ADVENTURE AND POLITICAL REFORM IN

WINSTON CHURCHILL BEFORE 1913

APPROVED:

E. G. Ballard
Major Professor

P. D. Masingir
Minor Professor

E. S. Elston
Director of the Department of English

Dean of the Graduate School
ADVENTURE AND POLITICAL REFORM IN
WINSTON CHURCHILL BEFORE 1913

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Mary V. Casey, B. A.

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

In a period of time when most celebrities' lives are common property, Winston Churchill, one of the most popular novelists of the early twentieth century, lived a life so secluded that today only a few facts about his life have been published, and some of those are directly contradictory. Churchill himself was responsible for this obscurity, as may be seen in a letter in which Bjalmar O. Lokensgard, in answer to a query by Upton Sinclair concerning the possibility of any biography about Churchill, wrote:

... I have some information about the American Winston Churchill that will in part answer Upton Sinclair's query.

In 1941 George Weida Spohn (1879-1943), for many years chairman of the Department of English at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, asked Winston Churchill for permission to write a critical biography. The novelist invited Dr. Spohn to call on him at his summer home in Vermont. As Dr. Spohn's academic foster son, I was privileged to accompany him in the journey. Mr. Churchill was impressed by Mr. Spohn and consented that the work be undertaken. That day we hauled back to the Spohn's lake home near Laconia, N. H., a great bundle of letters and notebooks. Later in the year Mr. Churchill shipped several boxes of material.

At the time of his death Dr. Spohn had completed several chapters. His widow, Lucy Tyler Spohn, felt that the project should be finished. She suggested that I write to Mr. Churchill to find out whether he would agree to the proposal that I try to finish the work. In a letter dated 23 May 1946, Mr. Churchill wrote that he wanted to be wholly frank: he confessed to being 'profoundly relieved because

circumstances have so fallen out that I can now say that I do not wish my biography written by anyone.' He said he had 'respect and liking for Mr. Spohn and did not question his ability,' but added that 'there is no one in the world I would let write it now.' He insisted graciously that he would have let me write the biography if he wanted one done. He had taken Mr. Spohn on faith and would have taken me in the same way.

He said he spent the last twenty-seven years of his life in an attempt to eliminate publicity. He now realized that consenting to the writing of his biography was weakness on his part. He requested that I return the papers he had sent. 'Not that I ever expect to use them, but I should like to have them here.'

Winston Churchill was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on November 10, 1871, at the home of his mother's family. His father, Edward Spaulding Churchill, a native of Portland, Maine, was a West Indian merchant and descendant of John Churchill, who settled at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1641. His mother, Emma Bell Blaine, was a descendant of John Dwight, the founder of Dedham, Massachusetts, and of Jonathan Edwards.

No account is given of his childhood except that he was educated at Smith Academy in St. Louis. One writer, Stanley Johnson, states that he was reared by an aunt and uncle there. The same writer continues, "Not being able to go to college, he started business life at sixteen. But when the opportunity for an appointment to Annapolis came, he was the successful candidate."

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3Stanley Johnson, "A Novelist and His Novels in Politics," World's Work, XVII (December, 1908), 11016.
4Ibid., p. 11017.
At Annapolis he maintained a high scholastic standing and assumed active leadership in undergraduate sports and societies. An all-round athlete, he was an expert fencer and a devotee of all outdoor sports. He organized the first eight-oared crew at Annapolis and served as its captain for two years. In 1894 he ranked twelfth in the graduating class of thirty-two, but there were only thirty-one vacancies, and, as the future at that time appeared too unpromising of warlike adventure, he preferred to resign his naval commission.

After resigning his commission, he went to New York, where he obtained a position with the Army and Navy Journal. Shortly afterward he joined the staff of the Cosmopolitan Magazine, of which he soon became the managing editor. While employed on these magazines, he sold a short story, "Mr. Keegan's Elopement," to the Century Magazine for seventy-five dollars. Because his duties with the magazine left him no time for original independent writing, he resigned his position after only nine months.

Upon his marriage to Mabel Harlakenden Hall of St. Louis on October 22, 1895, he moved to Cornish, New Hampshire, where he spent the remainder of his life.

Here accounts of his life vary to some extent. Several sources state that private means enabled him to devote all

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"Churchill," The Writer, XIII (December, 1900), 169.
of his time to writing, but this is hardly in agreement with Johnson's statement, quoted earlier, that he was unable to attend college. Nor does Johnson's further statement that Churchill's almost forgotten fantasy in fiction, The Celebrity, appeared at that time and won him enough money to take up his earnest work as he liked to do it appear accurate; for according to another source, he spent the winter of 1895-1896 preparing this book, which he left unfinished in the hands of the publishers, when he went to Europe in April, 1896. The publishers persuaded him to finish it. The first effort was disapproved, and the second was lost in the mails. He attempted a revision and finally, after rewriting it twice, gave the book to the press in the comedy form now known to the public. It was immediately popular and brought both profit and prestige to its author, who was already laboriously writing and rewriting Richard Carvel. Too, the fact that the book was not published until 1898 refutes the suggestion that The Celebrity supplied him with the necessary financial support to write.

However this may be, Churchill became independently wealthy after the publication in 1899 of Richard Carvel, which sold over three hundred thousand copies by the end of the first year and which was more widely read and discussed

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Johnson, op. cit., p. 11016. Ibid., p. 11017.

The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, X, 179.
during its first year than any other American book ever published to that time.

Churchill's third book, The Crisis, appeared in 1901. Dealing with the Civil War and presenting both the North and the South in a sympathetic way, this book established his reputation as one of America's most popular novelists. Although it is not much read by this generation, the book had sold a million and sixty-one thousand copies by the time of the author's death in 1947; and it made an impression upon the public which lasted for more than twenty years, for in 1924 the book ranked sixth among the ten favorite books chosen by readers of the Literary Digest. Its popularity, combined with that of his other novels, caused Churchill to be named in the same poll as the fourth of the ten favorite authors appearing after 1900. The magazine pointed out that his book was the only survival of the class of fiction, historical romance, which was so popular at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Churchill commented years later that this recognition rather surprised him in view of the fact that his last novel had appeared in 1917, seven years before the poll was taken. However, today, almost forty years

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10 "Who Are the 'Classic Authors' of Today?" The Literary Digest (author not given), LXXX (March 15, 1924), 46.

after the publication of his last novel, he ranks as the second author of best sellers over a period of fifty years. In an interview with W. W. Whitelock, a writer for The Critic, made while he was most active in his writing, Churchill made some comments concerning his own writings and beliefs about writing. He explained that his idea was to deal with the great forces that went to the making of the United States rather than to study social conditions as manifested in individuals. Concerning the manner of treating immorality in literature, he had not yet met that problem and supposed that he would have to deal with it in later books, but he felt, nevertheless, that America was the most moral country in the world. When the interviewer asked whether he would portray such characters as Daniel Webster just as they really were or with their lapses omitted, he answered that he felt it was wrong to expose the weaknesses of a man like Webster because he was a national ideal that should not be shattered. The same was true with Hamilton, but he should not hesitate to portray a man like Aaron Burr exactly as he was, as it would be no loss to historical ideals.

Churchill continued to write either historical romances or novels dealing with some current problem, political or

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10 Carol Hughes, "Mary Roberts Rinehart: Queen of Best Sellers," Coronet, XXXII (July, 1952), 98.

11 W. W. Whitelock, "Mr. Winston Churchill," The Critic, XL (February, 1902), 141.

14 Ibid.
social, until he went into retirement in 1917 at the age of forty-six. That year he published his first piece of non-fiction, *A Traveller in War-Time*, which was a result of his touring France and England and visiting the British war front. His only other piece of non-fiction did not appear until 1940, breaking briefly a silence of twenty-three years. Two or three plays, which attracted no real attention, were published after his last novels. The ten novels apparently rounded out his cycle of historical novels, treating of forces affecting America, which he inferred he planned to write.\(^5\)

In view of the amount of work he put into a book, the number of volumes he produced in so brief a span of time is a tribute to his industry. In order to have the personnel and historic settings of his novels as nearly accurate as possible, he visited all the places he planned to mention and studied all manner of documents—histories, memoirs, letters, and old newspapers—relating to the incidents or characters involved, and taking voluminous notes. He was thoroughly saturated with his material before he began to write. That no drudgery was too great may be illustrated by the fact that he rewrote *Richard Carvel* five times and redid the entire chapter telling of the battle between the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis* after the book was in type.\(^6\)

\(^{15}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{16}\) The *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, x, 178.
Regarding Churchill's diligence, Frederic Taber Cooper says that he illustrates the paradox that "genius is a capacity for taking infinite pains."\(^1\) He continues that the writer considers three or four years as being none too long to spend on a single volume, endlessly repolishing it, and that it is impossible to read a single volume without being aware that its production involved a labor not unlike the slow process of chipping away fragment by fragment, grain by grain, the enveloping marble from the emerging statue.\(^2\)

However, his writing did not prevent his taking an active part in affairs around him. From 1903 until 1905 he served in the New Hampshire State Legislature. He had been aware that the railroad interests in the state were powerful, and these two years served to arouse him against those interests, which at the time completely controlled the politics of the state. Coniston, published in 1906, and Mr. Crewe's Career, published in 1908, picture New Hampshire politics under the control of the political "boss" and of the railroads. If their purpose was to awaken the thinking people to a recognition of the existence of the state of affairs and to bring about reforms, they served their purpose. Although Carl Van Doren says that Churchill gathers his premonitions when the drift is already setting in and that he has never, like a philosopher or a seer,

\(^{1}\) Frederic Taber Cooper, *Some American Storytellers*, p. 148.
run off alone, he was not the last to take up an idea; and these two books, combined with Churchill's personal campaign, served as powerful weapons in the fight for a better and purer political administration.

In 1906 the Lincoln Republican Club, a reform group, invited Churchill to be its candidate for the Republican nominee for governor of New Hampshire. After a strenuous campaign in which the railroads fought him bitterly, he was defeated in the Republican Convention by a narrow margin of eight votes when the opposing candidates formed a coalition and threw all their support to one. However, The Outlook wrote that he was not defeated, as the battle was not a personal one, and as he had committed all of his adversaries and the Republican Party of the state to the principles for which he had contended.

His defeat for the Republican nomination for governor did not end his interest in politics. He campaigned for Everett Colby of New Jersey, who was fighting the Public Service Corporation and other allied interests for the same principles of democratic government for which Churchill had fought in the State of New Hampshire.

In 1913 he made his last bid for public office when he ran for governor of New Hampshire on the Progressive Ticket.

19 Carl Van Doren, Contemporary American Novelists, p. 52.
20 Johnson, op. cit., p. 11017.
21 "Churchill's Virtual Victory," The Outlook, LXXXIV, (author not given), (September 29, 1906), 243.
He stated that he had been inspired to do so by Theodore Roosevelt, of whom he had always been a great admirer.\textsuperscript{22}

Early in his public career he was confused with Winston Churchill, the British statesman, to whom he was not related. However, until 1917, when he retired from writing, there was no question as to who was the Winston Churchill, although the other had made a dramatic and publicized escape after being taken prisoner by the Boers. However, in 1917 he relinquished his priority to the Englishman, who had just become Minister of Munitions.\textsuperscript{23} In connection with this confusion Churchill recounted, "One day I received a letter from the Englishman good-naturedly complaining about the confusion, and suggesting that one of us should change his name, and that it was up to me. I wrote back, agreeing that it was an excellent idea, but I stressed the fact that I was actually the senior--the English Churchill was born in 1874, two years after me--it was up to him to change his name. This he did by digging up his middle name, Spenser."\textsuperscript{24} The English Churchill has always signed his name with the middle name or initial; however, this precaution was not wholly effective. The two Churchills met several times thereafter, and the American Churchill entertained the other with a dinner.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22}Cyril Clemens, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 145.

\textsuperscript{23}The \textit{New York Times}, Obituary, (March 14, 1947), p. 27.

\textsuperscript{24}Cyril Clemens, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 145.

\textsuperscript{25}"The Winston Churchill's," \textit{The New Yorker}, XVI (June 1, 1940), 26.
His retirement shocked and disappointed his hosts of readers. Subsequently, he dropped so completely from the public eye that few knew he was still living in 1940, when he published *The Uncharted Way: The Psychology of the Gospel Doctrine*. So little was known of him that as late as 1942 he is spoken of in *Twentieth Century Authors* as having no children, yet an article published after his death stated that he was survived by a daughter and two sons, with one of whom he was collaborating on a book at the time of his death. Still another statement, found in his obituary in the *New York Times*, listed as his survivors two sons, John, an architect of Washington, D. C., and Creighton of Windsor, Vermont. (A letter from John Churchill reveals the fact that a third child, Mable Churchill Butler, also survived her father.)

Churchill spent the long years of his retirement on his estate in Cornish, New Hampshire. His beautiful red-brick mansion, Harlakenden House, which served as the summer White House in 1913 during Woodrow Wilson's first year in office, stood upon a crest of land overlooking the Connecticut River and the fertile valley. One reporter who interviewed the

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26 *Twentieth Century Authors*, edited by Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, p. 282.
27 Cyril Clemens, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
author there said that save for a moat and drawbridge it was like walking into one of Sir Walter Scott's novels. Many of his neighbors were artists and literary people; among them were Maxfield Parrish and Augustus St. Gaudens.

In an interview not many years before his death, he explained his retirement, an act which made him a subject of literary criticism before his death, by saying that he ceased writing novels because he enjoyed living quietly on his country place, dabbling in painting, reading the works of others, and writing occasionally for his own satisfaction and the pleasure of a few intimates, to whom he gave copies of his typed manuscripts. To the world he said that it was a question of fun, and that he derived more fun living as he did, apart, painting and carpentering. The author expressed admiration for several novelists--Scott, Dickens, Twain, Thackeray, and Du Maurier--but said he had read almost no novels since he stopped writing them in 1917, when his interest turned to other things and that "it is very difficult now, for me to think of myself as a writer of novels, as all that seems to belong to another life, and I never was really literary. I wrote the novel for pleasure or adventure."

When asked about what had been called almost his only idiosyncrasy as a writer, to see that there was almost always a "C" somewhere in the titles of his novels, he said that it

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30 Whitelock, op. cit., p. 135.
31 Clemens, op. cit., p. 145. 32 Ibid., p. 145.
was no mystery; he simply used a "C" because it was a very
euphonious letter, and he liked to see it in various titles.\textsuperscript{33}
He continued, "The critics love a mystery. I have paid very
little attention to what the critics have said of my work, but
I did like it when the late William Allen White called me 'the
first of the Literary Reformers.'\textsuperscript{34}

During the last years of his life, Churchill had spent
the winters at Winter Park, Florida. There he died of a heart
attack, shortly after his arrival from New Hampshire, on March
12, 1947. His body was returned home, where he was buried in
Plainfield Cemetery beside his wife, who had died two years
before.

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 144. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}
CHAPTER II

ROMANTICISM IN CHURCHILL'S EARLY HISTORICAL NOVELS

From earliest times man has enjoyed the heroic romances. The Anglo-Saxon scops and gleemen sang of fearless heroes and their wonderful deeds of bravery. The Arthurian legends are peopled by brave young knights, who, because of the purity of their hearts, are enabled to save virtuous and beautiful young heroines from dastardly villains. Through the years, despite brief periods of disfavor, romantic literature has continued to appeal to the imagination of readers, and at the turn of the present century romance in American literature was most popular in the form of the historical novel.¹

Since literary terms, according to one writer, are like chameleons, changing color while we gaze at them and modified first of all by the user and then by every individual among those he is addressing,² it will be necessary to mention some of the characteristics of the historical romance. Although the historical novel may often be true to historical fact, like other romantic literature it is a product of the emotions and the imagination. It is sometimes referred to as "escape literature" because it has its setting in a period of the past which

²Brander Matthews, The Historical Novel and Other Essays, p. 31.
seems more interesting and satisfying than the present. Certain romantic elements such as romantic love, tyranny and oppression, innocence in danger, capture, imprisonment, and dramatic rescue are combined to produce excitement and adventure. The action is romantic and violent. Sentiment, a melancholy atmosphere, supernatural elements, and the identification of man with nature are also distinguishing marks of romanticism. Characters fall into two groups, the good and the bad. Good characters are frequently idealized and artificial. Women are pale, retiring creatures with a great sorrow, or they are spirited, scintillating women for whom men would gladly die. Both of these types are the embodiment of beauty and virtue. These women usually know nothing but ease and luxury, yet when misfortune strikes, they are courageous and face the worst hardships without a word of complaint. The heroes are all noble, courageous, and chivalrous men, ready at any moment to defend their honor or that of the heroine. Good characters may be of either humble or noble origin, but sterling worth, integrity, and inherent nobility are always apparent. Moreover, each of these good people instinctively recognizes these qualities in the other. The villain, on the other hand, recognizes in the hero all these desirable traits and hates him for them. An obscure origin often adds a mysterious touch to the character of romance.

Not all of these elements, however, are typical of the historical romance in America. In his discussion of the American
novel, Carl Van Doren describes the pattern which the historical novels written between 1896 and 1902 follow in this way:

In spite of these distinctions in style and handling, however, the general corpus of such romances forms a singularly unified mass. Certain themes... are repeated again and again. Historical personalities so crowd the scene that a hero or a heroine can hardly step out upon the street or go to dinner without encountering some eminent man—particularly Franklin or Washington, or some one of the colonial governors of Virginia. While intensely American in reporting the conflicts with English rule, the stories almost always sympathize with the colonial Revolutionary gentry as against the humbler orders... with the aristocratic emigres from France as against the French revolutionists. Details of costume load the narrative far more than descriptions of landscape. Fine gentlemen, called Cavaliers till the word becomes a byword, flutter and ruffle across the stage, with splendid gestures and delicate points of honor... With them in all their lighter moments are exquisite ladies, generally very young but with some dowagers among them, who live in spacious, cool houses, in a world of mahogany and silver and brocade; ladies who ardently expect new bales of clothing from London but who joyfully sacrifice all such delights during the Revolution; ladies who rise late, take the air genteelly, play at lovely needlework, and spend their nights at balls of elaborate splendor; and yet ladies who know the saddle and, when need comes, put off their squeamishness and rough it in the most dangerous escapades without a tremor. One formula furnishes something like half the notable plots: an honest American gentleman, mortally opposed to a villain who is generally British, courts a beautiful American girl through acue vicissitudes and wins her only in the bitter end just before or after killing his wicked rival in a duel.3

Churchill's first historical romance was Richard Carvel, published in 1898. He followed it in 1901 with The Crisis and in 1904 with The Crossing. Van Doren names these three as the most successful of the romances written during this period.4

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4 Ibid., p. 216.
In true romantic style, each of these novels has for its setting an adventurous era of the past. Richard Carvel deals with the American Revolution and the years immediately preceding it. Its scope is so broad that the reader sees the leisurely life of the Maryland gentry of pre-revolutionary days, the feverish excitement of London society of the time of Charles James Fox, and the high adventure of seafaring with John Paul Jones. The Crisis pictures the divided sentiment of the people of St. Louis, Missouri, during the Civil War. In The Crossing the author again chooses the Revolutionary War period but deals principally with the struggle of the settlers of Kentucky, who are but remotely affected by the war. Their struggle is to defeat the Indians and to find a means of getting their raw materials to market by opening the Mississippi River.

Summaries of these novels will show that they follow Van Doren's general description. Richard Carvel is the romance of adventure at its best. The main theme concerns Richard's courtship of Dorothy Manners, but interest is also focused on Charles Fox and on John Paul Jones. Richard, the orphan grandson of Lionel Carvel, a Maryland plantation owner, has from childhood loved his playmate, the beautiful daughter of a neighbor. He feels that his love is hopeless, however, as Dorothy's father has instilled into the girl the idea that she shall bring a title into the family; and Dorothy, conscious of Richard's adoration, has teased him by telling him that she will marry an

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earl. When Dorothy is carried to England to be presented at King George's court, Richard is left desolate in Maryland. Then the plot takes a turn that is reminiscent of Stevenson's *Kidnapped*. Through the machination of his wicked uncle Grafton, the black sheep of the family who wants to inherit Lionel Carvel's estate, Richard is abducted and placed upon a pirate ship. He is rescued when the pirate ship is sunk by a merchant vessel, captained by a John Paul, who later becomes known to Americans as John Paul Jones. With John Paul, Richard travels to Scotland, where Paul loses his ship because of the malicious tales told by his envious crew. Feeling that his country has betrayed him, Paul dramatically renounces his allegiance to Scotland:

'You, who are my countrymen, who should be my oldest and best friends, are become my enemies. You who were companions of my childhood are revilers of my manhood; you have robbed me of my good name and my honor, of my ship and my very means of livelihood and you are not content; you would rob me of my country, which I hold dearer than all. . . . May God forgive you! . . . He alone knows my love for Scotland, and what it costs me to renounce her. . . .'

'Renounce her I do,' he now cried, 'now and forevermore! Henceforth, I am no countryman of yours. And if a day of repentance should come for this evil, remember well what I have said to you.'

Richard and Paul travel to London. Mr. Manners, fearing that Dorothy may prefer Richard to nobility, refuses to recognize him; his grandfather's agent demands identification, which Richard cannot supply; and he and Paul are cast into debtor's prison. Release comes in a romantic way. Dorothy hears

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Horace Walpole recounts an incident involving a brawny young American, who, Dorothy is convinced, can be no other than her old friend. She immediately comes to his rescue. Richard plans to return to Maryland by the first vessel and reward Paul by providing him with a ship. Lord Comyn, a friend of Richard and a rejected suitor of Dorothy, pleads with Richard to stay in England in order to save Dorothy from a marriage with the evil Duke of Charterssea, who appears to hold some threat over the Manners family. Comyn assures Richard that Dorothy loves him and that only he can save her. Torn between his love for Dorothy and his obligations to and love for Paul, the youth honorably yields his personal interest to his sense of duty. Paul, however, is aware of Dorothy's charms and of Richard's love for her, so he obtains a ship on his own merits and leaves Richard free to remain in London.

In London the young American becomes the center of society and an intimate of many titled people. Among his closest associates is Charles Fox, a Junior Lord of the Admiralty at twenty-one. Fox, a man of great personal charm, wields a great deal of power in Parliament, but he is unscrupulous and uses that power to further his personal ambitions rather than the good of the people. Although his grandfather is staunchly loyal to the King, Richard is an ardent believer in liberty and the right of man to govern himself. In a fearless debate with Fox he expresses his loathing for tyranny and represents the colonists as loyal citizens whose only desire is for political
freedom. He warns Fox:

"Do you know what you are doing? You are pushing home in-
justice and tyranny to the millions, for the benefit of the
thousands. For is it not true, gentlemen, that the great
masses of England are against the measures you impose upon
us? Their fight is our fight. They are no longer repre-
sented in Parliament; we have never been. Taxation without
representation is true of your rotten boroughs as well as
of your vast colonies. You are helping the King to crush
freedom abroad in order that he may the more easily break
it at home. You are committing a crime. . . .

'I tell you we would give up all we own were the
glory or honour of England at stake. . . . If you wish
money, leave the matter to our colonial assemblies, and
see how readily you will get it. But if you wish war, per-
sist in trying to grind the spirit from a people who have
in them the pride of your own ancestors. Yes, you are
estranging the colonies, gentlemen. A greater man than I
has warned you."? 

This vigorous speech arouses Fox's admiration and ultimately
wins him to the side of the common people in their fight against
the corruption of the King and the nobility. 8

After a few weeks Richard learns of his grandfather's death.
Lionel Carvel, believing Richard to be dead, has left his pro-
erty to his surviving son, Grafton. No longer the heir to
great wealth, Richard is forsaken by all of his fair-weather
friends among the nobility, but those of real worth stand by
him. Fox and Comyn discuss a government position for him, but
he refuses the offer and returns to America.

The following years are less eventful. Richard manages a
plantation for a friend. By his industry and business acumen,
he begins to rise. He devotes much time and energy to working
with the patriotic groups who are beginning to realize that

7Ibid., p. 300. 8Ibid., pp. 510-11.
revolution is the only means of freeing the colonists from tyranny.

When war comes, Richard again encounters John Paul, who has now become John Paul Jones and the owner of a small plantation in Virginia. Jones's knowledge of sailing and of British harbors and his enthusiastic plans for harrying England's trade and destroying her merchant ships arouses a similar enthusiasm in some of the members of the Congress, and an American navy is formed. Richard becomes a sailor, goes with Jones to France, and is critically wounded when the Bon Homme Richard defeats the Serapis. Jones contacts Dorothy, who enlist[s] the aid of Fox and Comyn to smuggle Richard from Holland into England, where she nurses him back to health. Before he is fully recovered, however, Mr. Manners betrays him; and he, together with the Manners family, is forced to flee England.

The conclusion is typical of romantic literature. The cowardly Grafton, although he is actually a Tory, has tried to stay on the winning side. When his treachery is proved, his property is confiscated and returned to Richard. Dorothy, who has really loved Richard all through the years, becomes his bride. A happy solution is also achieved for Fox, who becomes a statesman with high principles and earns the love and respect of the common man, and for John Paul Jones, who becomes a hero in his adopted country.
Somewhat less adventurous is Churchill's next novel, *The Crisis*, but one critic calls it the most noteworthy popular expression of the field of romance provided by the Civil War and reconstruction period. Stephen Brice, a young Bostonian reared in luxury, is left impoverished at his father's death. Taking his mother, he goes to St. Louis to study law under Judge Whipple, a friend of Stephen's father and a violent abolitionist. There he meets Colonel Comyn Carvel, grandson of Richard Carvel and Dorothy Manners, and his beautiful daughter, Virginia. Like many of the important people of St. Louis, the Carvels are of Southern sentiment and are slave owners. The fact that feeling about the slavery question is already running high does not hinder a close personal friendship between the Carvels and Judge Whipple. Virginia's affection for the Judge, however, does not lead her to admit Stephen to her circle of friends. She characterizes Stephen as a Yankee who wants to deprive the Southerners of their rights and says that he is no gentleman. She bases this apparent dislike upon an incident which occurred on Stephen's second day in St. Louis. Passing a slave auction, the young man was sickened by comments he heard about the prospective fate of a beautiful quadroon. He used his last money to purchase the girl in order to set her free. Virginia had wanted the girl and felt that Stephen's action was a personal affront.

9Dorothy Anne Bondere, *The Prairie and the Making of Middle America*, p. 322.
As Virginia begins to admire Stephen, she grows critical of Clarence Colfax, the spoiled cousin whom she has always expected to marry, because he lacks the high ideals which Stephen possesses. Her admiration changes to love, and her love is returned by Stephen. However, since it would be a violation of the romantic plot for the course of true love to run smoothly, they do not reveal their feelings for each other until the final pages of the novel.

Early in his legal training, Stephen is sent by Judge Whipple to Illinois, where he hears one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Inspired by Lincoln and convinced of the truth of his statement that the "nation cannot exist half slave and half free," Stephen begins to work with the judge in behalf of abolition. With Carl Richter, a fellow lawyer, Stephen visits in the German quarter of St. Louis, and hears how these young men left their native land to seek freedom and are now prepared to fight for freedom in their adopted country. In 1860 Stephen campaigns in support of Lincoln in his efforts for the presidency.

When war comes, Clarence goes into the uniform of the Confederacy and becomes a hero because of his many daring exploits. Stephen, less colorfully but equally bravely, distinguishes himself with General Sherman's army. Both young men are critically wounded but return to battle as soon as possible.

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Shortly before the close of the war Clarence is captured as a spy, but Stephen intercedes for him, and Virginia goes to Washington to make a personal appeal to Lincoln. The President grants the pardon with the statement, "I am sparing his life, because the time for which we have been waiting and longing for four years is now at hand—the time to be merciful. Let us all thank God for it."\(^{11}\) Lincoln is also instrumental in bringing Stephen and Virginia together.

The Crossing, far more adventurous than The Crisis, is described by Van Doren as more grandiose in its sweep than the ordinary historical novel.\(^{12}\) At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, Davy Trimble is carried from the Caroline mountains to Charleston when his father goes to fight the Indians. Accustomed to a mountain cabin, Davy is impressed by the grandeur of the Temple home, where he is left. From a negro servant he discovers that he is related to the Temples and that his name is really Ritchie, but he learns nothing about his parents themselves. His stay in Charleston is brief; Temple, a Tory, flees when the British forces are defeated in Charleston; and Davy is carried to Temple Bow, where Temple's wife and child are staying. Davy has several exciting adventures here: he goes to the races; he sees his cousin, Nick Temple, subdue a Congo chief who has escaped from the slave quarters; he prevents a duel which one of Nick's pranks starts. Mrs. Temple's indifference to both boys is more cruel than actual unkindness, and

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 511  \(^{12}\)Van Doren, op. cit., p. 218.
when Davy receives word that his father has been killed, he runs away.

Although only a small boy, Davy has his own way to make now. He works for a short time for a German, then leaves him to return to the mountains with sixteen-year-old Polly Ann Ripley and her grandfather. When Polly Ann's sweetheart, Tom McChesney, returns from fighting the Indians, he and Polly Ann marry and take Davy with them into Kentucky. This is a fearful journey, for the Indians are making a desperate stand against the white men. Davy kills a deserter from the American army, who has molested Polly Ann. In a fight with a small war party, Davy kills his first Indian. Fear of the Indians is a daily companion and continues with them after the three safely reach Harrodstown, Kentucky, for the little fort there is under siege.

George Rogers Clark, the leader of the group at Harrodstown, sees no relief from the Indians unless the English who are inciting them to war are defeated, so he marches to Kaskaskia and captures that settlement. Davy travels with the group as a drummer boy and inspires the men by his courage. A peace treaty is made with the forty tribes of the Northwest, but the feeling of security is short-lived, for Hamilton, the British general at Vincennes, continues to arouse the Indians. In the dead of winter when the rivers are out of their banks and the surrounding lowlands are veritable lakes, Clark leads his small
forces against Vincennes. The march is one of agony. Describing it, Davy says, "All day they waded with numb feet vainly searching for a footing in the slime."\(^{13}\) Food runs out, and many men become too weak to walk. Davy describes one night's camping, "There was no fire, no food, and the water seeped out of the ground on which we lay. ... Bit by bit the ground hardened, and if by chance we dozed we stuck to it."\(^{14}\) In speaking to Tom McChesney, Clark gives Davy credit for the success of the undertaking. After Hamilton surrenders, Clark cites Davy's heroism before the assembled army:

'I shall name one, one who never lagged, who never complained, who starved that the weak might be fed and walk. David Ritchie, come here. ... I give you the thanks of the regiment.'\(^{15}\)

Other romantic but less violent adventures take place through the years. Polly Ann and Tom, encouraged by Clark and others, send Davy to be educated in the law by Judge Wentworth of Richmond, Virginia. His training completed, Davy sets up an office in Louisville. After he has established a reputation for being sensible and discreet, he is sent to New Orleans by certain Kentucky patriots who feel that General Wilkinson, who has succeeded in persuading the Spanish governor of Louisiana to open the Mississippi River to Kentucky trade, is guilty of treason.

In New Orleans, Davy sees a miniature of Helene de St. Gre,


\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 224.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 249-9.
a beautiful girl of the court of Louis XVI of France, and falls in love with her. Nick, who is Davy's companion on this trip, falls in love with Antoinette de St. Gre, a cousin of Helene. However, Nick leaves in anger when he discovers that his mother, who fled from Temple Bar years before, is sheltered in the St. Gre home, and that Antoinette will not forsake this old friend despite Nick's hatred of her.

Several years pass before the author, following the Romantic pattern, collects all of these scattered characters and resolves their problems. The French Revolution drives Helene to her relatives in New Orleans. Nick goes to his dying mother and is reunited with Antoinette. Davy meets Helene there, and they too are married.

Thus one may see that the plots, the romantic love themes, the incidents, which are sometimes rather incredible, and the dependence upon coincidence are typical of romance.

In common with the other romances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers, these are crowded with eminent historical personalities, some of whom move realistically through the pages while others are brought in on the flimsiest of pretexts.\(^\text{16}^\) John Paul Jones plays an important part in Richard Carvel. In fact, Churchill's portrayal of Jones is credited with arousing in his memory a nation-wide interest which resulted in the finding and transportation of his body to

the United States. Charles Fox is of only slightly less importance than Jones. Richard encounters George Washington on several occasions. He also numbers among his acquaintances Governor Sharpe and Governor Eden of Maryland, the Earl of Sandwich, Lord Baltimore, Hugh Walpole, David Garrick, and Thomas Carlyle. Stephen Brice of The Crisis becomes a friend of Abraham Lincoln, General Grant, and General Sherman, and Davy Ritchie of The Crossing meets Daniel Boone and John Sevier, has several encounters with Andrew Jackson, and is an intimate of George Rogers Clark. Many less widely-known historical characters are also found in these novels.

Churchill's treatment of these actual historical characters is another indication of romance and one on which he commented at one time. As mentioned above in Chapter I, when asked how he would portray such a character as Daniel Webster, as he was or with lapses omitted, Churchill replied that he felt it wrong to expose the weaknesses of a man like Webster because he was a sacred historical ideal. The same would be true of Hamilton, but the author would portray a man like Aaron Burr exactly as he was as there would be no loss to historical ideals. In accordance with this chivalrous belief, Churchill treats his historical Americans with the utmost generosity and, with one exception, exposes no weaknesses.

This one exception is George Rogers Clark, whom the author
pictures in the latter part of the story as an embittered man
who has become a part of a conspiracy to separate that portion
of the nation which is now Kentucky from the United States and
join it to Spanish Louisiana. The Clark of this picture is
verbose and somewhat addicted to drink, a pathetic contrast to
the earlier Clark who kept his own counsel and who admonished
Davy to "serve the people as all true men should in a republic.
But do not rely upon their gratitude." This very ingratitude
which he foresaw is the thing which has ruined Clark's life,
however, and the man who accuses him of treason excuses him by
saying that the treatment which Clark has received would bring
a blush of shame to the cheek of any nation save a republic.

Other traits in keeping with Van Doren's list of qualities
of historical romances are numerous. Each of Churchill's
heroes is of fine family. Stephen Brice comes from a once
wealthy family; Richard Garvel belongs to a wealthy colonial
family; and Davy Ritchie, although apparently a backwoods boy,
is actually the grandson of a Scottish earl. Although The
Crossing has an abundance of landscape description, the author
gives more consideration to the details of dress of his char-
acters. He is more sympathetic with the aristocratic Helene
and her class than with the French revolutionists. Davy reflects

21Ibid., p. 326.  22Ibid., p. 393.
upon the wrongs that have been done under the clause, the Rights of Man, and thinks of Louis XVI as an "amiable well-meaning gentleman" and of Helene as personifying "the courage which will go down eternally through the pages of history."\(^{23}\)

This interest in the gentlefolk rather than those of humble birth indicates that the romance in Churchill's works is similar to the romance of feudal days rather than that of the years between 1760 and 1832 when romantic writers felt that the poor were enslaved and should revolt against the upper classes. Yet such is not entirely the case. Churchill does not base a man's worth on wealth and the possession of titles. He admires only those individuals among the upper classes who are true to the ideals of chivalry. Richard Carvel and Stephen Brice are gentlemen in the eyes of society by the accident of birth, but Churchill presents them to his readers as gentlemen because they have noble instincts and gentlemanly behavior. Through Richard Carvel, he says, "There are no earls among us in America." He adds, "Our earls are those who have made their own way, like my grandfather."\(^{24}\) He condemns the nobility as a class in The Crisis when he has a German refugee describe the German nobility as immoral like the French, overbearing, and oppressive, and commends the poor as knowing that their country is to be saved only by morality and pure living.\(^{25}\) Richard also

\(^{23}\)Ibid., p. 435.


condemns the tyranny of the wealthy classes when he says that had he never been in debtor's prison, he might never have known that the American Revolution was brought on and fought by a headstrong king, backed by unscrupulous followers who held wealth above patriotism. A loyal Frenchman of The Crossing says that France is rotten through the prodigality of her kings and noblemen; and aristocratic Helene concurs in this criticism of her class when she compares Nick Temple, who is of high birth, with the nobility of her land:

'He is more or less the sort of man I have been thrown with all my life. They toil not, neither do they spin. I know you will not misunderstand me, for I am very fond of him. Mr. Temple is honest, fearless, loveable, and of good instincts. One cannot say as much for his type. They go through life fighting, gaming, horse-racing, riding to hounds--I have often thought that it was no wonder our privileges came to an end. So many of us were steeped in selfishness and vice, were a burden on the world. . . . We toyed with politics, with simplicity, we wasted the land, we played cards as our coaches passed through famine-stricken villages. The reckoning came. . . . Had our King, had our nobility, been men with the old fire, they would not have stood it. They were worn out with centuries of catering to themselves. Give me a man who will shape his life and live it with all his strength. I am tired of sham and pretence, of cynical wit, of mocking at the real things of life, of pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy. Give me a man whose existence means something.'

This strong indictment of the nobility indicates a kindred spirit with the writers of the romantic age.

In considering the poor classes, Churchill never really

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28 Ibid., p. 581.
descends to the theory of the Noble Savage, yet he does at times endow them with virtues which he denies the nobility. He speaks of the "peaceful peasants who had sought this place Kaskaskia for its remoteness from persecution, to live and die in harmony with all mankind," and Helene reminisces about the honest, red-faced peasants of her girlhood home. Moreover he credits them with more sympathy for their fellow men than may be found among the upper classes. Richard speaks of Horace Walpole as a gentleman of his own class who professes to believe Richard's story but who offers no assistance. A poor sea-captain, driven from home and employment, however, divides his last money with the unfortunate youth. Most of the lords and ladies of London drop Richard from among their companions when he is no longer the heir to a large estate, but the servant Banks, who scarcely knows Richard, tries to give him money when he is in debtor's prison. He stresses the humble origin of such historical characters as Lincoln, and he says further "that some of our best citizens came to Kentucky swinging to the tail of a patient animal."

Nevertheless, in The Crisis Churchill does not take the

31Ibid., p. 238.
usual romanticist's views; he does not use all his admirable characters to eulogize the Negro as the "Noble Savage." Judge Whipple calls slavery the greatest crime of modern times and one which must be wiped out with blood. On another occasion he calls slavery a black curse because of its demoralizing effect upon free people. On the other hand, Colonel Carvel, one of Churchill's most admirable fictional characters, feels that Negroes were meant by God to be slaves and that they are inferior people who lack the self-control necessary for members of a republic. He grants that abuses do exist under slavery as under any other system, but he feels that the slaves are better off than the poor of London in the days of the Edwards and happier than the factory hands in New England. Stephen, expressing the opinion of the conservative people of the North, speaks of slaves as property and says that conservative people believe that if men are deprived by violence of one kind of property which they hold under the law, all other kinds of property will be endangered.

This recognition that good people are divided about slavery and that some of those who oppose it do not recommend doing away with it by violence is contrary to the usual romantic method of presenting all good characters as burning with a zeal to

37 Ibid., p. 193.
emancipate enslaved peoples, by revolution if need be. This failure to romanticize greatly about the Negro is further shown by the fact that at no time does the author picture a slave as receiving harsh treatment from a master. Except for the incident of the slave auction, he shows only family servants who receive great consideration. Perhaps his most romantic treatment of the slave concerns the affection which the slave has for his master or mistress. Both Richard Cervel and The Crisis record numerous instances of such affection, and The Crossing tells how one old negro woman voluntarily comes to serve her former mistress.

Churchill makes much use of melodramatic situations involving innocence endangered but dramatically rescued at the crucial moment and violent encounters in which heroes defend delicate points of honor. When Richard is carried away on the pirate ship, the Black Moll, he gains the respect of the villainous captain by his fearless attitude but almost loses his life because of that indifference to danger when honor is involved. The captain celebrates the anniversary of the sinking of a ship by getting drunk, hauling out the Jolly Roger, and requiring all hands to salute it. When Richard refuses, the drunken sailors chase him up the masts but are too drunk to follow him. At the crucial moment John Paul Jones appears in the John, sinks the Black Moll, and saves Richard, the only person sober enough to swim away from the sinking pirate vessel.

A typical incident in which the hero must protect his honor
is to be seen in a duel between Richard and Comyn. On their first meeting the two young men like each other very much. Yet a few hours later, when Richard accidentally strikes Comyn, the latter challenges him to a duel. Only Richard's dramatic refusal to press his advantage because, to use his own words, "I protest I loved him then as one with whom I had been reared," saved the encounter from being fatal. On another such occasion Richard is challenged to ride a brutal, untamed horse, which has just killed one man, and his honor will not permit him to refuse.

The innocent heroines of both The Crisis and Richard Carvel encounter villains who would coerce them into loveless marriages. Eliphalet Hopper, the villain of The Crisis, obtains control of the Carvel business after Colonel Carvel's destitute Southern creditors are unable to pay their debts during the Civil War and the Colonel's fortune has gone to help the South. Eliphalet tries first to persuade Virginia to marry him by offering to tear up the notes he holds. When this method fails, he tries to force her into marriage by threatening to expose her father as a spy when the latter enters St. Louis in civilian clothes to visit his daughter. Stephen is conveniently present to save her from this fate.

Mr. Manners himself is a part of the plot to force Dorothy to marry the dastardly Duke of Chartersea. Mr. Manners, a title seeker, tells his daughter that the family honor is at stake.

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Churchill, Richard Carvel, p. 139.
because of some past indiscretion on his part, and that the duke will reveal this indiscretion if Dorothy does not marry him. Mr. Manners goes further and tricks Richard into an ambush where the duke and his friend lie in wait. Richard fights with the duke, forces him to leave England, and saves Dorothy.

A variation of this romantic handling of the love interest is that of the marriage of convenience in which the bridegroom, although a perfect gentleman, is much older than the bride. Helene, the heroine of The Crossing, is released from such a marriage by the timely death of her elderly husband and is left free for a romantic love match with Davy.

Certain elements such as the identification of man with nature, the supernatural, and the revolt against the moral conventions which mark much of the European literature of the romantic period are not found in Churchill's work. However, the author uses the romantic element of sentiment to a great degree. When he rescues Richard from the pirate ship, John Paul immediately realizes that the former is a gentleman though his hair is matted and he is dressed in the rough clothing of a peasant. 39 The colored servants, and even the animals, instinctively recognize "thoroughbreds" from people of baser instincts. 40 Stephen is prepared to be patronizing when he first meets Lincoln; yet,


40 Ibid., p. 35.
despite the fact that the author presents Lincoln as most un-
prepossessing in appearance, Stephen sees through the homely
shell to the greatness beneath, and a feeling of worship for
the great man is born. Virginia's hatred of Lincoln as the
personification of all Northerners dissolves in his presence.
Davy has one glimpse of John Sevier, and his instinct tells him
that Sevier is a gentleman born. These are but a few of many
instances where no logical reasons are given, where no action
serves to demonstrate the values recognized. Thus, with
Churchill characters, the emotions or the "instinct" supersedes
reason as a basis for judgment.

Churchill endows his characters with all the romantic qual-
ities. His minor women characters are given to fainting, and
many of his characters possess some great sorrow, which, inci-
dentally, is never explained. This latter quality belongs
primarily to the women; Richard's mother is sad and beautiful;
Antoinette, Mrs. Brice, and Mrs. Manners are sad; and Mrs.
Temple is described by Helene as the saddest woman she has ever
known. However, the men are not immune from this sorrow.
Davy's father, Alec Ritchie, has a great sorrow; and even Hamil-
ton, the Englishman whom the Kentucky settlers accuse of incit-
ing the Indians, has a great sorrow stamped upon his face.

On occasions, as in the metrical romances of earlier days,

an obscure origin casts a romantic haze about characters. As a child Richard's mother, along with four sailors, is picked up from a sinking ship. The child is dressed in clothing of the finest quality, and around her neck is a locket containing a miniature of a young man in a British uniform and a yellowed slip of paper with the French equivalent of these words: "She is mine although she does not wear my name." A coronet on the child's handkerchief indicates noble parentage. Inquiries reveal that the mother had secured passage under an assumed name. Davy's ancestry is also obscure. He remembers his father as an unusual mountaineer, who is called an aristocrat. A silk dress which belonged to the mother he does not remember stirs his curiosity because mountain women do not dress in silk. Nick indicates that Davy is descended from Scottish nobility. Yet this mystery of his parentage is never explained.

The heroines of these novels resemble in every detail the heroines of other historical romances as described by Van Doren. They live in luxury; they are somewhat willful and spoiled because of the adulation which has been heaped upon them; they think of nothing but beautiful clothes and jewelry and gay social occasions. Nevertheless, when need comes, they stoop to the humblest tasks or live in honorable poverty rather than in wealth for which they must sacrifice integrity. Dorothy and Virginia have lived in all the luxury that America could provide. Dorothy has been the toast of Maryland and London society.

just as Virginia has been the belle of St. Louis. When the Revolutionary War deprives Dorothy of her wealth and position, she refuses to make a wealthy marriage or to receive financial aid in any way; instead she and her mother support the family by cooking and selling Maryland dainties. Virginia, impoverished by the Civil War, refuses new gowns which an aunt would give her, in order to use the money for soldiers. Moreover, putting aside the qualms she once would have shown, she helps nurse the sick and on at least one occasion assists in an operation on a wounded soldier. Helene, accustomed to lavish court life, fearlessly undergoes the horrors of the French Revolution. As a refugee in Louisiana, she risks her life nursing the victims of yellow fever.

Villains are of the deepest dye. An account of Grafton Carvel's treachery would apply, with only slight variations, to any of these villains. Richard describes Grafton as having been a deceitful boy, who had pried in his father's papers and discovered the secret about Elizabeth, Richard's mother. When Elizabeth rejects Grafton in favor of his brother, Jack, Grafton revenges himself by telling friends that she is of spurious birth. Cast off by his father for this despicable act, Grafton tries to regain favor in later years when both Elizabeth and Jack are dead. He tries in every way possible to discredit Richard with Lionel Carvel. Failing in that, he plots to have Richard kidnapped and killed. Grafton toadies to whoever he thinks may be of help to him. Although he is really a Tory, he
pretends to be an American patriot in order to save his property. When he is discovered in a traitorous act against the American government, he flees to England. His final villainous act is to betray Richard to the English authorities when the youth is at the Manners home recovering from wounds received in the war.

The heroes are as good as the villains are bad. They are honorable, heroic, and patriotic. Despite their deeds of daring, they are always modest and humble. Davy, particularly in his boyhood, and Richard are dashing characters, frequently involved in deeds of daring. No challenge daunts them. Stephen is gracious and considerate, not inclined to violence but ready to suffer any consequence to maintain the principles in which he believes. Judge Whipple and Colonel Carvel, though not the heroes of The Crisis, are characters dear to the heart of the romanticist. Judge Whipple illustrates the blunt, harsh old man with the heart of gold, while Colonel Carvel typifies the traditional Southern gentleman with all his hospitality and chivalry. Two other men are worthy of mention. Nick Temple and Clarence Colfax, though lacking the sinister element often found in the "Byronic hero," approach him; for both are moody, melodramatic, violent, passionate, restless, and dissatisfied.

Because of the romantic and adventurous plots, the romantic characters, and the many romantic elements involved, the term romance is quite properly applied to these novels.
CHAPTER III

CHURCHILL'S POLITICAL IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES AS SEEN IN CONISTON AND MR. CREWE'S CAREER

Early in the twentieth century when many young writers were turning from a romantic survey of the past to a realistic consideration of America's civic and social problems, it was natural that Churchill should also turn his attention to such problems. The first result of his interest in politics was his successful candidacy for the New Hampshire Legislature, where he served from 1903 to 1905; this interest later found literary expression in Coniston, published in 1906, and in Mr. Crewe's Career, published in 1908. These two years served to convince him that politics were no longer in the hands of the people but had passed from them during Jackson's term as President into the hands of corrupt individuals and thence to the corporations. Describing this process, he wrote:

The Era of the first six Presidents had closed, and a new Era had begun. I am speaking of political Eras. Certain gentlemen, with a pious belief in democracy, but with a firmer determination to get on top, arose— and got on top. So many of these gentlemen arose in the different states, and they were so clever, and they found so many chinks in the Constitution to crawl through and steal the people's chestnuts, that the Era may be called the Boss-Era. After the Boss came along certain Things without souls, but of many minds, and found more chinks in the Constitution:
bigger chinks, for the Things were bigger, and they stole more chestnuts.1

Coniston is essentially a study of the rise of the boss system in American politics and sets forth methods and motives under which consolidated railroads superseded the earlier phases of government by the boss and lobby.2 Churchill bases his study on the boss system as it developed in New Hampshire, which is comprised of many small villages rather than large metropolitan areas. As a result the book portrays the rural boss whose power is entrenched in the state capital and whose retainers are neighbors who have known him always rather than the ward politician of great cities who marshals his cohorts of foreign born voters to the polls and who supports himself by mysteriously controlled city contracts and other "honest graft."3 The author draws his picture of Jethro Bass, the boss of Coniston, from the life of Ruel Durkee, the most powerful ruler New Hampshire ever had before the days of railroad rule.4 Durkee began his career in the very county in which Churchill lived; and, though he had


4Stanley Johnson, "A Novelist and His Novels in Politics," The World's Work, XVII (December, 1908), 11018.
been dead for twenty years, his political exploits were fresh in the minds of many politicians, who recounted them to Churchill with the greatest freedom, hardly foreseeing their use later in Coniston.\(^5\)

Conditions depicted in Coniston are such as would not have been tolerated by early Americans, Churchill believed. He felt that many of the Puritans who came to New England were impelled to emigrate from the old country as much by "an aversion to pulling the forelock" as by religious principles and that the spirit of these men prevailed for a time after the Revolution was fought.\(^6\) He divided early American history into two epochs of thought and action when great moral and political questions arose and overshadowed and swept away for the time all private interests. The first epoch followed the American Revolution when such men as Hamilton, Adams, and Jefferson wrote, spoke, and worked for the public good. The common people--farmers, lawyers, merchants--read their newspapers and discussed questions of self-government at country stores. The second epoch preceded the Civil War, when the great moral issues of slavery and the preservation of the Republic so pervaded the minds of men that they were willing to die for such issues.\(^7\)

During these two epochs Coniston was inhabited by men

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 11017.  
\(^6\)Churchill, Coniston, p. 542.  
\(^7\)"Churchill's Exposures Are of National Concern," The Arena, XXXVI (October, 1906), 411.
who felt that the privilege of self-government was more desirable than life and who fought that they might choose God-fearing persons to make their laws.\textsuperscript{8} For many generations God-fearing men ruled the little village. Deacon Lysander Richardson typifies the honesty of such men. Churchill describes the deacon at the town meeting as counting the ballots:

"not like another moderator I have heard of, who spilled the votes on the floor until his own man was elected. No. Had they registered his own death sentence, the deacon would have counted them straight and needed no town clerk to verify his figures.\textsuperscript{9}

But a new epoch comes when men are less attentive to governmental policies, and the incorruptible men like Deacon Lysander are ousted by unscrupulous men like Jethro. "Jethro never heard the expression about 'cracks in the Constitution,' and would not have known what it meant--he merely had the desire to get on top."\textsuperscript{10} The author pictures Jethro as overthrowing the long-established government of the town by unsavory methods. He organizes all of the dissolute and the disgruntled people of the town to vote for him. His power to bring about such an organization is derived through mortgages which he owns on farms and buildings, cows and horses. A typical campaign speech may be seen in the following conversation with Eben Williams, whose place is mortgaged to Jethro

\textsuperscript{8}Churchill, Coniston, p. 14. \textsuperscript{9}Ibid., pp. 59-60. \textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 45.
for eight hundred dollars and who has paid no interest in
the year and a half that Jethro has held the mortgage:

"Haow be you, Jethro?" he said nervously. Jethro
nodded.
"Weather looks a mite soft,"
No answer.
"About that interest," said Eben, plunging into
the dread subject, "don't know as I'm ready this month
after all."
"G-goin' to town meetin', Eben?"
"Wahn't callatin' to," answered Eben,
"G-goin' to town meetin', Eben?"
Eben, puzzled and dismayed, ran his hand through
his hair.
"Wahn't callatin' to--but I kin--I kin."
"D-Democrat--hain't ye--D-Democrat?"
"I kin be," said Eben. Then he looked at Jethro
and added in a startled voice, "Don't know but what I
be--Yes, I guess I be."
"H-heerd the ticket?"
Yes, Eben had heard the ticket. What man had not.
Some one has been most industrious, and most disinterest-
ed, in distributing that ticket.
"Hain't a mite of hurry about the interest right
now--right now," said Jethro. "M-may be along the
third week in March--may be--c-can't tell."
The third week in March was the week after the
Coniston town meeting.

Jethro is elected senior selectman, and the period of boss
control in Coniston is begun.

As the years pass Jethro's methods spread over other
towns and counties. Jethro bargains for the support of
these new local bosses, who bow to him as lieutenants to an
overlord. Jethro becomes all-powerful. "Number Seven" at
the Pelican Hotel at the state capital becomes known as the
"Throne Room," and from it Jethro rules the state. The
legislature sits to him as a sort of advisory committee;

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11Ibid., p. 53. 12Ibid., p. 79.
"an expensive advisory committee to the people, relic of an obsolete form of government,"\textsuperscript{13} comments the author.

The local boss does not necessarily hold office himself. He may, by directing the votes of those whose mortgages he holds, sell offices to men of wealth who will, in turn, do his bidding. Such is the case with Heth Sutton, Speaker of the House of Representatives, who owes his office to Bijah Bixby, one of Jethro's lieutenants. Concerning Sutton's position, Churchill writes: "The Honorable Heth . . . is the man of substance and broad acres in Clovelly: Bijah merely owns certain mortgages in that town, but he has created the Honorable Heth (politically) as surely as certain prime ministers we could name have created their sovereigns."\textsuperscript{14} The representative created in this manner is but a figurehead whose vote is sold by his boss. "Bijah—as he will not hesitate to tell you—took Heth down in his pocket to the Legislature, and has more than once delivered him in certain blocks of five and ten, and four and twenty, for certain considerations."\textsuperscript{15}

This selling of office is not limited to those of representatives. Jethro chooses the governor, as may be seen when one Coniston citizen asks, "Who be you thinkin' of for next governor, Jethro?" and another comments, "They say Alvy Hopkins of Gosport is willin' to pay for it."\textsuperscript{16} In

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 79. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.} \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 82.
speaking to the Coniston storekeeper, Hopkins confirms their opinions of Jethro's power:

"If Jethro had been real tactful," said the Honorable Alvyn, sinking down again, "he'd have introduced me as the next governor of the state. Everybody knows I want to be governor, everybody knows I've got twenty thousand dollars in the bank to pay for that privilege. Everybody knows I'm going to be governor if Jethro says so." 17

The storekeeper is a little startled by this ingenuous statement; he thinks of the monument in front of the state-house with the inscription, "The People's Government," and recalls that Hopkins has not mentioned the people; but the realistic gubernatorial aspirant is thinking only of the increase in price of high offices, for he adds, "Time was when a man could be governor for ten. Those were the good old days--eh, Jethro?" 18

When a representative to the state assembly has rendered particularly good service to Jethro, he may be awarded a seat in the national legislature. This happens to Heth Sutton, whose adroitness in handling a particularly difficult piece of legislative work leads to the higher office:

He came to Coniston a private citizen, and drove away to all intents and purposes a congressman: the darling wish of his life realized after heaven knows how many caucuses and conventions of disappointment, when Jethro had judged it expedient for one reason or another that a north countryman should go. By the time the pair reached Brampton, Chamberlain Bixby was introducing his chief as Congressman Sutton, and by this title he was known for many years to come. 19

17 Ibid., pp. 169-70. 18 Ibid., p. 170. 19 Ibid., pp. 221-2.
Heth Sutton is typical of the politicians whom Jethro and other bosses choose. He is conceited and pompous. Capable of a certain political shrewdness, he still is not a man of great intellect. Although he may deliver noble orations in which he declares that he is in Congress at no man’s bidding but as a servant of the common people, his only allegiance is to his boss. His only reason for wanting public office is the prestige which such a position holds, and he is willing to pay handsomely for that prestige.

Churchill believed that America was in a third political epoch when people were so absorbed in their own affairs that they had neglected to do their share in a government that depended upon individual interest and had grown to regard politics as a form of traffic, a trifle nefarious, to be indulged in by those who wished to make money. Moreover, he felt that most people were unaware that self-government had been taken from them and cherished the delusion that they still had it. The author reflects these ideas in Coniston, where the attitudes of the people vary from a rather cynical acceptance of the situation to utter ignorance of it. The politicians and some of the more observant of the common

20 Ibid., p. 230.

21 “Churchill’s Exposures are of National Concern,” The Arena, XXXVI (October, 1906), 411.

22 Ibid.
citizens recognize Jethro's power; they know that senators, representatives, judges, and governors come to Jethro to get their orders, and that he can make or break them at a word.\textsuperscript{23} Alexander Duncan, a wealthy railroad president, knows about politics and finds them disgusting;\textsuperscript{24} yet, instead of using his great wealth and influence to correct the condition, he buys representatives to do his will\textsuperscript{25} and sometimes uses Jethro.\textsuperscript{26} However, Duncan's wife apparently is ignorant of political conditions, for she naively supposes that Sutton would not have his position if he did not know everyone in his district.\textsuperscript{27} Jethro's ward, Cynthia Wetherell, illustrates the unsuspecting acceptance of politics of most of the women of her time. She innocently comments that Jethro makes all the judges and senators and congressmen in the state and wonders why Beth Sutton says the people elected him.\textsuperscript{28} She believes, however, that the people can always be trusted to do what is right, and that they have chosen Jethro to perform their political duties because he is "so great and good."\textsuperscript{29} The Coniston minister feels that the ways and standards of politicians are set apart from those of other citizens and are not to be judged by people not in public life; he does

\textsuperscript{23}Churchill, Coniston, p. 221. \textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 188.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 165. \textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 169. \textsuperscript{27}Ibid., p. 290.
\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 230. \textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 231.
not stop to consider that Jethro and men like him are responsible for the disreputable condition of politics.\textsuperscript{30} The stage driver points out that a gentleman is too good for politics.\textsuperscript{31}

Even worse than ignorance and indifference is the perverted pride with which some of the Coniston townspeople view Jethro's achievements. Even the good minister takes a secret pride in his fellow townsman. When Jethro voluntarily relinquishes his power in later years, many of the townspeople are resentful, for their town has fallen from its mighty estate, and they no longer bask in reflected glory. Thus the attitude of the time encourages Jethro's brand of politics and enables the boss not only to exist but also to perpetuate his power through such figureheads as Hopkins and Sutton.

This power which Jethro acquires through the politicians whom he "owns" is but a means to an end. Once he has obtained control of a sufficient number of representatives and of the governor, he is in a position to control all legislation, thereby reaping the benefits of his political labors. Since he creates the judges, he controls the courts also. Business men are powerless before him; they must deal with him if they have any legal cases.\textsuperscript{32} Isaac Worthington, complaining that Jethro owns the judges body and soul, says that if he has a case to try concerning his mills or the bank, he finds Jethro mixed up in it some way before he is through and

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 221. \textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 111. \textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 97.
is forced to arrange matters with him. On another occasion Worthington wants a franchise to extend his railroad. He attempts by legitimate means to get the bill through the legislature but is unable to get it reported out of the Committee on Corporations, which like all other committees in the legislature is described as being "in Jethro's pocket." Eventually Worthington must plead with Jethro to set a price for passing the bill. Churchill presents a vicious cycle of bribery and corruption in which the boss receives payment from all sides. Some men pay him for office; then he uses them to pass or to prevent certain legislation for which other men have paid him. He takes the "lion's share" of such spoils, but his lieutenants also reap a rich harvest as may be seen by Churchill's statement that many suits, and injunctions, and appeals to the legislature were made after the extension of the Truro Railroad, and that in all these affairs Bijah Bixby and other gentlemen found both pleasure and remuneration. He adds, "Mr. Bixby will sit on the sunny side of his barns in Clovelly and tell you stories of that golden period with tears in his eyes, when he went to conventions with a pocketful of proxies from the river towns, and controlled in the greatest legislative year of all a 'block' which included the President of the Senate, for which he got the fabulous sum of ---." Other indications

of the financial returns to the boss may be seen in some of Jethro's typical transactions. After Alva Hopkins becomes governor, his daughter declares that he paid twenty thousand dollars to receive that office and that Jethro must have received half.\textsuperscript{36} Worthington offers Jethro twenty thousand dollars for the passage of a railroad consolidation bill.\textsuperscript{37} It is obvious then that Jethro's interest in politics arises neither from a desire for honor nor a desire to serve the people.

These illustrations may indicate that only the wealthy are affected by the boss's political maneuvers, but such is not the case. No transaction is too big for Jethro, yet none is too small. He chooses the postmasters as well as the governors. When Cynthia plans to ask for a school, Jethro knows that had the place been promised ten times over, a word from him to the prudential committee would obtain the place for her.\textsuperscript{38}

The political boss sometimes has a struggle to maintain his supremacy, and even Jethro is occasionally forced to fight. Some of the political chicanery to which he resorts is shown in his clash with the railroad forces when he tries to pass the Truro Franchise Bill, Worthington's extension bill. Jethro is not certain that he can get the

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 223. \textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 507. \textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 402.
bill through the lower house because railroad forces are fighting it and have bought the votes of most of those legislators whom Jethro does not "own." The scattering of honest representatives, whose support is doubtful, may be enough to carry the vote for the railroad. A travelling company arrives to give a performance of Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Jethro sees an opportunity to defeat his opponents. He "permits" a man who wishes to become governor to give complimentary tickets to all of the delegates; one of his pawns then suggests an adjournment of the usual evening session. Still another member requests that there be no adjournment as there are many bills of importance to the little farmers, which need attention before the legislature adjourns for the term. The latter's request is granted, and the session is held as usual; however, most of the railroad representatives, believing that too few delegates to pass major legislation will be present, attend the theater. Jethro sends townspeople to the play to fill the seats of his delegates in order to delude the railroad leaders; his forces attend the night session; a quorum is present, and the bill passes.

If government in New Hampshire had changed from government "by the people, for the people" to government "by the boss, for the boss," Churchill saw in the corporations an even greater threat to the welfare of the people. In Coniston, Isaac Worthington, who sees the great power that a railroad may possess, represents this threat:
Mr. Worthington meant that his son should eventually own the state itself, for he saw that the men who controlled the highways of a state could snap his fingers at governor and council and legislature and judiciary: could, indeed, do more—could own them even more completely than Jethro Bass now owned them, and without effort. The dividends would do the work: would canvass the counties and persuade this man and that with sufficient eloquence. 39

In his efforts to wrest power from Jethro, Worthington appeals to the people as a reformer, but clear-sighted men see that the changes he hopes to make will not be for the better. Stephen Merrill, himself a railroad president who had dealt with Jethro, realizes that political conditions will be worse and denounces Worthington's changes:

"Change them!" he cried bitterly, "change them for the worse, if he can. He will try to wrest the power from Jethro Bass. I don't defend him. I don't defend myself. But I like Jethro Bass. I won't deny it. He's human, and I like him, and whatever they say about him I know that he's been a true friend to me. And I tell you as I hope for happiness here and hereafter, that if Worthington succeeds in what he is trying to do, if the railroads win in this fight, there will be no mercy for the people of that state. I'm a railroad man myself, though I have no interest in this affair. My turn may come later. Will come later, I suppose. Isaac D. Worthington has a very little heart or soul or mercy himself; but the corporation which he means to set up will have none at all. It will grind the people and debase them and clog their progress a hundred times more than Jethro Bass has done..." 40

The mighty struggle between the boss and the corporation-to-be comes over a railroad consolidation bill. In initial skirmishes Jethro is victorious. Then, Cynthia becomes aware of the fact that Jethro is not chosen by the people to make their laws because he is "so great and good," as she had once

39 Ibid., p. 345. 40 Ibid., p. 356.
thought; she discovers that he has, instead, wrested this power from the people. Jethro, acknowledging that her notions of right and wrong are the principles of good people,\textsuperscript{41} retires from politics and leaves the field clear for the railroad forces under Worthington. Many of Jethro's lieutenants join this group. Newspapers carry articles "exposing" Jethro's methods, and "many private citizens--who had participated in politics only to the extent of voting for such candidates as Jethro in his wisdom had seen fit to give them, read the articles and began to say that boss domination was at an end."\textsuperscript{42}

Jethro is completely inactive, and another man is chosen selectman, the only official political position which Jethro has ever held. However, Churchill shows that the new man does not represent the choice of an intelligent, thinking community which is striving to clean up its political situation. He shows Bijah Bixby, now a worker for Worthington, going among the Coniston farmers two days before the March town-meeting day with his clothes "bulging out in places when he began, and seemingly normal enough when he had finished."\textsuperscript{43} He gives us a picture of Worthington's part in this episode, as well as some of the future plans and the character of this professed reformer, in a conversation between the railroad man and his adviser, Gus Flint:

\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 392. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{42}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 423.

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 425.
"So that scoundrel Bass is actually discredited at last," he said. . . . "I lose patience when I think how long we've stood the rascal in this state. I knew the people would rise in their indignation when they learned the truth about him."

Mr. Flint did not answer this. He might have had other views.

"I wonder we did not think of it before," Mr. Worthington continued. "A very simple remedy, and only requiring a little courage and--and--" (Mr. Worthington was going to say money, but thought better of it) "and the chimera disappears. . . ."

"Well, what's the outlay up to the present? Large, I suppose. Well, whatever it is, it's small compared to what we'll get for it." He laughed a little and rubbed his hands, and then he remembered that capacity in which he stood before the world. Yes, and he stood before himself in the same capacity. Isaac Worthington may have deceived himself, but he may or may not have been a hero to his senechal. "We have to fight fire with fire," he added, in a pained voice. "Let me see the account."

"I have tabulated the expense in the different cities and towns," answered Mr. Flint; "I will show you the account in a little while. The expenses in Coniston were somewhat greater than the size of the town justified, perhaps. But Sutton Sutton has now joined the railroad group thought--"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Mr. Worthington, "if it had cost as much to carry Coniston as Newcastle, it would have been worth it—for the moral effect alone."

Moral effect! Mr. Flint thought of Mr. Bixby with his bulging pockets going about the hills, and smiled at the manner in which moral effects are sometimes obtained.44

Personal rather than business interests may influence politicians' actions, and revenge upon an enemy may affect a small locality or the entire state. Worthington, who has always been a bitter enemy of Jethro and who now feels that Jethro is powerless, has Cynthia dismissed from her school because he opposes his son's wish to marry her. One member of the prudential committee is violently opposed to

44Ibid., pp. 430-1.
dismissing Cynthia. Another member who is Worthington's tool asks the third member whether or not he is "a-goin' to stick by what you agreed--by your principles," and the latter, whose mortgage Worthington holds, replies that he is going to stick by his bread and butter. 45

In retaliation for Worthington's action concerning Cynthia, Jethro returns to the political scene. In describing the battle for power which follows Jethro's return, Churchill shows the freedom with which money is paid out to those who are of political value by both sides in the fight. Three men who are opposed to the proposed consolidation have already offered Jethro sums that "would seem fabulous to many people, and had seemed so to them" to take charge of the fight, and now they renew their offers. One of them, although he "had not actually driven the pack-mules, laden with treasure, to the Pelican House, where Jethro might see them from his window" calls for a private interview and leaves the end of his personal check-book protruding from his pocket. 46

Less important politicians share in this wealth as the author shows:

If you can buy one member of the lower house for ten dollars, how many members can you buy for fifty? It was no such problem in primary arithmetic that Mr. Balch and his associates had to solve--theirs was in higher mathematics, in permutations and combinations,

and in least squares. No wonder the old campaigners speak with tears in their eyes of the days of that ever memorable summer. There were spoils to be picked up in the very streets richer than the sack of the thirty cities; and as the session wore on it is affirmed by men still living that money rained down in the Capitol Park and elsewhere like manna from the skies, if you were one of a chosen band. If you were, all you had to do was to look in your vest pockets when you took your clothes off in the evening and extract enough legal tender to pay your bill at the Pelican for a week.... Men who had never seen a receiving teller opened bank accounts. No, it was not a problem in simple arithmetic, and Mr. Balch and Mr. Flint, and even Mr. Duncan and Mr. Worthington, covered whole sheets with figures during the stifling days in July. Some men are so valuable that they can be bought twice, or even three times, and they make figuring complicated.\textsuperscript{47}

Again a personal consideration affects the entire state, for Jethro sells his victory to Worthington for the latter's consent to his son's marriage to Cynthia.

Jethro ends his political career with the formation of a great railroad corporation which he has helped to create, just as his original, Ruel Durkee of New Hampshire, had done some twenty years before Coniston was written. The author considers Jethro and the conditions depicted in the novel typical of an era both in New Hampshire and the rest of the United States.\textsuperscript{48}

Stephen Merrill prophesied that the corporation set up by Worthington would have no heart or soul, and Churchill believed that prophecy had been fulfilled in the years following Durkee's death. During those years New Hampshire had been subjected to domination by the Boston and Maine Railroad

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., pp. 495-6. \quad \textsuperscript{48} Ibid., pp. 541-2.
through wholesale distribution of passes as retainers to leading attorneys, politicians, and newspapers throughout the state irrespective of party and by other seductive and compelling influences.\footnote{James W. Remick, "Winston Churchill and His Campaign," \textit{The Outlook}, LXXX (September 1, 1906), 17.} Churchill himself had some first-hand experience with this practice of buying a politician's favor with passes. In his race for governor in 1905 he told how the Boston and Maine Railroad sent him a pass when he was elected to the New Hampshire Legislature in 1903. He declared, however, that even at that time he was not ignorant enough to believe the railroad was disinterested in politics and that the gift of the pass was entirely charitable; feeling that he would be obligated to the railroad if he accepted the pass, he threw it away.\footnote{"Churchill's Exposures Are of National Concern," \textit{The Arena}, XXXVI (October, 1906), 412.} This experience and many others which he recounted might have been taken direct from \textit{Mr. Crewe's Career},\footnote{"Winston Churchill and Everett Colby," \textit{The Outlook}, XC (September 19, 1906), 93.} where he demonstrates first this bribery through passes.

The Boston and Maine Railroad is represented in this novel by the United Northeastern Railroads, which grew out of the consolidation which Jethro permitted. Gus Flint, Worthington's assistant who engineered the consolidation bill
and directed the campaign for its passage, is the absentee ruler, who now governs the state through railroad lawyers and other employees. To make this government simple and easy, Flint sees that all influential men are indebted to the railroad for free travel. Austen Vane, the romantic hero of the story, has scarcely begun to show his ability as a lawyer when he receives a pass from the Northeastern informing him that he may travel free for the rest of the year; it is inscribed on the back with the statement, "It is understood that this pass is accepted by its recipient as a retainer." Austen expresses Churchill's criticism of this practice of "retaining" all the lawyers of any ability in the state as it makes it difficult for poor people who have righteous claims against the railroad to get efficient lawyers. Newspapermen, too, sell their services to the railroad for mileage books and advertising. The speaker of the house and many legislators are recipients of passes. These pass holders form a veritable army when the corporation faces any sort of opposition, either in the legislature or from other sources.

With so much power behind him a single important railroad employee may then direct the government of the state:

52 Churchill, *Mr. Crewe's Career*, p. 35.

53 Ibid., p. 43.
"When I went down to Concord three years ago," said Mr. Churchill, "I found in a room in one of the hotels there an old man to whom every single bill that came up was submitted before being offered on the floor of the House or Senate, and if he approved it was offered; if he did not, the bill went into the waste-basket. There was no exception to that rule. I went to him myself one day with a bill to improve the roads all over the State at State expense. It is needless to say what happened to my bill. That old gentleman, who died not long ago, was a division superintendent of the Boston and Maine Railroad, and he certainly kept the machinery of the State government well oiled and running smoothly."

This division superintendent, who occupied "Number Seven" of the Eagle Hotel in Concord, had his counterpart in Mr. Crewe's Career in Hilary Vane, the chief railroad counsel in the state. From the Railroad Room, which corresponds to Jethro Bass's "Throne Room" in the old Pelican, Hilary controls the government, subject only to his superior, Gus Flint.

That Churchill believed that the governor was completely subservient to the railroad may be seen by the fact that his room is connected with Hilary's by folding doors, a convenient arrangement whereby the governor is always near to receive orders. This complaisant governor delivers an inaugural speech which is largely Hilary's work. This speech is described as a noble speech with much in it about the people and the sacred government they have inherited from their forefathers and much about the high character and achievements of the people of the state. Lincoln and the Republican Party are praised in the speech. It presents some noble ideas...

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53 "Winston Churchill and Everett Colby," The Outlook, X0 (September 19, 1908), 93.
concerning the curtailment of expenses, the protection of forests, the improvement of roads, and the careful observation of corporations. However, the author ironically recounts the history of this noble speech:

It was well for the applauding, deep-breathing audience in the state-house that first of January that they did not have a glimpse in room Number Seven the night before, under the sheets that contained the list of the Speaker's committees; it was well that they could not go back to Ripton into the offices on the square, earlier in December, where Mr. Hamilton Tooting a minor railroad lawyer was writing the noble part of that inaugural from the memoranda given him by the Honourable Hilary Vane. Yes, the versatile Mr. Tooting, and none other, doomed forever to hide the light of his genius under a bushel! The financial part was written by the Governor-general himself—the Honourable Hilary Vane. And when it was all finished and revised, it was put into a long envelope which bore this printed address: Augustus P. Flint, Pres't United Northeastern Railroads, New York. And came back with certain annotations on the margin, which were duly incorporated into it. This is the private history (which must never be told) of the document which on January first became, as far as fame and posterity is concerned, the Honourable Asa P. Gray's—forever and forever.55

Furthermore, the author believed that all key legislators were chosen by the railroad. He pictures Flint as selecting the Republican candidates for the twenty senatorial districts of the state.56 Before the opening of the session the speaker meets with Hilary, the division superintendent of the Northeastern, and the Northeastern's capital lawyer and, with

54 Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career, p. 139.
55 Ibid., pp. 139-40.
56 Ibid., p. 94.
their assistance, makes up the lists of his committees. All of the important committees are headed by and largely composed of those who serve the railroad. With the governor, all of the senators, the speaker, and many pass-carrying representatives, including the Democratic leader of the minority forces, under his control, Hilary is able to keep the government "well oiled and running smoothly" for the railroad.

The government runs so smoothly, in fact, that many legislators do not attend the sessions at all except when they receive mysterious hints to do so. Others play poker in the state-house cellar waiting for word to go up to vote.

Churchill did not believe that all or even a great majority of the representatives were tools of the railroad, however. Through many characters he indicates that there is a great deal of anti-railroad feeling but that it is not efficiently organized. Moreover, the honest country members, who oppose the railroad, are so ignorant of parliamentary procedure that they are unable to hold their own against the trained leaders of the corporation forces. One member states, "The railroader sends them slick cusses down here that sit in the front seats who know all this here parliamentary law and the tricks of the trade, and every time any of us

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\[57\textit{Ibid.}, p. 134.\] \[58\textit{Ibid.}, p. 146.\]
gets up to speak our honest minds, they have us ruled out of order . . . "59 Austen Vane, who opposes the tactics of the railroad, tells his father, "In my opinion, if a man of any ability whatever should get up on the floor of the House and make an argument for the Pingoquit bill, the sentiment against the Northeastern and its political power is so great that the House would compel the committee to report the bill and pass it."60 Churchill also believed that the majority of the voters of the state were tired of railroad rule and wanted a return of political control to the people. Humphrey Crewe reflects this belief when he states that there is an overwhelming sentiment among the voters of the state for decent politics.61

Yet anti-railroad sentiment remains unorganized, and the corporation continues to control the government. Austen Vane explains the purpose of this railroad domination by saying, "There is no doubt that the Northeastern Railroads have seized the government of this State for three main reasons: to throttle competition; to control our railroad commission in order that we may not get the service and safety to which we are entitled—so increasing dividends; and to make and maintain laws which enable them to bribe with passes, to pay less taxes than they should, and to manipulate political machinery."62

59Ibid., p. 162. 60Ibid., p. 184. 61Ibid., p. 277. 62Ibid., pp. 177-8.
Flint inadvertently verifies Austen's statement at a moment when he believes control is slipping from his hands:

"Do you realize what it means if we lose control? Thousands and thousands of dollars in improvements—rolling stock, better service, new bridges, and elimination of grade crossings. And they'll raise our tax to the average, which means thousands more. A new railroad commission that we can't talk to, and lower dividends—lower dividends, do you understand? That means trouble with the directors, the stockholders, and calls for explanations. And what explanations can I make which can be printed in a public report?"

The railroad's method of throttling competition is to bury in committees any request for a franchise for a road. Churchill described the Committee on Railroads in the New Hampshire Legislature as bestowing so much careful consideration upon franchises for electric roads which would parallel the Boston and Maine Railroad that these measures were never reported back to the House until two or three days before the close of the session. The same method is used in Mr. Crewe's Career, where a bill for a railroad is kept in committee until an unusual situation forces the committee to report it back to the house.

However, reaching the house does not insure the passage of the bill despite the fact that a majority of that body is anti-railroad in sentiment. The railroad sets to work to kill the bill. Calls go out all over the country for

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workers to report to the capital, and overnight an army is mobilized to fight the bill. Describing the pressure brought to bear upon the members of the legislature, the author writes:

Every member of the House from Putnam County, for instance, was seen by one of those indefatigable captains, and if the member had a mortgage or an ambition, or a wife and a family that made life a problem, or a situation on the railroad or in some of the larger manufacturing establishments, let him beware! If he lived in lodgings in the town, he stuck his head out of the window to perceive a cheery neighbour from the country on his doorstep. Think of a system which could do this, not for Putnam County alone, but for all the counties of the State!\textsuperscript{65}

When the actual battle begins on the floor, skilled parliamentarians and lawyers defend the railroad as a benevolent institution to which the state owes its prosperity. Hilary Vane also makes a clever appeal to the country members by presenting the railroad arguments through some of the less polished delegates. "A grave farmer with a beard delivers a short and temperate speech (which he has by heart), mildly inquiring what the State would do without the Northeastern Railroads; and the very moderation of this query coming from a plain and hardheaded agriculturist (the boss of Grenville, if one but knew it) has a telling effect."\textsuperscript{66}

Such appeals may convince some delegates, but more of them vote in blind obedience to railroad orders. Actually, many

\textsuperscript{65} Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career, p. 225.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p. 229.
delegates do not really understand what is happening, for many carry slips of paper which read:

"Vote yes on the question. Yes means that the report of the Committee will be accepted, and that the Pingsquit bill will not pass. Wait for Bascom's signal, and destroy this paper."67

This method of fighting bills is not limited to those which might prove inimical to the railroad through creating competition; any bill which might bring about an increase in taxes is also fought if, by any chance, it is reported out of committee. Conversely, the railroad uses this same method to pass bills which are obviously intended for the purpose of helping the corporation to maintain its supremacy. One constituent complains to Austen about the railroad tactics in regard to an anti-pass bill which has been proposed to eliminate bribery through free transportation. The law forbids anyone to ride on a pass except railroad presidents, directors, express messengers, and persons in misfortune. But the railroad forces nullify the effect of the bill by adding the words, "and others to whom passes have been granted by the proper officers."68 This last incident seems to come directly from the New Hampshire statutes where the first section of one law forbade the railroad to issue passes to legislators and other public officers, but the second section compelled the railroad to carry such officers free.69

67Ibid., p. 230. 68Ibid., p. 163.
69"Winston Churchill and Everett Colby," The Outlook, XC (September 19, 1908), 93.
Churchill points out further that, because of its political power, the railroad controls the railroad commission in order to avoid rendering the service and safety to which the public is entitled. Grade crossings are represented as death traps; frequently no signal is given near enough such crossings to warn travellers. Yet, when accidents occur, the railroad commission whitewashes the case to save the railroad, and the victims are persuaded to sign releases for small sums.

If many of the incidents in Mr. Crewe's Career bear a striking resemblance to those which occurred during Churchill's term in the New Hampshire Legislature, others parallel his experiences as a candidate of the Lincoln Republican Club for the Republican nomination for governor of New Hampshire in 1906. The author is depicted as weaving much of his experience as a campaigner, but little of his personality, into the creation of Humphrey Crewe. However, the ways in which they obtained invitations to run for governor differ. Humphrey Crewe, a self-styled reformer who actually uses the tactics of those whom he condemns, solicits this invitation. Churchill's invitation came from thirteen distinguished New Hampshire Republicans who formed the Lincoln Republican Club, which advocated the abolition of free passes, a primary law to permit a direct vote by the people for candidates, a corrupt practices act prohibiting political contributions from

70Johnson, op. cit., p. 11019.
corporations and requiring publication of campaign expenses, practical abolition of the lobby by requiring registration and publicity, and the election of railroad commissioners by the people.\textsuperscript{71} Churchill heartily approved the platform and suggested that it be presented to the other candidates. If they approved the platform, he felt that reform would be assured, and he indicated that he would be glad to efface himself in behalf of any other of the candidates whom the club saw fit to endorse.\textsuperscript{72}

It is worthy of note, however, that the distinguished Republican who suggested Churchill as a reform candidate did not sign the invitation along with the other thirteen. His reason is shown in a letter.

I have always admired Mr. Churchill, and his splendid work in the last House in the interest of all reform bills greatly increased my admiration of the man, and his name came to me as one on whom all parties could unite, and who would make a Governor of whom we all would be proud. Since I wrote you, it has been intimated to me in strong language that his name would not be acceptable to the railroad interests of the State, but would be strongly opposed. This was a great surprise to me, and I learned it with disappointment and regret.\textsuperscript{73}

Crewe was opposed by the railroad in his gubernatorial race just as Churchill was. Many of the same charges were hurled at the two, and they received much the same treatment at the hands of the newspapers. Each is attacked as a sort of foreigner who dares criticize his adopted state. Despite his statement that he would be glad to support any other

\textsuperscript{71}Remick, op. cit., p. 21. \textsuperscript{72}Ibid. \textsuperscript{73}Ibid.
candidate who would accept the platform of the Lincoln Republican Club, Churchill was accused of having an "itch for office." Crewe is opposed as a summer resident, who, to satisfy his "lust for office" defames the state. In the early days of their campaign the railroad is able to prevent attendance at their meetings. His campaign manager tells Crewe that the men are afraid to come themselves because the "railroad's fixed 'em" . . . "The Treadways and all the people who own factories served notice on their men that if they paid any attention to this meeting they'd lose their job." At the outset of Churchill's campaign there was an attempt to boycott his meetings by discouraging attendance, then by misrepresenting them as insignificant and composed of Democrats and women. At first no state newspapers would report his meetings, but such an interest was aroused and such a demand was made by the people for reports that newspapers responded and daily disseminated his speeches throughout the state. Crewe meets with like treatment; when he manages to defeat the railroad forces in the house on one occasion, his part in the event is scarcely mentioned.

There is also some similarity in the circumstances

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74 Ibid., p. 21. 75 Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career, p. 268.
76 Ibid., pp. 329-30. 77 Remick, op. cit., p. 22.
78 Ibid. 79 Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career, p. 234.
which bring the two men into the gubernatorial race. In each case there is a great deal of anti-railroad sentiment and some confusion among the railroad forces. Crewe's fight against those forces in the legislature gives a strong impetus to his campaign. His threat to railroad control is so great that the railroad is forced to withdraw its support from the candidate to whom Flint has promised the nomination and who has already spent some nine thousand dollars. This candidate is promised the nomination for the next year after discontent with the railroad has blown over.\textsuperscript{80} Flint chooses another candidate whose connection with the Northeastern is not so obvious. Confusion arose in New Hampshire when the Boston and Maine division superintendent who had ruled the state and who had a long list of men picked out and waiting for the nomination for governor died. Then each of two men on that list claimed that he had been promised the next chance to run for governor. Both sought the office, and Churchill and his associates in reform thought that they would never have a better chance to fight the machine.\textsuperscript{81}

Throughout the novel Churchill strongly denounces the lax convention laws of his state where the Republican candidates are chosen at party caucuses and where such choice is

\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 344.

\textsuperscript{81}"Winston Churchill and Everett Colby," \textit{The Outlook}, XC (September 19, 1908), 93.
almost equivalent to election. He writes:

General Doby, chairman of the committee, an impres-
sive but mournful figure, could not call a roll if he
wanted to. Not that he will want to! Impossible to
tell, by the convention laws of the State, whether the
duly elected delegates of Hull or Mercer or Truro are
here or not, since their credentials may be bought or
sold or conferred.\textsuperscript{82}

That dishonesty prevails where there is no means of check-
ing credentials and knowing who is qualified to vote is
shown when on some ballots as many as thirty-one votes are
cast beyond the number of actual delegates to the convention.
Churchill accounts for those extra votes in this conversa-
tion between an interested individual and a chauffeur:

\textbf{Individual}: Do you want to come in and see the
convention and vote?

\textbf{Chauffeur}: I am a Frenchman.

\textbf{Individual}: That doesn't cut any ice. I'll make
out the ballot, and all you'll have to do is to drop
it in the box.

\textbf{Chauffeur}: All right; I vote for Meester Crewe.
Sudden disappearance of the individual.\textsuperscript{83}

Nor does this conversation show all the dishonest efforts.

The Duke of Putnam, for example, knows how many creden-
tials there are in his county—say, seventy-six. He
counts the men present and voting and his result is
sixty-one. Fifteen are absent, getting food or—some-
thing else. Fifteen vote over again. But as the hu-
man brain is prone to error, and there are men in the
street, the Duke miscalculates; the Earl of Haines
miscalculates, too. Result—eleven over a thousand
votes, and some nine hundred men in the hall.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{82}\textit{Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career}, p. 440.

\textsuperscript{83}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 448. \quad \textsuperscript{84}\textit{Ibid.}
This same dishonesty which arose from lax laws deprived Churchill of the office which he sought. On the first ballot at the New Hampshire Republican Convention, Churchill was the leading candidate. However, the railroad forces combined and elected a candidate by a narrow margin of eight votes. Nevertheless, to win by so small a margin, the party machine brought unqualified voters in over the fire escape. Had the candidate been chosen by a direct primary, there is little doubt but that Churchill would have been elected.

Although he was defeated for the office, Churchill won a victory. Before the convention he committed all of his adversaries to the principles for which he contended, and these principles were unanimously incorporated into the Republican platform. That the author may not have been entirely convinced that such a platform would be followed is indicated by the irony with which he describes a similar victory for Crewe:

85 "Churchill's Virtual Victory," The Outlook, LXXXIV (September 29, 1906), 243.

86 "Winston Churchill and Everett Colby," The Outlook, XC (September 19, 1908), 93.

87 Johnson, op. cit., p. 11018.

88 "Churchill's Virtual Victory," The Outlook, LXXXIV (September 29, 1906), 243.
Now the platform is being read by State Senator Billings; closed eyes would best suit this proceeding, too. As a parallel to that platform, one can think only of the Ten Commandments. The Republican Party (chosen children of Israel) must be kept free from the domination of corporations. (Cheers and banner waving for a full minute.) Some better method of choosing delegates which will more truly reflect the will of the people. (Plank of the Honourable Jacob Boucher, whose conscience is awakening.) Never mind the rest. It is a triumph for Mr. Crewe, and is all printed in that orthodox (reform!) newspaper, the State Tribune, with urgent editorials that it must be carried out to the letter.89

Perhaps his books brought about even more widespread effects than Churchill's candidacy. The appearance of Coniston evoked both a eulogy of Durkee's career and an apology for his action. Churchill was challenged to say whether he meant to reincarnate Durkee in Jethro Bass, and he added fuel to the fire with his answer that he had not pictured Durkee, who was a perfect example of the modern political boss, so bad as he actually was.90 The book served also to focus attention upon the legislators. The session of the New Hampshire Legislature immediately following the publication of Coniston was characterized by the ill nature of the old leaders, who found themselves watched by the people for the first time in their political experience. According to one writer no tribute to his service in awakening the conscience of the voters could be better than the words of a Democratic leader in the House, who rose during one of the heated sessions to remark, "Winston Churchill has done

89 Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career, p. 441.
90 Johnson, op. cit., p. 11018.
more harm to the good name of New Hampshire than 10,000 Jethro Basses could have accomplished."91

The most striking result followed the publication of Mr. Crewe's Career. In this novel much complaint is made against the railroad for increases in both passenger and freight rates. Austen Vane discovers that the consolidation bill which had created the United Northeastern Railroads carried a clause stating: "The rates for fares and freights existing at the time of the passage of this act shall not be increased on the roads leased or united under it."92 Austen plans to bring suit against the railroad for violation of this clause. The same condition actually existed in New Hampshire; a statute of 1909 embodied the same inhibition and had also been violated.93 Churchill's followers demanded that the state act against the Boston and Maine Railroad for this violation, and the attorney-general promptly filed "an information."94

Thus, even in defeat, Churchill brought about such interest in reform that one writer spoke of him as the first of the literary reformers.95 Moreover, he felt confident

91Ibid., p. 11017.
92Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career, p. 256.
93Johnson, op. cit., p. 11019. 94Ibid.
that the eras of boss domination and railroad control were at an end:

"It doesn't matter," said Austen, "whether the Northeastern Railroads have succeeded this time in nominating and electing a governor to whom they can dictate, and who will reappoint railroad commissioners and other State officials in their interests. The practices by which you have controlled this State, Mr. Flint, and elected governors and councillors and State and national senators are doomed. However necessary these practices may have been from your point of view, they violated every principle of free government, and were they to continue, the nation to which we belong would inevitably decay and become the scorn of the world. Those practices depended for their success on one condition,--which in itself is the most serious of ills in a republic,--the ignorance and disregard of the voter. You have but to read the signs of the times to see clearly that the day of such conditions is past, to see that the citizens of this State and this country are thinking for themselves, as they should; are alive to the danger, and determined to avert it. You may succeed in electing one more governor and one more senator, or two, before the people are able to destroy the machinery you have built up and repeal the laws you have made to sustain it. I repeat, it doesn't matter in the long run. The era of political domination by a corporation, and mainly for the benefit of a corporation, is over."

He saw an apathetic and indifferent public as having caused such a condition in the beginning; for he stated in a political speech that if servants were permitted to run the master's house, they would do so for their own pecuniary benefit, and that in such cases the masters are more culpable, if, having discovered the situation, they do not stop it.

He credited the heads of corporations with having honestly believed that their tactics were necessary to prevent ruin:

96Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career, p. 468.

97Johnson, op. cit., p. 11019, quoted from a political speech.
"... The railroads, before they consolidated, found the political boss in power, and had to pay him for favors. ... We mustn't blame the railroads too severely, when they grew strong enough, for substituting their own political army to avoid being blackmailed."

He believed further that the government should render justice to the corporations, and he was confident that the corporations would receive justice if they voluntarily relinquished their power, but that they might suffer vengeance if they continued to follow their course of corruption and bribery.

From a study of these two novels one may draw a conclusion as to Churchill's political beliefs. He felt that public apathy had allowed unscrupulous men to gain control of politics. These men, who were not concerned with the welfare of their fellow men or that of the state, used their political power to further their own interests. They sold the offices of senator and governor to the highest bidders; they created judges in the same manner. Having made these officials, the politicians were then able to control all legislation and all court decisions; for senators, governors, and judges obeyed the dictates of their creators. These bosses, at first able to obtain large sums from businesses, were finally forced to yield their power to large corporations, particularly the railroads. The corporations followed the pattern of the individual boss; they controlled all high

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99 Ibid., p. 469.
100 Ibid., p. 472.
political offices, all court decisions, all legislation in the same way. They extended their control beyond that of the boss to include the lawyers and the newspapers. They enjoyed every privilege, including extremely low tax rates. In order to pay large dividends to stockholders, the corporations operated on the lowest possible levels, giving no consideration to public needs in the way of safety and service. However, Churchill was optimistic despite the dark political history which he saw; he felt that the people had been awakened from their apathy, that they saw the danger of losing their American heritage of self-government, and that they would set to work to regain what they had lost and to restore government to their own hands.

The two books were to have been two parts of a trilogy, which should have been completed by a novel telling the story of complete political reform. That the third book was never written may be an indication that Churchill lost his faith in a return to government "by the people."

\[101\] Johnson, op. cit., p. 11017.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Although Churchill's two political novels retained something of the romanticism of his early fiction, there is little carry over of politics into his first social novels. Coniston and Mr. Crewe's Career completed his literary interest in political reform. With A Modern Chronicle, published in 1910, the author turned his attention to the instability of marriage. He believed that divorce was not to be thought of by the true Christian.¹ He believed also that if husbands expended as much effort on marriage as they did on getting wealth and power and if wives were as much concerned about marriage as they were with acquiring clothes and social position, neither would know the restlessness, the sense of futility, the emptiness and unhappiness which they experience.²

In A Modern Chronicle the author pictures a young woman who has been reared with a taste for luxuries which her family cannot provide. She becomes infatuated with a young man

¹Churchill, "Our Common Sense Marriages," Good Housekeeping, LVII (July, 1913), 53.
²Ibid.
whom she considers wealthy. She tells herself that she loves him; however, it is the idea of a more luxurious and exciting life which she really loves. Marriage is disillusioning. The young man is actually not wealthy, though he intends to be. He wants his wife to be "nice" to business prospects. His idea of being nice does not really involve intimacies, but it does include some familiarities which a husband should resent. Moreover, he neglects her for his business. Although she resents his absorption in business and is somewhat horrified to find that all his business transactions are not completely honorable, she still wants more wealth than he can provide. She becomes as bored with her new life as with her old and looks to a higher social stratum and greater wealth as being the solution to her restlessness and dissatisfaction. Her marriage ends in divorce when she meets a very wealthy young man who, apparently, can give her everything she desires.

This marriage, like the first, is doomed from the beginning because neither partner enters it with the right spirit. The wife desires luxury and social prestige; the unstable husband wants a beautiful new toy.

The author pictures his heroine as finding real happiness only after she has changed her whole set of values and has come to realize that an enduring marriage cannot be based upon material standards. However, the author's condemnation of divorce does not allow him to permit his heroine
to find happiness in marriage until she has endured a great deal of suffering to expiate her past life and until death has removed both husbands.

By 1912 Churchill had begun to feel that people were greatly interested in religion. He had even given a religious implication to the wave of political reform which had swept the country in the early nineteen hundreds and with which he had been so vitally concerned. Accordingly, his next work, The Inside of the Cup, published in 1913, dealt with religion.

This novel discusses two problems, one theological and one sociological, which he felt prevented people from accepting the teachings of the church. The first of these problems, Churchill believed, arose from the fact that the church stood for a supernatural authority and for the principle of doing our thinking for us, and for the fact that every discovery of science from inventions to the prevention of disease had been accomplished against that principle. He shows his educated characters as longing for someone to present Christianity in such a way that it will appeal to their reason rather than as a "mixture of cosmogony and Greek philosophy, tradition and fable, paganism, Judaism, sacerdotalism, and temporal power wrongly called spiritual dealt out by this same church

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4 Ibid., p. 12.

as the last word on science, philosophy, history, metaphysics, and government."\(^6\)

The second of these two problems, the conflict between business and religion, was, perhaps, even more harmful to the church. Churchill pictures the influential members of the church, those who support it and dictate its policies, as carrying no Christian principles into their business dealings. One vestryman owns a hotel and other property in the red light district of the city. Another requires the salesgirls in his department store to sign a statement that they live at home in order that he may justify the starvation wages which he pays. Still another is a clever corporation lawyer who can draw agreements which successfully evade the spirit of the law and who can find all the necessary loopholes to keep his clients out of jail after their fraudulent business dealings. A fourth member is like Isaac Worthington of Coniston. He feels that money and power are everything. He has disinherited his daughter because she does not approve of his business dealings or agree with his theology. He has driven his idolized son from home and eventually to death by breaking up the boy’s love affair and driving the young woman into prostitution. He has ruined every man who opposed him and countless innocent people who have invested money in fraudulent enterprises with which his name has been

\(^6\)Churchill, *The Inside of the Cup*, p. 11.
associated and from whom he has always escaped unscathed with his ill-gotten gains.

These are the people who get much publicity and praise for building settlement houses and donating large sums to charity. Yet the author sees many indigent people receiving the charity but never going near the church because such men are a part of it. Others he shows as scorning the church and bitterly refusing any help for the same reason.

Thus the author develops the thesis that Christianity lies not in robbing men of their savings and then dispensing largess but in service to mankind. Because the men who control the churches so often practice the former, the author pictures the church as having lost its influence with the poor.

From this study it may be seen that Churchill, in accordance with his expressed plan, attempted to write a novel about every important phase of American life. He began his work with three highly romantic novels picturing different epochs of early American history. The first of these, Richard Carvel, deals with the Revolutionary Period. The Crisis portrays sympathetically both Northern and Southern sentiment during the Civil War. The Crossing depicts the westward movement from the early colonies into what is now Kentucky and Tennessee. It covers the time from the Revolution until shortly after the Louisiana Purchase and almost bridges the gap between the two earlier novels.
All three novels are highly romantic. Plots follow the usual pattern of the adventurous historical romance with daring exploits, danger, and dramatic rescue. Also, Churchill's treatment of his characters is always romantic, from his dastardly villains to his pure heroines and dashing, chivalrous heroes. The novels abound in all the sentimentalities of romantic fiction.

With the awakening interest in politics displayed by most of the writers of the early nineteen hundreds, Churchill also turned his attention to the political scene. After serving two sessions in the New Hampshire State Legislature, he wrote the two novels, Coniston and Mr. Crewe's Career, pouring into them his political convictions. He thought of early American politics as having been a subject of vital interest to the entire population. However, he felt that the Jackson era marked the beginning of a corrupt period which lasted until his own day. During this time he believed that Americans had become so indifferent to their duties as citizens that unscrupulous men had gained control of politics for personal gain. Coniston pictures the process by which the local "boss" gains control of community politics and gradually extends that control until he directs the governmental affairs of his entire state, greatly influences Washington politics, and dictates to all businesses. All public officials become his tools, and he uses them to further his own interests. He pictures the corruption and
bribery and the indifference to the needs of the state which inevitably follow such procedures. He shows the "boss" as yielding his influence at last to great corporations. Mr. Crewe's Career portrays the second phase of this corrupt government. In this period the corporations continue the domination begun by their predecessors and extend that domination until not only public officials but also attorneys and newspapers are under their control.

Churchill was greatly opposed to such government and set about to fight the corporations both through active participation in politics and through his novels. He felt that the fight was not won but that it was but a matter of a few brief years until politics again should be in the hands of the common citizens. He concludes Mr. Crewe's Career on this hopeful note.

This last novel concluded Churchill's primary preoccupation with politics. With his next work he transferred his attention to fundamental social reform, thus completing his study of the various phases of American life.
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