

A Tale of a Lonely Parish.

The first half of Mr. F. Marion Crawford's new novel, *A Tale of a Lonely Parish*, is commonplace and dull, and one reads it with a feeling that the author's effort is beyond his strength, that his powers have not grown with his reputation, and that the work is going to prove a failure. At p. 193, suddenly, startlingly, with scarce a note of warning, without the slightest reason for expectation on the part of the reader, an event occurs of a highly dramatic character, which is very powerfully managed, which stirs the reader's blood, and arouses his liveliest attention; and from that point on the book runs upon an upper level of interest so that it will be finished for its own sake and not for its author's. The story is one of that sort that we do not like to disclose its plot. The "lonely parish" is Billingsfield in Essex. The parish has of course a vicar, the Reverend Augustin Ambrose; who fits boys for Cambridge as well as preaches to his flock on Sunday. The vicar has a wife, who has been a good manager and a good mother, but who plays a subordinate part in this story. Billingsfield has a Hall, and the Hall has a Squire, and the Squire has a bloodhound, an immense Russian bloodhound, "Stamboul," who is a sight to behold. Billingsfield also has its mysterious resident, a Mrs. Goddard, who passes for a widow in trouble, but who really has a husband. Mrs. Goddard has a daughter, Nellie, and Mr. Ambrose has a pupil John. These, we believe, are the principal characters. This much we will tell the reader about them, that John falls in love with the mother, but finally puts up with marrying the daughter; that the Squire proposes to the widow, only to find that she is not widow but wife; that the majestic and ferocious Stamboul saves his master's life once and again; and that brain fever distances the detectives in bringing an escaped convict to bay. There is no attempt at fine writing in the book; no particular skill in characterization; no remarkable cleverness in dialogue; it is a straightforward, simple, honest piece of work, printed and bound furthermore in a style that enhances the pleasure of reading.

[Macmillan & Co. \$1.50.]