

## A Book of the Week.

### "UNKIST, UNKIND."\*

IN this uncanny tale, Miss Hunt has made an entirely new departure. She has almost forsaken her world of society functions, and bored, but epigrammatic, men and women, to take us to a border castle, and a windswept Northumbrian moor, and an atmosphere of witch-craft, crystal gazing, and barrow-opening which seems to relegate us to centuries that are past.

There is only one character—that of Oliver—which in any way recalls her wonted *dramatis personæ*.

In this attempt to create an atmosphere wherein the marvellous shall seem likely, and nothing quite impossible, Miss Hunt has succeeded to quite a remarkable degree. Her story is essentially what one might call "creepy."

The character of Sibella Drake is that of a species of female Heathcliff,—a being found abandoned as an infant on a desolate moorland road, its parentage wholly unknown, and therefore leaving ample room for conjecture of the wildest kind. Sibella is not quite so consistently devilish as Heathcliff, but the idea of the innate wickedness in the character, set on fire by an unrequited love, is intrinsically the same, though doubtless nothing was farther from Miss Hunt's thoughts than a conscious plagiarism from "Wuthering Heights." The personality of the narrator is also curiously like that of the insipid person who is supposed to relate the story of Heathcliff, though here again, Miss Hunt has made a female character, where Emily Brontë imagined a male. Here, however, the resemblance ends. The finder and protector of Sibella is a refined gentleman of antiquarian tastes, whom solitude and sedentary pursuits have turned into a recluse. Janet Freeman, the narrator, becomes a member of this curious household, in the capacity of secretary. The charnel-like aspect of the whole house strikes her at first with a horror which awakens in the breast of the reader the keenest sympathy. Sir Anthony and Sibella practically spend their existence as riflers of tombs; and the decorations of their gloomy abode consist exclusively of mortuary trophies of a valuable but morbid interest. A skeleton catches the new secretary's gown in his bony claw as she ascends the staircase the first night: Sibella's bed-rail is decorated with a row of skulls:—

"I see the skull under everybody's face now," said the morbid woman. "It is one of my pastimes to trace it under the ruddy flesh. I see the hard jaw, the set teeth, the short nose . . . . It is dreadful of me, but I do!"

"And so shall I, if you go on like this!" I cried, in a sudden fit of horror and disgust, and I fled and left her there among her skulls and skeletons. She and her chamber were hateful to me."

The poor secretary flees into the kitchen, which seems the only cheerful room in the house. Here she is regaled by the cook with stories of how the last secretary died in the house, and shown with pride the cook's own shroud, which she treasures in a box as a woman might her wedding dress.

"Then I felt a blackness, a darkness of the spirit descend upon me. It was quite a physical distress. It seemed to me as if the air of this house I had come to was full of death; that I could not, do what I would, get away from it. I tried to be polite to Cristeena, and praise her elaborate tuckings

\* "Unkist, Unkind." By Violet Hunt. (Chapman, Hall and Co.)

and frillings. She went to put away the box. While she was gone a sudden thought struck me, an uncontrollable impulse moved me to lift the lid of a large stew-pan that was standing on the hob.

"The round, brownish occiput of an ancient Briton met my eyes, simmering and bubbling away in the turbid water; I hastily clapped down the lid and fled."

The story of the book I shall not reveal. But to all lovers of the uncanny, I strongly recommend it.

G. M. R.

## The People's Duchess.

(OCTOBER 27th, 1897.)

"Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,  
In the fierce light which beats upon a throne."

"YEA, the white lilies of a spotless past,  
And a pure present, were her very own;  
But with the lilies roses must be cast  
About her, taking life's last rest alone!  
For queenly roses of large-hearted love  
Crowned her while living. Her sweet native air  
Was Love's own sunshine; and she prized above  
The praise of kings a peasant's grateful prayer!  
Pass, England's Daughter, whom the Nation hailed  
With shouting on its day of Jubilee!  
Sleep, England's Daughter, honoured and bewailed,  
A kingdom loved, a kingdom mourns for Thee!  
The throne to which Love raised thee stands apart,  
Empty for ever in old England's heart!"

H. STOCKALL—(*Weekly Sun*).

## Bookland.

Madame Sarah Grand's new novel, "The Beth Book," will be published early next month.

Excellent in all respects is Miss Flora L. Shaw's short history of Australia, which forms the third volume of the Story of the Empire series.

### WHAT TO READ.

"Travels in West Africa, Congo Francais, Corisco, and Cameroons." By Mary H. Kingsley.

"An Artist's Letters from Japan." By John La Farge.

"The Day Book of Wonders." By David Morgan Thomas.

"A Villain of Parts." By B. Paul Neuman.

"Sunset." By Beatrice Whitby.

"The Love Affairs of some Famous Men." By the author of "How to be Happy though Married."

"A Spanish Maid." By L. Quiller Couch.

"Corleone: a Tale of Sicily." By F. Marion Crawford.

## Coming Events.

### SANITARY INSTITUTE.

8th November.—Sanitary Building Construction. Prof. T. Roger Smith, F.R.I.B.A., Professor of Architecture, University College, London, District Surveyor, West Wandsworth.

ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.  
1st December.—First Sessional Lecture, "Ants."  
By Sir John Lubbock.

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