

LITERARY NOTES

MR. CREWE'S CAREER.

THE title of a novel is sometimes matter for curiosity. Mr. Winston Churchill has shown a decided preference for the third letter of the alphabet, from his first novel, *The Celebrity*, to his recent publication, *Mr. Crewe's Career*. Those who are not above believing in the association of straws and the prevailing breeze profess to see in this an indication of Congress. However that may be, most readers of the latest Churchill novel will wonder why *Mr. Crewe* should appear in the title, since that stupidly important gentleman is by no means the hero and indeed is used by the author as a butt for both sides in the political strife with which the story is filled.

Those who know and care little about politics will not be likely to enjoy *Mr. Crewe's Career* for it is decidedly a political novel, and one of this northern half of America at that. One may imagine an Englishman being somewhat bewildered by the cogs in the New England party machine and finding it difficult to follow the ways of the various "bosses." Cupid plays a comparatively insignificant part in the plot, although the author resorts to the time-worn expedient of having the hero, *Austen Vane*, fall in love with the daughter of his chief enemy, and of course he wins *Victoria Flint* after the war is over and the votes are counted.

The book concerns itself with the fight between this young and honest lawyer and the Northeastern Railroads, whose officials practically control the State, which might as well be called New Hampshire from the first chapter. *Austen Vane*, in spite of a certain exuberance of action which led him to shoot a thief when he was in the unconventional West, is an idealist in politics and a patriot of the old-fashioned order. He fairly takes away the breath of the reader by refusing an annual pass from the president of the corrupt railway board and proceeds on his scornful and toilsome way, winning in dramatic fashion, a suit for damages against the road. The Northeastern is thoroughly selfish and unscrupulous, taking no thought for the public safety when dividends are desired. The characters in the book are said to be easily recognised in the State of New Hampshire and in that case there must be a few palpitating moments for certain prominent officials in the neighbourhood of Mr. Churchill. The characterisation is admirably keen and picturesque, although there is no character which stands out with such rugged strength as *Jethro Bass* of *Comston*. In fact this novel is decidedly not the equal of that masterly study.

The description of *Mr. Crewe* in his impervious egotism winning his way to a seat in the Legislature, although entirely ignorant of the way in which he arrived, is almost as good as *Veneering's* attainment unto the honours of an M. P. The humour of Mr. Churchill's depiction of political strife is often tinged with something deeper than mockery. In the social side of the story, we come upon airy bits of analysis quite as good as anything in *The Celebrity*, a novel which has a style to delight a sulphite. For instance, when *Mrs. Flint* is talking of her daughter's original fashion of seeking unconventional acquaintances, she murmurs faintly:

"What do you expect me to do—especially when I have nervous prostration? I've tried to do my duty by Victoria—goodness knows—to bring her up among the sons and daughters of the people who are my friends.

They tell me that she has temperament—whatever that may be. I'm sure I never found out, except that the best thing to do with people who have it is to let them alone and pray for them."

Mr. Churchill does not belong to the "fiction-while-you-wait" class of novelists. Thus we are grieved when we find such a slovenly lapse as this profound observation: "Just what the state of his feelings were at this time towards *Victoria Flint* is too vague accurately to be painted." There is occasional carelessness of style which is not graceful irregularity but the outcome of prolixity.

In spite of the author's dramatic presentment of political schemes; his finest yearnings plainly turn to Nature. The "warm blue heart of the hills" reveals itself in the midst of conflict between monopolist and idealist. The novel has an emphatic purpose which appears to be twofold: to show that corruption is not the winning policy in public affairs and that the man who is worth mere dollars has lost his own soul. The writer belongs to the new band of young political aspirants who refuse to assent to all that is cynically implied in: "An election is not a prayer-meeting." The civic cleansing which has been attempted with a degree of success in St. Louis, Cleveland and Philadelphia has been followed by similar movements in state affairs and the author of *Mr. Crewe's Career* has evidently made a thorough study of the subject. The appearance of this novel in a year of presidential election is opportune but the book has more enduring qualities than that of mere timeliness. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada.

* * *

MY DOG.

By ST. JOHN LUCAS.

The curate thinks you have no soul:
I know that he has none. But you
Dear friend! whose solemn self-control

In our four-square, familiar pew,

Was pattern to my youth—whose bark
Called me in summer dawns to rove—

Have you gone down into the dark
Where none is welcome, none may love?

I will not think those good brown eyes
Have spent their light of truth so soon;

But in some canine Paradise
Your wraith, I know, rebukes the moon,

And quarters every plain and hill,
Seeking its master. . . . As for me,
This prayer at least the gods fulfil:
That when I pass the flood, and see

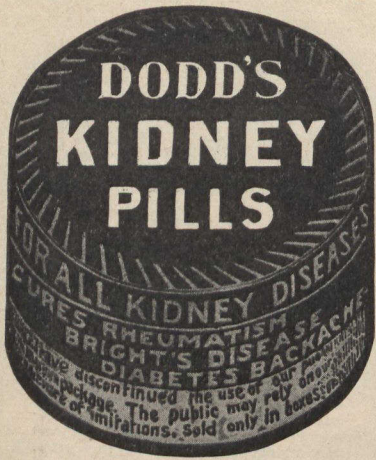
Old Charon by the Stygian coast
Take toll of all the shades who land,
Your little, faithful, barking ghost
May leap to lick my phantom hand.

The Outlook.

The Human Side

Continued from page 21)

along I ups an' says, 'I'll be goin' sure this time,' 'n' Ma packs that trunk o' mine, puts th' buttons in my shirt, scrubs my ears until they hurt, 'n' looks up in my face 'n' says 'Hope you'll have fine hollerdays.' 'N, by gum, I look around—blossoms springin' from th' ground—lambs aplayin' on th' hill—birds asingin' sweet and shrill—'n' a woman standin' there—sunbeams on her snowy hair—
"N I say, 'Guess arter all, Ma, I'd better wait til fall."

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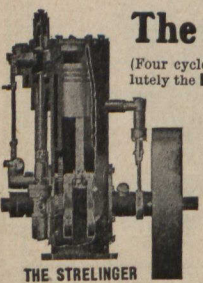
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