

Book of the Week.

CONISTON.*

One has simply nothing but praise for Mr. Churchill's book. It might possibly be objected to by some people, that it is too long. These critics would have found the same thing to say of "Vanity Fair" or "David Copperfield" or "Middlemarch." "Coniston" is a big chunk of typical New England life, cut off in the middle of the last century. It shows the growth of what Mr. Churchill describes as the "Boss" era of American politics, that era which has proved so disastrous to the nation, which has led to the beef trusts and the oil trusts and the railroad trusts, and all the affrighting municipal corruption which Mr. Booth Tarkington and Mr. Upton Sinclair have lately been denouncing.

The temptation of power to the strong man, that is the keynote of the book. The generation of strong men bred from the fight for liberty, undisciplined, untried, full of the novelty of freedom, and its unspeakable possibilities, this was the generation that evolved "bosses." In a democracy, anyone could boss the show, provided only he had the strength to get other men in his power. Of old, the conqueror had more direct methods. He made men slaves at the sword's point, and drove them through the streets with ropes about their necks to grace his triumph. Now we do not go to war. It is not an open enemy that does us dishonour, and takes advantage of our weakness; it is the man who buys mortgages and binds us his political slaves by holding over our head the threat of turning us, our wives and our children, out of doors. It is just the old story, only under different names. It makes us think that we have not advanced one step in the progress of the race.

The character of Jethro Bass has not been surpassed, to my knowledge, in modern fiction.

The first part of the book contains a love story, which for freshness and charm and spontaneity, is only equalled by the note that rang through James Lane Allen's "Kentucky Cardinal" and "Choir Invisible." But in Mr. Churchill lies a strength which Mr. Allen was without.

The scene in the woodshed, where Cynthia makes her petition and the man cannot grant it, and cannot tell her why, simply because he has no words in which to clothe the vast ideas with which his brain is teeming, is one to sink deeply into memory, and heart, and judgment. One may, one must, feel that the subsequent behaviour of the man in not again attacking the girl is inexplicable. But one knows that in real life these things do occur. There comes, in a love affair, one of those curious hitches, when both are powerless to move. And in another case, in face of far stronger impediments, so it seems, the thing will go on and fulfil itself. The way in which the love story of Jethro is told conveys the idea that the thing actually happened.

The second love story, that of Cynthia's daughter, is not nearly so convincing, probably because Bob Worthington seems such a common-place hero after

* By Winston Churchill (American). Macmillan.

Jethro, and the inarticulate throes of that mighty heart.

Let her who has a long, tedious journey before her take this book along with her. Let her read it through, not skipping, not skimming, in the cursory modern fashion, reading and relishing every word, learning to know Coniston and its inhabitants. Tedium will disappear, the reader will live in the fair New England world where Mr. Churchill has brought her; the murmur of Coniston Water under the breaking ice will be in her ears, the rosy dawn sun will illumine her tired eyes, the cool moist scent of ferns in wet hollows will assail her nostrils, and real people, not puppets, will act before her, act out their hearts and their lives, their ambition, their love, their power, their weakness; if she does not love Coniston by the time she is "through," then she is hopelessly insular, and the fault does not lie with Mr. Churchill.

G. M. R.

Upward and Onward.

THE airs of heaven blow o'er me,
A glory shines before me,
Of what mankind shall be,
Pure, generous, brave, and free.

The love of man and neighbour,
An equal-handed labour,
The richer life, where beauty
Walks hand in hand with duty.

I feel the earth move sunward,
I join the great march onward,
And take by faith, while living,
My freehold of thanksgiving.

WHITTIER.

What to Read.

"Liberia, the Negro Republic in West Africa." By Sir Harry Johnston.

"Sweated Home Industries." By Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay Macdonald in the *Independent Review*.

"The Ring of Day." By Mary Butler.

"The Little Gate of Tears." By Austin Clare.

"The Confessions of a Princess."

"Culture among the Poor." By Miss M. Loane, in the *Contemporary Review*.

"A Sovereign Remedy." By Flora Annie Steel.

Coming Events.

August 28th.—Concert in aid of Lady Dudley's Fund for District Nurses in the University Buildings, Dublin.

A Word for the Week.

Don't flatter yourselves that friendship authorises you to say disagreeable things to your intimates. On the contrary, the nearer you come into relation with a person, the more necessary do tact and courtesy become.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*.

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