

of diseases. For whooping-cough, for example, a spider is sewn into a piece of muslin and hung on the curtain rod, in the belief that when the spider dies the cough, and not the patient, will die also. In the same county when a doctor ordered poultices on the chest for a sick child, the poultices were applied to an oak chest by the bedside. Nothing is more astonishing than the primitive beliefs which survive in the remote parts of counties not far distant from London. Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Hertfordshire are counties to which this statement is certainly applicable.

Those of us who love the dear animals—and all good nurses do that, will rejoice to find that among the clauses of the will of the late Mlle. Chanegrane, who left £80,000 to the French Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, is one to provide for the removal of injured horses from the streets.

We have more than once seen a poor horse, fatally injured, lying prone in the roadway with a fractured shoulder or worse, waiting for merciful death, and the silent agony of the beautiful eyes has haunted us ever since. The only souls we have ever seen have looked through animals' eyes.

A Book of the Week.

THE OLD KNOWLEDGE.*

A novel by Mr. Stephen Gwynn was bound to be interesting. Perhaps the first thing that strikes us about this delightful story is a wonder that a poet should not have written more poetical prose. Not that this prose is by any means unpoetical, but somehow, one would have expected a style more like that of "Aylwin"—not just a modern love story with a setting of Donegal hills and valleys.

The story is a wholly charming one, leaving one very much with the feeling that the writer has not put forth by any means his full strength. He might have been much more tragic, or, at least, have approached much nearer tragedy, with such a character as Owen Conroy.

Millicent Cartaret, the heroine, is a duckling with a hen for a mother. One might say, more shortly, that she is the typical nice modern girl.

"Millicent declined to have accomplishments, she was determined to have an art. Her mother, after a faint struggle to maintain the hours which every nice girl should devote to the strumming of scales, surrendered at discretion, reflecting in herself upon the awful utterance of her brother-in-law: 'She might have wanted to be an actress.' Laying that fear to heart, she bore with much; she endured patiently the strange friends, of both sexes, whom Millicent imported from time to time into her drawing-room, and thanked Heaven inwardly that her daughter showed no desire to emulate their costumes. The life-class was something of a shock to her feelings, but Millicent explained sternly that it was essential to an artist's career. 'What on earth Millicent should want with a career, Mrs. Cartaret could not imagine.'

Unchaperoned in Donegal, the pretty Millicent falls in with Frank Norman, and with Owen Conroy, the weird, mysterious Gaelic bee expert and Seer, full of the Celtic folk-lore, and with an old aunt who is commonly reported a witch. Conroy succumbs at

* By Stephen Gwynn. Macmillan.

once to Millicent's charm, and the girl, attracted by his genius, and flattered when she sees how great is his rapture at being understood, sympathizes with him and talks to him, till she finds herself face to face with a fire she herself has kindled, but cannot extinguish. It is here that Mr. Stephen Gwynn seems to have fallen short of what he might have achieved. There is no doubt that hypnotic power such as Conroy possessed is a real thing, and Millicent might have been drawn far nearer to the brink of submission to his will, with no outraging of the probabilities. To have saved her, by the intervention of Frank, would have been a more dramatic situation; but the characters created by this author are too eminently sane and everyday for this to seem the natural outcome. He might have made Millicent a good deal more unconventional without making her less loveable.

In some parts his writing seems immature, particularly in dialogue. He is unintentionally humorous in one place, where he makes his truly modern heroine sigh sadly over the limitations of the Colonel's mind, because he, the Colonel, really thinks it possible that a man's beliefs should influence his conduct. With all due deference to modern infallibility we humbly submit that the point is at least arguable. G. M. R.

Verses.

A NEW YEAR'S FORECAST.

New useless gifts, new unmeant thanks,
New bores, new crazes, and new cranks,
New gaps in old friends' dwindling ranks.

New debts, new duns, new aches, new cares,
New booms and slumps in mining shares;
New gout, new wrinkles, new grey hairs.

New Shakespeares—every month or so,
New sins "for idle hands to do";

New everything—and nothing new.—*The World.*

What to Read.

"The Tragedy of Sir Francis Bacon." An Appeal for Further Investigation and Research. By Harold Bayley.

"The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox, 1745-1826, Daughter of Charles, Second Duke of Richmond, and successively the Wife of Sir Thomas Charles Bunbury, Bart., and of the Hon. George Napier; also a short Political Sketch of the Years 1760 to 1763, by Henry Fox, First Lord Holland." Edited by the Countess of Ilchester and Lord Stavordale.

"Mary Boyle, Her Book." An Autobiography. Edited by the late Sir Courtenay Boyle.

"Comments of a Countess."

"The Making of an American." By Jacob A. Riis.

Coming Events.

January 15th.—Meeting in support of the Endowment Fund of Guy's Hospital in the Egyptian Hall of the Mansion House, the Lord Mayor presiding.

Children's Fancy Dress Ball, in aid of the Children's Hospital, Great Ormond Street, Crystal Palace.

January 29th.—Illustrated lecture by Miss Lillias Hamilton, M.D., on "Three Years at the Court of the late Ameer of Afghanistan," in aid of the Girls' Friendly Society in South Africa, Portman Rooms, Baker Street, 3.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)