



Life, Literature and Education.

The Story of the Future.

Is it not a rather peculiar fact that, so often, the words of the most irresponsible critic on the staff of a magazine, in regard to a new literary production, are taken as infallible? The criticism appears without signature, and in this fact the writer gains a vantage-ground. His impersonality renders him formidable. It is as though through the iron lips of the press an oracle has spoken. The very positiveness of his expression, the scathingness of his sarcasm, carry conviction. He is not one that wavereth like a reed in the wind. He towereth like the pine tree, straight and tall. Yet, possibly, in the disillusionment of his presence, he appears as the tu'penny hack, scribbling away for dear life in his cobwebby office, with the thump of the printing presses on the one side, and the alley along which the coal is driven on the other. Not that the cobwebby office, the back alley, or the fact that he must scribble hard and fast for his bread and butter, are any detriment to a man's critical powers. The point is that this man is paid to write up his criticism column. He must fill it up with something, and often he has not time to more than skim the book which he reviews, taking a dip here, a dip there, and putting up a big bluff at the end of the hunt. True, if he is swift, and keen, and clear-headed—as he sometimes is—and endowed with the literary sense that makes him a connoisseur, and will some day pull him out of the cobwebby office on the back alley, he may arrive, with just such a cursory glance, at a truer estimation of the work in hand than might another after weeks of study. But there is, of course, the shadow of a doubt as to whether he be of these chosen ones. And now, to what tends all this? We would be no iconoclast, to pull down your literary index-posts. We would merely give you warning—take no critic's estimate of a book as the final word. Until you have read it yourself, suspend judgment. Nowadays, numbers of people are getting their ideas of books, not from the volumes themselves, but from what the reviewers say about them.

To refer to a case in mind, you may have noticed, of late, criticisms on "Coniston," Winston Churchill's new book. Most of them are favorable, and yet we find the redoubtable one, who makes fun even of the big literary lion of the United States in this fashion:

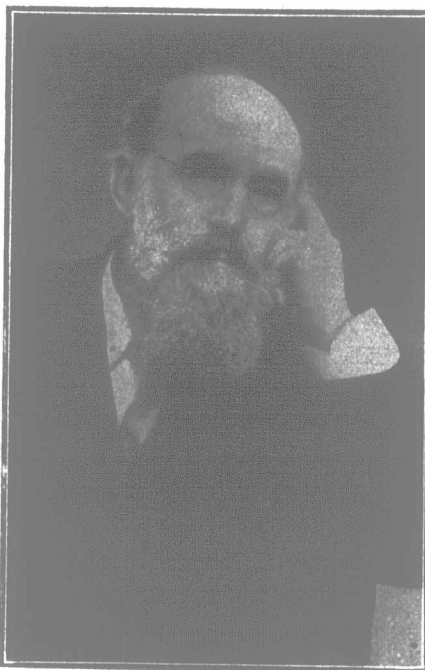
"Wa-al, I want to know!" laughs one of these, "Here you be again, Mister Winston Churchill, and, it is a purty long yarn you hev written fur us this time—543 pages! Whew! C-cal'late that ought to furnish some

folks with reading enough to last all funny man catches the unsuspecting summer!" Further on this funny man catches the unsuspecting author up in divers sub-conscious apologety. "One might think," he says, "this was all a part of the art of the story, this slow, Yankee drawl of a pace, if Mr. Churchill did not more than once let it be known that he is wholly unconscious of any undue sleepiness and non sequitur of narrative, but, to the contrary, happily imagines that he is now 'gallopin', 'skipping lightly' along. When the first love-story ends at page 68, Mr. Churchill says: 'For a little while we are going to gallop through the years, as we have ambled through the days, although the reader's breath may be taken away in the process.' But the reader should not be afeard—that is, afraid—he should be able to get through the succeeding pages without any great loss of breath; it is doubtful if the jolting will even seriously disturb his slumber. On page 128 Mr. Churchill cheers the lagging reader on with the hopeful word that he is now entering upon a period of six years, 'which we are about to skip over so lightly,' and by the time he reaches page 369 he pridefully speaks of his chronicle, 'now so swiftly running on.'"

Now, it may be easily seen that such a jeering criticism as this might be quite sufficient to prevent the uninitiated from reading Mr. Churchill's book. Anyone who has, however, ever read Richard Carvel, The Crisis, etc., must recognize that in the above extract a single weakness has been dwelt on, to the exclusion of much that must be commendable in the work of such a writer as Winston Churchill. The criticism, however, incidentally brings another query to mind, that is, as to what the length of the future novel will be. Each decade, it seems, the material bulk of the popular work of fiction is curtailed. The time was when ladies wept over novels seven volumes long; yet who to-day would be found to read, much less be so tenderly affected by such ponderous tomes? With many it requires a good deal of moral courage to attack even the two-volume stories of Thackeray and Dickens; and, as we have seen, the modern 543-page single volume has come in for its share of ridicule. There are, indeed, those who aver that the short story will afford the popular fiction of the future. Such a conclusion as this is, perhaps, too far-fetched; nevertheless, the place of the moderately short novel seems assured. In these days of trolley and shoot-the-chute, even our pleasures, it seems, have to be taken at high-tension speed. The fact is, however, worth thinking about that, as shown by a recent literary or book-seller's census in England, at the top of the list of best-read authors, despite the length of their stories or the procession of characters that march through them, stand Dickens and Thackeray, in the order named. When we get to the kernel of the thing, it is not just a question of length that determines the popular novel. What, then, do our readers think it is? In a few words, write us what you believe will be the secret of the "story of the future."

A Distinguished Divine.

Rev. John Clifford, M. A., D. D., B. Sc., pastor of the Westbourne Park Baptist Chapel, is one of the notable preachers whom Canadian and American visitors to Old London are anxious to hear. He is one of the most widely-known and masterful



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One of the most widely-known and masterful preachers of the day. Pastor of Westbourne Park Baptist Church, London, England.

preachers of the day. His sermon at the time of the recent Inter-parliamentary Peace Conference in Old London, this summer, on "The Parliament of Man," was a superb protest against militarism, its spirit and its burdens. He is head of the Free Church Council of England and



Rev. Father Bernard Vaughan.

Whose sermons on the sins of modern society have stirred Old London.

Wales, and President of the Baptist World Alliance, a traveller editor, and an author of repute, besides being one of the most useful and honored Gospel ministers of modern times. On

October 16th next he will have completed his 70th year, and a plan is being carried out by their admirers to present himself and Mrs. Clifford with a £7,000 testimonial, to provide an annuity for the rest of his days.

"Canadian Nationality."

"Canadian Nationality, The Cry of Labor, and Other Essays," is a neat, 230-page volume, embracing a symposium of eleven essays on as many topics, by W. Frank Hatheway, of St. John, N. B., who clothes his thoughts in glowing language, embellished to an extreme with a wealth of allusion and illustration. Of Emerson, he proclaims himself a devoted disciple, though he has departed far from the simplicity of style of that great master of English, and comes dangerously near what he warns his readers against—hero-worship. The predominant note is appreciative patriotism. On Canadian scenery, Canadian life, Canadian character, Canadian opportunities and Canadian destiny the author seeks to focus the attention of his readers. He would have us engaged with a vital philosophy of the living present, rather than the musty lore of the past. Very effectively he appeals to us to look for joy and inspiration in our home surroundings, rather than abroad. For the essays on labor, not so much can be said. The sentiments expressed are altruistic, but the hard-headed economist will scarcely give much consideration to the author's well-intended suggestions for the improvement of the existing order of society and wealth-distribution. Nevertheless, even these chapters are good reading. The profusion of apt reference to the beauty spots and scenes of grandeur which abound in the Dominion, will give the book a local coloring for almost every reader, from Halifax to Vancouver. Naturally, the most frequent mention is made of familiar points in the author's own picturesque Province of New Brunswick, but pains have been taken to foster the national outlook and deprecate the old, lingering tendency to Provincial prejudice. Taken all in all, the book is uncommonly interesting and elevating from cover to cover. There is room for more works with the same strong, wholesome Canadianism. The author displays an enthusiastic and appreciative acquaintance with the natural beauties of Canada that is positively refreshing. Here he is on safer ground than when he undertakes the role of Councillor-in-General to statesmen, political economists, business men, preachers and teachers. We reproduce a few choice excerpts which particularly appealed to us in the reading:

From the chapter on "Civilization and Character."—"Every protest awakens thought. Every nonconformist alleviates what wrong there was. The protester may tyrannize afterwards, but he ameliorates and leavens.

"Blind belief in a man, a party or a church is no benefit to growth. It is liable to lead to oligarchy and even tyranny. Sturdy dissent and question, with thoughtful inquiry