NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE CURRENT NOVEL.

THE TOUCH OF SORROW: A Study. 16mo, pp. 279. Henry Holt & Co.

CHRONICLES OF MARTIN HEWITT. By Arthur Morrison. 16mo, pp. 267. D. Appleton & Co.

THE YOUTH OF PARNASSUS, AND OTHER STORIES. By Logan Pearsall Smith. 12mo, pp. 277. Macmillan & Co.

MOODY'S LODGING-HOUSE, AND OTHER TENEMENT SKETCHES. By Alvin Francis Sanborn. 16mo, pp. 175. Copeland & Day.

Novelty of theme is not the most conspicuous characteristic of the anonymous story entitled "The Touch of Sorrow," but the tale is pleasantly told; and, despite its superficiality, may serve to pass a summer's afternoon. Stella, the heroine, is a young woman of the Dodo type, worldly, beautiful, selfish, pleasure-loving. The man she marries, Martin by name, is a satisfactory example of cultured urbanity. He has money; and, though young, is making for himself a reputation in the House of Commons, where he naturally spends most of his evenings. These regular absences throw Stella much on her own resources, and she does not abuse her freedom as Dodo did. Her worst fault is self-indulgence, and her most complete surrender to selfishness occurs shortly before her complete reformation: it was the darkness that precedes the dawn. Her early education had been directed by a prim little German fräulein, to whom she pretended to be deeply devoted. Now, just as Stella is on the point of playing an attractive role in some private theatricals, news comes from her home in the country that the fräulein is dangerously ill, and if her old pupil wishes to see her she must come at once. Stella ignores the telegram, which is followed at a short interval by another announcing the little German woman's death. Stella strives to conceal the facts from her husband, but is forced finally to confess. This confession, coming about the same time that her infant son is seized with a mortal illness, is the first step toward her change of heart. Her redemption is completed when the child dies. Standing by the little grave, she "felt that a new soul had come to her, and to those that stood about her its radiance was visible in her face." This is the "touch of sorrow" to which reference is made in the title.

"The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt," by Arthur Morrison, suffer by reason of a twofold comparison. In the first place, they are clearly modelled on Dr. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, and thereby lack the freshness without which no detective stories may hope to be successful; in the second place, they suffer by comparison with the author's previous volume, "Tales of Mean Streets," a collection of brief sketches which bears the unmistakable mark of originality. One cannot resist inquiring why the author of these striking tales, the creator of "Lizerunt," should sell his artistic reputation for the mere luxury of competing with Dr. Doyle in a field in which the elder writer was clearly the master. However, it cannot be denied that Martin Hewitt is a clever detective; his ingenuity in ferreting out a clew is extraordinary. He notices everything that every one else fails to notice, and he invariably notes the right things. Thus, when Mr. Kingscote is mysteriously murdered in his own drawing-room, and the old gardener is arrested on suspicion, Hewitt knows instinctively that the old man had no share in the tragedy. Hewitt claims that his skill is due solely to his exercise of his faculty of common-sense, but the ingenuous reader cannot resist the temptation of believing that nothing short of inspiration could have led him to examine the panels in Mrs. Clayton's cheap lodging-house. Kingscote had once lived in these chambers; he suddenly became rich and hired a house of his own. Then one night two mysterious persons presented themselves at Mrs. Clayton's door, and hired his old room. The next morning they left, and when the landlady went upstairs to set things to rights she found that the eccentric pair had pulled all the wainscoting down and had carefully splintered every panel. The next night Kingscote was murdered. "A coincidence," cries the ingenuous reader. "A clew," retorts Mr. Hewitt, and forthwith picks up a handful of splinters and fits them together till the complete panel lies before his friend's astonished gaze. Then he draws attention to a peculiar auger hole stuffed with putty, recalls a mysterious diamond robbery, scrutinizes a bent nail which he finds in Kingscote's drawer, and immediately concludes that the murderer's name is Chalilitt; that this same person was the famous diamond thief; that Kingscote's sudden prosperity was due to his having found these diamonds in the wainscoting of Mrs. Clayton's room, etc. When a detective falls into the hands of a novelist, there is no end to the conclusions he is able to draw from the most trifling circumstances. There are five other tales in the volume, of which the one just analyzed is a fair sample.

There are nine short studies grouped under the title, "The Youth of Parnassus, and Other Stories," and of these the best by far is the seventh, which is called "Idyl," although even here the point of view is annoyingly English. However, Miss Lamb has the negative merit of being alive and to a degree typical of a certain easily recognizable sort of American girl. She is pert, comprehensively curious, without reference to material, and she is attractive. Matthew Craik, on the other hand, is a simple Oxford tutor, whose life is devoted to the study of the early philosophers of Asia Minor. He lived alone, was wasting his youth among books, and had no commerce with "everything that is light and amiable in existence." Craik met Miss Lamb at a garden party in Oxford; he did not want to meet any one; he preferred the society of his Asiatic philosophers to that of young ladies; but he screwed up his courage and went to the party, and he fell an easy prey to Miss Lamb's blandishments. In the popular phrase, she drew him out, she put him at his ease; she professed the greatest interest in his book, "Life and Thought in Early Asia Minor." And Craik was flattered, and purred like an old cat when his ear is scratched, and came about as near as possible to falling in love with the dashing Miss Lamb. The hour of awakening came when he discovered that he was not, as he had innocently thought, a special favorite of the young lady's, but one among many others. She liked his book, as she liked dozens besides. Flattery was her chosen method of flirtation. The tale is brief and well written, and, unlike the others, has an air of actuality. The title story, "The Youth of Parnassus," is a poor effort, which has for its theme the gradual conversion of an American youth to Roman Catholicism under the influence of the historical and poetic associations of Oxford.

Facts in plenty, and evidences of conscientious literary workmanship, are to be found on every page of Mr. Alvin Francis Sanborn's "Moody's Lodging-House, and Other Tenement Sketches." The title sufficiently explains the field of the author's investigations, and it remains only to note that he has confined his attention to the lodging-houses and tenements of Boston. These he knows thoroughly, having acquired his information by personal inquiry, and by actual contact and association with the good-natured ne'er-do-wells of whose tragic-comic lives he has chosen to be the historian. Mr. Sanborn's methods remind us, by contrast, of a certain writer who, finding it necessary to include a sketch of slum life in a volume of metropolitan sketches, took a leisurely walk one day through the soiled parts of the metropolis known as the slums. He guided his well-polished boots carefully over the dirty streets, and pulled his coat tails fastidiously out of reach of the moving throngs. He noted local color, and wrote his sketch, which was accepted by those who knew nothing of the life which it essayed to describe as a marvellous photograph of a little known society. Mr. Sanborn's method of work was diametrically opposed to this. As a preliminary to writing of the Boston lodging-house, he must first live in the lodging-houses; as a preliminary to depicting the lives of their inmates he must know them, not as they might wish to be known to the outside world, but as they were known to their associates, to the men who were as badly off as themselves. Accordingly the author disguised himself, donned ragged clothes, cultivated a scraggly beard, filled a clay pipe with ill-smelling tobacco, assumed a shambling gait, and with drooping head sailed forth, prepared to take every experience as it came, and to tell the truth when his notebook was filled, nothing extenuating, or setting down in malice. The result, in our opinion, demonstrates the success of the author's method. His brief sketches are scarcely fictions, there being little dialogue, but they carry conviction and seem to have the air of actuality. The characters are well differentiated, and Miss Lizzie, the factotum of Moody's, is a first-rate example of miniature work.

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