

Book Notice.

CROWDED OUT, AND OTHER SKETCHES. By Seranus. Ottawa, Evening Journal Office. Toronto, R. W. Douglas & Co.

These sketches are for the most part simple short stories without much plot interest, but characterized by grace of expression and tenderness of feeling. The dialogues in all the stories are natural, sensible and interesting, with none of that forced cleverness which often blemishes an author's first work. The story of the Mr. Foxleys is especially good. It is marked by simplicity and freshness of plot, graphic portraiture of character and truthful effectiveness of description. The wooing scene strikes me as being the finest in the book.

A reasonable objection might be taken to a single feature of the first tale. The style is too evidently French to be natural to the writer, and the effect of the artistic termination will be quite lost on English readers who cannot translate Mrs. Harrison's favourite lines:—

"Descendez à l'ombre,
Ma Jolie blonde."

But the dramatic power and pathos of the story are rarely equalled within such narrow bounds. There is perhaps hardly sufficient justification for the "Pea Green Parrot" story, and the "Bishop of Saskabasqua," being simply a reminiscent character sketch, will disappoint any reader who expects a story in it.

The book is thoroughly Canadian in its general features, with an English background and a few touches of French colouring. The author has evidently a strong hope for the new world, but her regard for the old land, its institutions and prejudices, rises almost to reverence. The characters of the stories are not those which are usually met in every-day Canadian life. They are in the main of the aristocratic order. This tendency of the author may be the result of living in Ottawa with an environment of Canadian knights, foreign dukes, marquises and haughty-browed aides-de-camp. This is a serious defect in these character sketches, if they are set forth as representative of this country. Few of us are descended from the old country aristocracy, and I do not think we would have any reason to think ourselves better if we were. The author might have found in our country many different types of character well worthy of a place of honour in her book, who are yet not descended from titled families. When in one case she introduces as her hero an employee in a sawmill, it is disappointing, not to say farcical, to have him turn out to be Etienne Chezy d'Alencourt. In another story a servant girl is not represented as calling for our admiration until a "gentleman" very condescendingly falls in love with her—a gentleman whose "family goes back to the Conquest"—as if it were the better on that account. Darwin traces all of us farther back than that. And the author thinks it further necessary to improve her by "association with thorough and high-bred gentlemen." It appears also that her original features and attire were not just the thing for the heroine of a story. She was "very plump and rather pink"! Clearly now, that wouldn't do! So her appearance is represented as changing under the refining influences referred to above, until she had lost her plumpness and too fresh colour, and her dress had become "almost that of a lady"!

Really there is an air of snobbery here which it is time we got ourselves rid of. The humble speech, the manners and the dress which "Seranus" implicitly condemns, are not at all inconsistent in life or literary art with the highest and most heroic goodness of

character. And this, I take it, is the only nobility or gentility we should worship in this new land of ours.

Notwithstanding this defect, however, the book is, as far as it goes, a creditable contribution to Canadian imaginative literature. Mrs. Harrison's previous reputation rested on her poems. It is safe to say that in the future she will be more widely known as the author of *Crowded Out, and Other Sketches*.—A. STEVENSON.

Correspondence.

The Law of Dower.

Editor ARCTURUS:

I UNDERSTAND that according to the law of this Province respecting dower, if a man sells a lot of land, and his wife refuses to bar her dower, the purchaser or husband may get a judge's order that the land be sold free from dower, but, at the same time, the order must secure to the wife her dower or its value.

The Hon. Chancellor Boyd has lately decided in a case of re Reddam, reported 7 C. L. Times page 19, that under sub-sec. 2 of sec. 4 of "The Devolution of Estates Act, 1886," a widow who resigns her dower is entitled to an absolute share of the husband's property.

Will some of your legal friends advise whether, in case of the sale of land worth say \$3,000, a wife would now be allowed to receive to her own use absolutely \$1,000 of the purchase money?

Brantford, Feb. 8th, 1887.

JOHN JAMES.

Ballot vs. Canvass.

Editor ARCTURUS:

JUST over one election, and face to face with another, circumstances are such as to warrant the intelligent voter in inquiring whether the Ballot Act has served its intended purpose. We all know what was aimed at in the passing of this measure, but so long as candidates for parliamentary honours are permitted to let loose upon a constituency scores of busy-bodies who make house to house visitations—veritable Paul Pry's, so far as the political conscience is concerned—just so long will so-called secret voting prove to be the miserable failure that it is.

In politics, as in religion, every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind, and for another person, whether candidate or agent, to approach him in private, for the purpose of making an apparently harmless inquiry as to how he intends to vote, or with a view to make him change his opinion by the advancement of specious arguments, is totally at variance with the spirit of the Ballot Act. Besides, it is insulting to invade a voter in this way, for if he is an intelligent elector, he should be supposed to know his own mind, and the fact that canvassers undertake to effect any change in his determination seems to show that they do not hold either him or his mental capacity in very high estimation.

The right to address public meetings, and to circulate any quantity of printed matter, is a very different thing. This right should be held inviolate in every free community, but private canvass too frequently means intimidation, or bribery, or both. To the candidate himself a personal canvass must be exceedingly disagreeable, if we suppose him to be a gentleman; and should he be anything else, which is too frequently the case, there is an additional reason why his visitations should be suppressed.

To render personal canvass illegal would be the most effectual method that could be adopted for the stamping out of bribery, and until our legislators place an anti-canvassing law upon the statute book, their constituents will be warranted in maintaining a belief that interviews with female heads of houses and osculations performed on babies are among the chief delights of the would-be representatives of "free and independent electors."—A.

MESSRS. BELFORD, CLARKE & Co., of New York and Chicago, are about to publish by subscription an authorized life of the late Senator John A. Logan; also Donn Piatt's *Memories of the Men Who Saved the Union*.