

not surprising, therefore, that it is a growing practice of the poor, when the pangs of dissolution set in, to have their dying relatives removed to the workhouse infirmary; not that the passing may be made easier, but that relatives may be spared the dreadful experience of living and sleeping in the same room containing the corpse. It is astonishing to what dreadful extremities the poor are reduced in connection with their dwellings. A City missionary recently entered a room where the family were taking their tea on the lid of a coffin containing a corpse; and it is said to be an ordinary occurrence in some districts for the family to sleep in the room where the corpse is laid out. This sounds very dreadful, but what are the poor to do?

### A Book of the Week.

#### THE ALIEN.\*

In a certain sense Miss Montrésor is to be pitied for the fact that, in her first book she struck such a high note of excellence that her critics look for a repetition, or a surpassing of herself, in what she now produces.

There is nothing in "The Alien" that will recall to the memory the strength and vitality, the breadth and force, of "Into the Highways and Hedges," but in its own quiet way it is charming, and the reader who can remember that "comparisons are odorous," will be able to enjoy it with a peaceful mind.

The writer handicaps herself severely with regard to dramatic possibilities by making all her characters those of persons with life's story behind them. The actors in the little drama are as follows:—Old Mrs. Mordaunt, daughter of Mr. Iredale. This old lady is mistress in her own right of Applehurst; and as her only son was drowned at the age of seventeen, her heir-at-law is Major Iredale, a middle-aged widower. With Mrs. Iredale lives her relative, Esther Mordaunt. This lady is well into her thirties when the story begins. We know that many a charming woman's life romance has come to her in the thirties, but Esther has, as we are told, at the outset, buried hers before the book opens.

There suddenly appears, from South America, one who purports to be Gatton Mordaunt, the long-dead son of the old lady of Applehurst. He is utterly unlike the portraits of the dead man, but so very strongly like old Mrs. Mordaunt as to leave no doubt that he is really her son. The little mystery is very transparent. It turns out that the alien, whose real name is Jasper Iredale, was born to the old lady before her marriage with Mr. Mordaunt. He is the passionately-loved child of her shame.

This man also has buried his love and his hopes in America, so that one knows there is nothing in the shape of romance to be expected from him; but he is interesting, both in respect of the fight he makes to hold the property in the Major's teeth, and also in respect of his relations to Maravilla, a young girl whom he discovered as the wife of a low Spanish tavern-keeper, and bought from her brutal husband, and lived with and loved until she "got religion" and, being persuaded by the priests that her present mode of life was a sin, left Jasper and went into a convent. The effort involved in this sacrifice cost her her life. She simply could not live without him; but she left a tiny

daughter behind her, and this child, at the close of the tale, is placed by Jasper in charge of Esther, now mistress of Applehurst, bequeathed to her by will by Major Iredale.

Students of heredity may be inclined to think that Miss Montrésor has left to poor Esther, the quiet English old maid, a queer task in the rearing and training of a child, born out of wedlock, both her parents being illegitimate also, but neither of them having really bad dispositions. Even with a good natural disposition, one would think that the product of so much lawlessness, with the blood of a mixed race in her, would offer a problem of an unusual kind to the trainer; and one may be inclined to think that the future of the little Rebecca, which comes after the end of the book—or the love-making of Jasper, which comes before the beginning—would be of more vital interest than anything we actually come across in the book itself.

G. M. R.

### What to Read.

- "The Life of Pasteur." By Rene Vallery-Radot.
- "Childhood of Queen Victoria." By Mrs. Gerald Gurney.
- "The Tribulations of a Princess." By the author of "The Martyrdom of an Empress."
- "The Right of Way." By Gilbert Parker.
- "A Union of Hearts." By Katherine Tynan.
- "At the Court of the Amir: A Narrative." By John Alfred Gray, M.B. Lond., late surgeon to H.H. the Amir of Afghanistan.
- "Sacharissa: Some Account of Dorothy Sidney, Countess of Sunderland, 1617-1684." By Julia Cartwright (Mrs. Henry Ady).

### Coming Events.

*Friday, November 8th, Saturday, November 9th.*—Bazaar on behalf of the Children's Hospital, Nottingham, opened on Friday by the Mayor of Nottingham, and on Saturday by Her Grace the Duchess of Portland.

*Thursday, November 21st.*—Quarterly Council Meeting of the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland at the Matron's House, St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Miss Isla Stewart, President, in the Chair, 4 p.m.

#### SPECIAL BUSINESS ON THE AGENDA.

To receive a Report of the International Nurses' Congress from Miss Mollett, Delegate.

To receive a Report of the Meeting of the National Council of Women from Miss Hay Forbes, Delegate.

To receive a Report from Mrs. Bedford Fenwick on the Meeting convened by the Women's Local Government Society on "The Part of Women in the National Organization of Education."

To arrange for a social meeting, at which addresses will be given by Delegates to the Buffalo Congress.

*Saturday, November 23rd.*—General Meeting of the League of St. John's House Nurses, at St. John's House, 8, Norfolk Street, Strand, W.C., 2.30 p.m. Social Gathering 4.30 to 6.30 p.m.

\* By F. Montrésor. (Methuen.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)