NEW BOOKS.

Continued from Seventh Page.

fill with very curious pictures after everybody else was in bed and asleep. When opportunity made it possible, she said remarkable things, as when she observed to young Mr. Darnley Stair, speaking of brewers' horses: "They are splendid. I've seen them with the heavy carts in these narrow streets; their necks are so thick and curved, they hold their heads so proudly; they clutch the ground with their great hoofs—it's like the book of Job." But she was careful never to talk that way to her mother. She attended very faithfully to business at home; was a much more competent mother to the younger children than Mrs. Crawford was; and, unlike some artists and poets, she was in very fine health and unfailingly cheerful. Curiously, fine as her perception was in matters of beauty, she was entirely thoughtless of her clothes and of style in dress. She was not handsome, but somehow she managed to get herself greatly liked; the reader will like her, or we are much mistaken. "A Virgin painted by a Dutchman" was Col. Hamilton's opinion of her. That will indicate at once how peculiar and how pleasant she was.

The other characters will interest the reader, too—Darnley Stair, who did not seem properly to belong in the brewing business, and with whom Susan had her tragedy; Archie Hamilton of the navy, who was not an ordinary young man, and the Colonel's niece, Julia, who did not have that perception of the poet and the artist which is or may be the rose of joy, but did have loveliness and beauty, also great gifts. An excellent and moving story of Scottish people who did not speak the dialect. With clean conscience we commend it.

A Book of What Happened to Christian.

We are told in Rosa Nouchette Carey's story, "A Passage Perilous" (J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia), that all her life long Christian Fordham had expected something to happen, and it seems no more than reasonable that, having happened, we should be made acquainted with it. "Even when she was a mere mite of a child," Christian's historian says, "with a curly head just level with the table, her baby precocity had astonished her mother. 'Me wonders,' she had remarked in her small chirping voice—'me wonders what happenings baby's dot to-day.' 'Baby's happenings' became quite a household proverb at the Vicarage, hoarded up with other like sayings by fond and admiring parents."

All that happened to Christian we cannot even suggest, but it is pleasant to report that the final pages (365-66) find her happy with Jack. They drove over to Chesterton together. It was a lovely October afternoon, and in the soft autumnal light the old house looked strangely peaceful. Jack gave his pony to the gardener, and they went into the quaint old hall. "Isn't it just lovely, Jack?" she asked her husband, and he assented in the strong, rude phrase customary in the army, to which he belonged. "Ripping," he said. They sat down together on the old oak settle. A soft sigh arose to Christian's lips as she looked round at the wide staircase and the old clock and the deer antlers over the high carved mantlepiece. Lovely, indeed, and they were to have a year of it before she accompanied her soldier husband back to India. "You are sure you don't mind going to India?" he inquired, a little anxiously. "Mind, with you?" and he saw at once that his anxiety was unwarranted.

We presume that the delectable old house was named in honor of the eminent English essayist, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, so frequently quoted by the *Evening Post*, though we are not sure of it.

All About Blount of Breckenhow.

In "Blount of Breckenhow," by Beulah Marie Dix (The Macmillan Company), we have an account in the form of letters of the life, treason and death of that seventeenth century personage. The style of the narrative may be indicated by a brief quotation from a letter from Arundel Rowlestone to her aunt, dated Oxford, Nov. 21, 1644. "'Tis passing strange," says the fair writer, who acknowledged later that she loved Blount, "but I must confess that my boy and I are thriving, even though we are constrained to dwell away from bonny Kirkstead. I was minded to swear to my husband that the air of this crowded town was to us mere pestilence, that so he might despatch us unto you, but alas! my cheeks are as red as a stout country wench's, and little James is beginning to drag himself across the floor on hands and knees in a way that would do your heart good to see. The little wretch, that he would do no such pretty tricks while he was at Kirkstead! But that was six weeks ago, and every week works alteration in a gentleman of his age."

The last hours of Blount are described by this same correspondent, whose happy facility with the pen will doubtless be appreciated by the reader. "I loved Blount," declares Arundel Rowlestone to her aunt, writing a year later, "though 'twas only in the last days that I faced it fairly and knew it for the real love of my life." Fortunately and of course, the correspondence makes a completed story, telling everything that the reader will want to know. The reader will like it. It is eventful and interesting, and well told.

Tragical Morning at the Grant's.

They were scrupulous and sensitive people in the community celebrated in Ruth Hall's story "The Pine Grove House" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.). The Grants, mother and daughter, must have drawn long breaths at times under the burden imposed by their high social station. It is so difficult in a democratic country to keep from being contaminated. We can well believe in the case of the Grant ladies that it cut like a lash and stung like a mosquito bite to have to go to call on somebody at the country hotel named in the title. The Grants were at breakfast when, through the medium of a letter, the necessity of making this call was made known. When we say that the Grant breakfast included toast and marmalade we indicate the correct social tone of that family. Mrs. Grant at first pretended not to know about the hotel, which was just around the corner. She adjusted her eyeglasses and consulted the letter. "Oh, here it is," she said carelessly. "They are at a hotel called, as I remember, the Pine Grove House." It was an English touch, supplementing admirably the toast and the marmalade; but the daughter's emotion was too great to be retained. "Mother!" she cried, and at this the elderly lady ceased from pretending and made free to declare her own feelings. "You may well say 'Mother!'" said she. "That is the long and short of it. She asks us to call on guests of Mr. Jonas Platt."

We can well imagine the tone employed in pronouncing this last hateful name, the name of the proprietor of the Pine Grove House. The story says: "Amy threw aside her toast with a tragic gesture." We trust that she was careful with the marmalade. Mrs. Grant's expression was intense. She proceeded to describe Mr. Platt's hotel. "It's the cheap and nasty kind," she said. "It's open all the year, and in the summer shop girls and floor walkers flock there to spend their vacations. For nine months it's given up to the other sort, to broken down clergymen, fourth and fifth rate actors out of an engagement, hack writers suffering from nervous prostration, poor relations pensioned off by their well-to-do families."

If Amy hadn't read certain English novels we are much mistaken. Still, the call had to be made, and we find the Grant ladies on the piazza of Mr. Platt's dreadful hotel presently, waiting for Mrs. Loring (Mrs. Loring who had been a Stuyvesant) and her daughter Helen. The story says of the Grants as they appeared on the piazza: "Theirs was the slightly contentious and rather disquieted type of much American aristocracy. They wore their well made gowns with a consciousness peculiar to country bred ladies in their best array, and contrived to give the impression that this elegance was thrown away here."

Kit Grant was different from his mother and sister—less thoughtful of himself and his social obligations. He rushed forward along the hotel piazza to meet Helen Loring. "I am Christopher Grant, Miss Loring," said he, "or perhaps you will let me say (for I've just been promoted, and I love to boast) that I belong to the contracting firm of Shipman, Grover & Grant, and am at home on a vacation." Mrs. Loring appeared presently. The story says of her: "It could be objected that Mrs. Loring somewhat overacted her own rôle of a cool, fine lady. Helen, watching her with new eyes, wished that she might understand that entire simplicity was most in keeping with their ludicrous surroundings. For her poor mother, who never forgot, sleeping nor waking, that she had been a Stuyvesant and was a Loring, felt that she must show these visitors that she was beyond patronage, although they did wear real lace and her handkerchief cost 25 cents."

The Lorings were in reduced circumstances, of course. Had they not been we should hardly have found them at Mr. Platt's very ordinary, not to say low, hotel. We will wager that no marmalade was served at the Pine Grove House breakfasts. Very likely they had griddle cakes; the place was coarse enough. These differences, to be sure, constituted no reason why Christopher and Helen should not some time, by virtue of that warrant of felicity which must attend upon—but we are not going to tell the whole story. We commend the reader to the book, by which we believe he will be greatly entertained.

Chicago Arabian Nights.

A very amusing book, in which the author shows up Chicago ideals in unexpected ways, has been written by Mr. Wardon Allan Curtis in "The Strange Adventures of Mr. Middleton" (Herbert S. Stone & Co.). We are not sure whether the revelations are conscious or unconscious, but we rather suspect the author of being an outside barbarian poking sly fun at Chicago's higher civilization. His book reminds us of many others, but has its own brightness and originality.

In form it follows the "Thousand and One Nights" and countless others, in that it draws a number of separate stories into one connecting tale; but the contrast between the Orient and Chicago is novel. The chief actor, in his total absence of scruple, resembles Raffles and others who preceded him, but we are glad to meet his matter-of-fact, go-ahead, Chicago standpoint. The intercalated stories are pretty good, the tale of Dr. McDill, which makes us think of Mr. H. G. Wells, giving a cheerful view of life in Chicago which does not run counter to some newspaper accounts. At times the author verges on vulgarity, and occasionally deviates from common usage in English. "Part of the Arabian peninsular" may be a concession to local pronunciation, to be sure, and "a terrible genii" we fear may be found in editions of the Arabian Nights that avoid "djinn" or "jini." Mr. Curtis has written a lot of bright and promising stories, all the same.

That Red Box Manuscript.

Somewhat belated a book that has been talked of a good deal comes to us, "The MS. in a Red Box" (John Lane, The Bodley Head). The story is good enough to stand on its own merits without the aid of any mystery or blood red publisher's introduction. It is a love story in an ancient setting, after the style of "Lorna Doone." The scene is the Isle of Axholme and the fens on the Trent in Lincolnshire in the days of King Charles I., when the Dutch engineers began to reclaim the marshlands. This is

Continued on Ninth Page.

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