

NEW BOOKS.

Continued from Ninth Page.

author who dares write a play in verse. Perhaps women who belong to literary clubs will venture where others fear to tread, for if Browning could write unactable plays, why not they? In "The Passing Show" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) Miss Harriet Monroe takes her hand at five short plays, and not without success. She selects women that are dramatic, and expresses her ideas in dignified and smoothly flowing verse. In "After All" and "A Modern Minuet" there is nothing to cavil at. She has, however, no sense of the absurd effect of some modern "tragedies" when put into verse, and the strongest of her scenes, "At the Goal," is rendered ridiculous by the dying man's running over his stock speculations in blank verse.

Perhaps at Pass Christian, the scene of "A Bunch of Roses and Other Parlor Plays" by M. E. M. Davis (Small, Maynard & Co.), before a kindly drawing room audience, the mil farces may have passed muster. We fear they would not prove acceptable on the stage, and they are still less possible in print. Their model is the old time one act farces in which John Brougham and William Warren used to shine. These were always disappointing to read. These were covered editions provided. These are destitute of humor or construction and call for a more than benign audience.

From San Francisco (Paul Elder & Co.) comes "Drawing Room Plays," by Grace Luce Irwin. If the author had devoted to plot, humor, refinement of language and sentiment, and other such necessities, part of the attention she gives to stage setting and costume, and the possibilities of introducing variety entertainments, the plays might, possibly, not be so bad as they are.

In a monologue so much more depends on the actor than on the piece that it is difficult to judge "Mozart's" by Max Laube (Fisk Harper). They do not read very well; a very little fun seems strained to the breaking point, but then that is the impression given also by some of the monologues in which the great Coquelin Cadet has been successful. The sentimental pieces read much better than the humorous ones.

Stories of Pathos and Humor.

A book of nine stories by John Luther Long is called after the title of the first one of them, "Sixty Jane" (The Century Company). Jane was a demented woman who dressed in the fashion of the '60s. The boys made fun of her in the street—pelted her handbox, tilted her hoop skirt, and uttered in shrill voices remarks about her that were plainly and intentionally critical and facetious. One of these boys grew up to be a minister of the Gospel. He was attached to a settlement house, and was called upon to visit Sixty Jane when she lay dying in a garret in Alaska street. She believed him to be her lover, Arthur, long dead. He kissed her delusion. She asked him to kiss her hand, and he related to her that it was a mad, ineffable plea. I put my lips upon them, wrinkled and withered and calloused as they were, and I was glad then, and I am glad now, that I could bring a smile of such wondrous glory to a human face. "Ah, you are not the dream! And my lips, too—kiss my lips, Arthur!" And I kissed her lips.

The story tells at considerable length what Sixty Jane said to the young minister, believing him to be Arthur. Among other things: "I like you to be a man. And you are—you always were—more of a man than any one I knew. Yet you were sweet. Oh, I think the bigger and greater and braver and stronger a man is, the more I like him. In the sweetest, the more like a woman, he is inside at the heart, soul. So you were always sweet to me. And you would let me talk, talk, talk, and I remember how sometimes the tears came when you did not even know it—for me. You see, I must tell you. You must understand. There is no one for me else. We are orphans, cousins. Other girls have their sisters or intimate friends to tell it to. I have not—only you—only you in all the whole world now. I chose to tell you. I wanted no one but you. For in you I found everything I wished. You could understand better than most girls could. That is why I talk to you of it. Why, don't you know that girls laugh and cry over everything, and for the same reason? When they are going to be married they grow possessed. They tear up all the old letters and weep over them. They put away the dolls they have treasured from infancy—and first kiss them, sobbing. They put away the books they have kept from their school days, reading first the inscriptions in them."

And so on. At the last, "I tried to find—there! she murmured from out the shadows, happily. And if I should—sleep—just a minute—you will—not go away? I want you here—when I wake—to see you first, as the other time. And will you hold my hand—that way—till I wake? I will not sleep long. Will you—hold my hand—till I wake—beloved? Yes, I said."

A frankly pathetic story; and we believe that pathos is popular, even when it is rather heroically administered. Another of the stories here, "The Strike on the Schlafplatz Railroad," is in great contrast. Hannikin Chuff filled most of the important offices on this road, which traversed five miles of country in German Pennsylvania. He was ticket agent, baggage master, conductor, engineer, and fireman. When he ceased from his official duties the entire road was paralyzed. The single engine became motionless. So did the single tender and the single combination baggage and passenger car. No tickets were sold. If there had been any trunks to accompany they would have accumulated. Chuff said of his engine:

"I grew up with her. I know all her works—chuff like I know my own. She knows me, an' I know her. She's about a thousand years old. So am I. She gets rheumatism in her connecting rods. So do I. She gets mad an' plays hell with sings sometimes—like me. Also she gets balky an' won't go. So do I. She's held together mostly with strings and wire—like me. Yit—she an' me's been friends ever since. She knows me to a minute I come about. An' you kin chuff bet 'at I know her. Heth Chuff! She wouldn't move a inch for him! I bet a dollar she'd bust on him."

This was accurate opinion. Chuff, a gloomy young man, eloped with Chuff's daughter. He fired up the engine while the strike was in progress and bore her away. Chuff pursued them on a determined but deliberate home. The race was for a time about even. They cut off the passenger car and gained. Then they cut off the tender. Shortly after this the venerable engine blew up. Whether the pair were annihilated the story does not say. It says merely that Chuff found no trace of them, though he searched the ground carefully. Our own opinion is that they escaped and were married.

Mebbe it was because they lived on t'e border, where it was all t'e time so much red hot folk." So the story opens. Daisy was fond of both Bob and Harold. She was angel to the two, as the French say, and as the title of the story intimates. Harold went into the Confederate Army, Bob into the Federal. They met at Gettysburg. Bob, serving his gun, was thrust through by a bayonet by a smoke-blackened confederate, one of the few who managed to get across the stone wall on Cemetery Ridge. Anybody who believes that the Confederate was not Harold is credulous indeed. It is well known to readers of romance how frequently bosom friends, fighting on opposite sides in wars in which vast armies are engaged, meet each other in bayonet encounters. Bob, of course, returned the Confederate's stab. He transfixed Harold. He relates:

"The gun fell out of my hands. I grabbed t'e rebel an' pulled his face close to mine. I couldn't see no more; he put his hands on his wound for pain, an' opened his eyes a little, an' then a little more an' more, an' I could see in his eyes what he was seeing in mine. He smiled a little then, an' tried to reach my hand, an' says chust: "Bob! An' I says chust: "Hal!"

Daisy nursed them as they lay in neighboring beds in the hospital. Particularly at this time was she an angel to both of them. "She was kneeling between our two cots with a hand of each in hers, an' it looked like 'at healed everything." But Harold's wound was mortal, and Daisy confessed to Bob at the last: "I loved you and pitied him." The reader will sorrow for Hal, though certainly his removal was necessary for the relief of an embarrassing situation.

History of the Talmud.

As a necessary accompaniment to his new translation of the Talmud now approaching completion, Dr. Michael L. Rodkinson has written "The History of the Talmud," two volumes in one (New Talmud Publishing Company). These form Vols. XIX, XX, and XX of the whole work. To the layman who may be interested in Jewish literature and religion they will serve as a convenient introduction to reading the Talmud itself.

The first volume or part comprises a succinct history of the Talmud from its formation to the present day, told in a way that should attract to further study. The second volume contains the apparatus for literary study, bibliographies, criticisms, an account of the ethics of the Talmud, an elaborate summary of all the contents of the Talmud, and many other important matters. A work of great scholarship that will enable Gentiles to understand the Jews and their institutions better than in the past.

A Good Guide to Furniture.

Would-be collectors and those fascinated by auction sales will derive aid and comfort from "The Old Furniture Book," by N. Hudson Moore (Frederick A. Stokes Company). It will guide them safely and pleasantly through the intricacies of Chippendale and Sheraton, of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., and of the colonial and mohair periods of American furniture. Nearly every article of furniture that is likely to turn up is described, the explanations are clear and intelligent, and the pictures, which are numerous, are illustrative.

Servants' Scandal at Kaiser's Court. People who would scorn to listen to gossip and scandal about their neighbors and would put a stop at once to such scrupulous bearing of servants have no such scruples when these have been dead long enough it becomes historical or literary investigation, as in the case of Shakespeare's poaching or Byron's domestic troubles. If the person is still living, the readers of libellous gossip, we imagine, must have the feeling of being smothered with nastiness after the reading and of having done something to be ashamed of.

A two-volume compound of vulgarity and bad taste has come to us in "Private Lives of William II. and His Consort and Secret History of the Court of Berlin," to which Mr. Henry W. Fischer attaches his name, whether as editor, translator or compiler we cannot make out. (Fischer's Foreign Letters, New York.) The book was copyrighted five years ago in London. It professes to be the account of "Ursula, Countess of Eppinghoven, a dame du palais of the Empress, between 1888-1890," confessedly a false name and, we feel sure, false designation.

If these stories were written by any woman attached to the Prussian court, she must be sought for in the kitchen, we imagine, rather than in close attendance on the Empress. Her assertion at the start, "I must need up to successfully. We should feel surer of her place were it not for the amazing revelations at the Von Kotze trial as to what German society women were capable of doing."

There have been many scandalous occurrences at the Prussian court which have found their way into the newspapers. These

we find all here put in the most unfavorable light, with every vile suggestion asserted as positive fact. What is added is trivial, or clearly beyond the writer's personal knowledge, or unlikely on the face of it. We suspect it of being a piece of journalistic enterprise like "The Englishman in Paris," but by no means so well done.

At any rate, it is a book to be avoided by the clean-minded. The scandal it retails, however, will cause many people to read it, and it may very easily succeed as a commercial venture.

Other Books. The English have a knack of turning out attractive books on sport which are pleasing if not strikingly original. The peculiarity of "English Sport," edited by Mr. Alfred E. T. Watson (Macmillans), is that most of the articles are written by persons of title, ranging from marquesses to honorables and baronets. They are assisted by several titled persons, some of whom are experts in their line. The articles cover every variety of outdoor sport, from hunting and racing to golf and motoring, and there is a chapter on billiards. All are written pleasantly and from the amateur's standpoint.

The literature of vulgarity seems to keep up. We cannot say that "The Devil's Letters to Mary MacLane" (Interstate Book Company, Chicago) is more vulgar than the book it imitates, but it is as vulgar, and at times even more offensive. Careful work is done every page of "On the Road With a Circus," by W. C. Thompson (Isaac Goldmann Company, New York), and, so far as we know, it is a pioneer in its line. Every phase of circus life and the travelling incident to it is described, and the ways and history of the animals and freaks and other performers are told.

There is plenty of anecdote and incident, but the author limits himself to verified fact where he might have been easily tempted to bring in current legends. A book that is attractive from its subject thus becomes instructive and authoritative. It is written in unpretentious, direct English and has many illustrations.

Litchfield, Conn., was once a famous centre of culture, with its law school and girls' seminary. A reminder of those days is the old town's name on the title page of a beautifully got up little book, "The Tale of the Spinning Wheel," by Elizabeth Cynthia Barney Buel, illustrated by Emily Noyes Anderson. It is an interesting, ship that will enable Gentiles to understand the Jews and their institutions better than in the past.

Mr. E. F. Knight, one of the best known among English war correspondents, was sent to South Africa after the recent war by the London Morning Post to report on the condition and resources of the country. He saw things through British glasses, naturally, and at a time when matters were unsettled, but he wrote his reports as an intelligent newspaper man, and these are now published in a large volume, with many illustrations, under the title "South Africa After the War" (Longmans, Green & Co.). Mr. Knight's observations will be of value to all who have interests in South Africa.

A queer book, a sort of reader for grown people, has been compiled by Mr. Charles Josselyn with the title "My Favorite Book-Shelf" (Paul Elder & Co., San Francisco). In typography and binding the book is very artistic. It consists of short extracts from some forty authors, some famous, others ludicrously out of place in their company. The extracts are too short to be distinctive, and show neither taste nor discrimination in the compiler.

Books Received. "The Story of a Soldier's Life," 2 vols. Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley. (Charles Scribner's Sons.) "L'Anarchie aux Etats-Unis." Paul Ghio. (Armand Colin, Paris.) "Stories of the Ancient Greeks." Charles D. Shaw. (Ginn & Co.) "The Cradle of the Birth of Ralph Waldo Emerson." (Continued on Eleventh Page.)

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