognize much of his own experience. The various characters in the book are sharply and faithfully drawn, but the pen of the artist has done its best work in depicting the different types of the genus preacher. The flirty young fellow, who has just gone on circuit, is a photograph, and his superficial piety and egotistical small talk would fit many scores of young pastors, as they have sickened thousands of onlookers. Rev. Arthur Drake Walters cheerfully tells how the young ladies 'set their caps' for him, and how he flirts with them to teach them some sense, while even huggings and occasional kisses are hinted at as part of his pastoral work. Young Embury had been brought up to believe that 'the Bible is true,' and that he who doubts a jot or tittle of it is an infidel. Yet his worry does not seem to be so much over the salvation of his soul, as that he is not really worrying enough with regard to it. In his trouble he goes to Dr. Holden, who is another typical preacher of the venerable, but easy-going, sort, who practically tells him to sift out the parables and other uninspired material, and to ignore the cheap logic of the agnostic. Young Patterson, a divinity student of the higher criticism sort, is equally unsatisfactory to the young inquirer, because his views are too nebulous. Rev. 'Tommy' Tracy is a lover of humanity, and is the ideal pastor who seems to have sacrificed everything 'to follow Him.' He is a gentle and lovable character, and it is the example of his self-sacrifice and piety which leads young Embury back to a belief in good things."

A pretty undercurrent of love runs through the story, which makes it pleasant reading even to those who do not care for the novel with a purpose.

"Cape Town to
Ladysmith."

THERE has just been published in book form (Copp, Clark), the letters written from South Africa, by the late G. W. Steevens, to The London Daily Mail from October 10, the day he landed in Cape Town, on the very eve of the war, to December 6, when within a few days of his fatal illness he wrote the wonderful word-picture, "In a Conning Tower," where he shows us the Naval Brigade manfully playing their part in the defence of Ladysmith. The volume will be treasured by all who read it as a memorial of a man who had won, in a brief career, a well-deserved eminence among his comrades of the press. His friend, Mr. Vernon Blackburn, has added a

"Last Chapter," telling us something about Steevens himself. Unlike many who have gathered fame at an early age, he was unspoiled by his success. He had a singularly winning character. One cannot pay a better tribute to his memory than to say, as can be said with truth, that in his few years of strenuous, active life he had made a host of friends and not one enemy. In this, his last work, as in his other writing, the two most prominent features are the wonderful vividness of the descriptions and the simple directness of the narrative. His classical training at Oxford left him the pregnant phrase and the forceful epigram ever at hand, while his experience as a journalist had taught him the folly of long and tedious descriptions. He had, too, a great faculty for entering into the spirit of the thing. Look at his first impression of Cape Town:

"After the surprise of being ashore again, the first thing to notice was the air. It was as clear—but there is nothing else in existence clear enough with which to compare it. You felt that all your life hitherto, you had been breathing mud and looking out on the world through fog." The town itself "seemed half Western American with a faint smell of India—Denver with a dash of Delhi. . . . Cape Town itself—you saw it in a moment—does not hustle. The machinery is the West's, the spirit is the East's or the South's."

The pages of the book bristle with stirring passages. In describing the home-coming of the Dunlee column to Ladysmith, he writes:

"Rents in their khaki showed white skin; from their grimed hands and heads you might judge them half red men, half soot-black. Eyelids hung fat and heavy over hollow cheeks and pointed cheek-bones. Only the eye remained—the sky-blue, steel-keen, hard, clear, unconquerable English eye—to tell that 32 miles without rest, four days without a square meal, six nights—for many—without a stretch of sleep, still found them soldiers at the end."

Of the dreariness of the siege Mr. Steevens gives a most interesting picture, relieving it by glimpses of the humorous side of things. His chapter on the sailors is full of merry conceits. Here is the commanding officer's opinion of a pertinaciously annoying Boer artilleryist:

"'That gunner,' said the captain, waving his stick at Surprise Hill, 'is a German. Nobody but a German atheist would have fired on us at breakfast, lunch and dinner, the same Sunday. It got too hot for us when he put one 10 yards from the cook. Anybody else we could spare. Then we had to go.'"

THE new novel upon which Mr. Winston Churchill is at work is set in the period of the American Civil War. He intends to study for the purposes of this book the notable Civil War collection at Princeton, and will spend the month of May near the university.

P.V.N.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

"MY LADY AND ALLAN DARKE." By Charles Donnel Gibson. Toronto, Geo. N. Morang & Co., Limited.

"FROM CAPE TOWN TO LADYSMITH." An unfinished record of the South-African War. By G. W. Steevens, author of "With Kitchener to Khartum," "In India," etc. Toronto, Copp, Clark & Co., Limited.

"THE KNIGHTS OF THE CROSS." By Henryk Sienkiewicz, author of "Quo Vadis," "With Fire and Sword," "Children of the Soil," etc. Authorized and unabridged translation from the Polish by Jeremiah Curtin. Toronto, Geo. N. Morang & Co., Limited.

ABSENCE OF MIND.

A CURIOUS and authentic instance of absence of mind is recorded concerning a popular book, says a London newspaper. A certain person, needing a copy of Mr. Whiteing's "No. 5, John street," is stated to have taken a cab to John street, Adelphi, to have rung the bell of No. 5 and astonished the maid servant by asking for one Whiting. This sounds like fiction, but, as a matter of fact, it is true.