

deceiver, Jules Verne himself, could have accomplished his purpose better. The whole plot centres about the secret machinations of a marvellous secret society, known as the Invisible Hand, whose object was the complete destruction of Russian despotism. Cosmopolitan in its nature, the society had its headquarters in some wondrous underground caverns near Chattanooga, U. S., where its treasures were stored, protected by the most elaborate scientific contrivances. The story proper follows the adventures of an Englishman, who joins the order through the instrumentality of one of its apostles, named Valdermere. Valdermere, himself a strong and well-conceived character, is shadowed by a famous French detective, Deneau, who eventually discovers the secret of the caverns. Then there is a grand denouement in which all the principals are involved in a terrible natural upheaval in the caverns. This climax is alike thrilling and effective.

**CASTLE CRANEYCROW.** By George Barr McCutcheon. Toronto: McLeod & Allen. Price \$1.25.

With a license worthy of Anthony Hope, Mr. McCutcheon has in "Castle Cranecrow" made a daring raid on modern European society, and, in consequence, has produced a decidedly romantic and engrossing tale. The rescue of a beautiful American heiress from the hands of a wicked Italian prince, to whom she is affianced, through the instrumentality of a former lover, comprises the groundwork of the story. The scene is laid first at Brussels and latterly at Castle Cranecrow in Luxembourg, an old feudal castle owned by Lord Saxondale, an English nobleman, whither the heiress is abducted by her lover on the eve of her marriage. The earlier struggles for the girl between the prince and the young American lover, aided by their several adherents, and the final coup by which the girl is saved are exceedingly well handled. Not only is the plot itself excellently designed and perfected, but the character sketching and the skilful fencing between the hero and the heroine are deserving of much praise.

**SIGNORA, A CHILD OF THE OPERA HOUSE.** By Gustav Kobbé. New York: R. H. Russell, 1902.

The fascination of the Bohemian life of the theatre pervades this beautiful book, with its wealth of lovely illustrations. Fact and fiction are interwoven in its pages, and, while we recognize many names and can associate them with real personalities, yet the waif-child so strangely brought into the life of the theatre is surely a product of the imagination. Left an infant at the stage door, little Signora becomes the peculiar property of Yudels, the handy man of the opera house, and grows up in the theatre, the favorite of all the opera singers. The description of her first trip into the outer world is delightful, for everything to her mind is associated with the sights and scenes with which she has been familiar. The author has woven about the waif-child much absorbing matter about life behind the scenes and on the road, not the life of the ordinary troupe but of grand opera artists.

**THE LONG STRAIGHT ROAD.** By George Horton. Toronto, McLeod & Allen. Price \$1.25.

That there is romance even in the most commonplace of lives is ably demonstrated in the pages of this book. Mr. Horton has attacked a most prosaic and unpromising subject—that of married life—and has succeeded in imparting to it just such a charm as only a really clever author could inspire it with. He has traced in its completeness a marriage of mistaken impulse and has thrown into sharp contrast with it a marriage of helpful and loyal hearts. To the first pair, and especially to the man, accustomed in his earlier days to a life of freedom and pleasure, the matrimonial state becomes a wearisome and bitter grind—a veritable "long straight road." To the second pair the passing years serve but to revive a perennial youth and make each dearer in the eyes of the other. The atmosphere, the sights, the sounds, the life of a great city

are about them and in this metropolitan air, well-depicted by the author, this drama of life runs its course. "The Long Straight Road," let us confess, is an admirable portrayal of city life to-day.

**FUEL OF FIRE.** By Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler. Toronto: William Briggs.

In her latest book Miss Fowler has attempted more plot-action than in any of her former works. In fact, "Fuel of Fire" is the nearest approach to a genuine novel which she has yet produced. Whether we like her better in it than in the more epigrammatic "Isabel Carnaby" or "A Double Thread," is a matter of doubt. However, there is sufficient of the old-time witty and clever dialogue to commend it to all admirers of the English authoress. The tale hangs about a slender thread. Baxendale Hall in England, the ancestral home of the Baxendales, has been destined by an ancient curse to be thrice burned, first by the King, next by the State, and finally by a power greater than either of these. Twice was the prophecy fulfilled to the letter, and it is about the third burning that the story deals. Miss Fowler weaves much circumstantial evidence against Laurence Baxendale, the young owner. His poverty, the presence of a highly-insured library in the Hall, his devotion to Nancy Burton, all seem to point to his guilt. There is a mysterious loss of keys and many other peculiar circumstances concerned with the burning. Finally the mystery is solved in a most ingenious and unexpected manner, and all suspicion is cleared away from young Laurence. However well Miss Fowler has developed this plot, it must be admitted that she is more at home in her depiction of such an inimitable character as Lady Alicia, mother of Laurence Baxendale.

**CECILIA, A STORY OF MODERN ROME.** By F. Marion Crawford. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company.

It is seldom that an author gives the name of an old book to a new one. Yet this is what Mr. Crawford has done—"Cecilia" also being the title of Miss Burney's once-famous book. Whether Mr. Crawford's "Cecilia" will become famous remains to be seen. At present, at any rate, it is in the list of best-selling books. Cecilia Palladio is a wealthy Italian heiress who takes up her residence in Rome with her mother. Besides wealth, she has beauty, is a student of philosophy, and quotes Kant and Nietzsche, but only on appropriate occasions. Lamberto Lamberti and Guido d'Este—two bosom friends and honorable men—fall in love with her. Guido's aunt, the Princess Anatolie, and the girl's mother have already arranged to bring about the union of the two, and his suit is successful, while Lamberto, sacrificing himself for his friend, reveals to no one his love for Cecilia. But Lamberto nightly dreams about her, and she in turn nightly, of her own volition, goes into a sort of hypnotic state, during which both are in spirit carried to the house of the ancient vestal virgins, Cecilia, while in this hypnotic state, being transformed into the last of that ancient religious order. "She had a dual existence, and dreamed herself into the other every day." On becoming engaged to Guido, Cecilia, finally, after a severe struggle, breaks herself from her hypnotic practice, but only to dream of Lamberto in her natural sleep. The result, of course, is a final breaking of the engagement with Guido and her marriage with Lamberto. The book is full of dramatic interest, stirring incidents and striking climaxes, and one is indisposed, after taking it up, to put it down until the end has been reached.

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED, RESERVED FOR NOTICE IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE.

**THE LADY OF THE BARGE.** By W. W. Jacobs. London: George Bell & Sons.

**UNCLE CHARLES.** By John Strange Winter. London: Geo. Bell & Sons.

**THE QUEEN'S ROSARY.** By Alice Davis Van Cleave. New York: R. H. Russell.

**THE TWO VANREVELS.** By Booth Tarkington. Toronto: William Briggs.