

charming, and this is how one of them advertised her attractions:—

"I am a beautiful woman. My abundant, undulating hair envelops me as a cloud. Supple as a willow is my waist. Soft and brilliant is my visage as the satin of the flowers. I am endowed with wealth sufficient to saunter through life hand in hand with my beloved. Were I to meet a gracious lord, kindly, intelligent, well educated, and of good taste, I would unite myself with him for life, and later share with him the pleasure of being laid to rest eternal in a tomb of pink marble."

Compared with that, matrimonial advertisements in this grey land of ours are prosaic indeed.

## A Book of the Week.

### THE EARTHLY PURGATORY.\*

Heartily we welcome Miss Dougall's reappearance among novelists. She has left us too long without a sample of her powers. The book she here presents to us is a curious one. In the hands of most writers, it would be merely a detective story; there is a quality in all that Miss Dougall writes which saves it from that. The characters, the construction, the march of events, have the marks of that originality which colours and informs all her work. But the mystery is the keynote of the tale; and the secret of it is kept until the very end.

Neil Durgan is a man whose father was ruined by the abolition of slavery. He is an elderly man, and the fancy has taken him to work in some mines belonging to a cousin in Georgia. He is told that he will find board and lodging at the house of two Misses Smith, ladies of means, who, for some reason which nobody can quite fathom, have bought a house on the summit of the mountain, and settled down in that remote place. He goes to the house, is kindly received by the elder sister, a prim little lady, with grey hair, and it is decided that he is to stay with them. The arrangement, however, does not meet with the approval of the younger sister, Bertha. She is evidently displeased when she learns that they are to have a boarder, but says no more for the present. She locks him into his bedroom at night, and sits, as he discovers afterwards, all night long on guard. To ward off what? To save him from—what? He not unnaturally conjectures, when she meets him in secret next morning and frankly asks him to leave, and not to let her sister know that she has made such a request, that they are concealing some dangerous person or beast in the solitary place, and that she fears for the safety of any stranger. He does as she asks, and resigns himself to the discomforts of camping out. His cabin is not so very far away, and by degrees he becomes the friend and ally of Bertha. He is an elderly, weary, disappointed man, with a wife who declines to have anything to do with him and lives with a spiritualistic medium called Charlton Beardsley, a hopeless invalid, to whom, for some sentimental reason, she devotes her life. Durgan interests himself in Bertha and her sister, and in the curious air of mystery which hangs about them. By degrees he learns more. He discovers that the little prim, gentle, benevolent Miss Smith—the elder sister—is really Hermione Claxton, the heroine of one of the most sensational murder trials of recent years. On a

certain day, Miss Hermione Claxton sent out all the servants and her sister, and, in their absence, apparently with the help of a boy, an unknown messenger who had come to the house, shot her step-mother and murdered her father in a brutal manner. The motive was supposed to be questions of finance, which had caused disputes in the family. By the advocacy of the celebrated lawyer, Alden, who was Hermione's lover, the jury acquitted her. The case remained wrapped in mystery.

But now, link after link in the twisted chain is forthcoming, by degrees. And, of necessity, Neil Durgan sees and hears all. Alden, the constant lover of Hermione—though she steadily declines to marry him—appears on the scene, and they discover, by slow degrees, that Miss Claxton is, and has been ever since the murder, concealing things from the man who was straining every nerve to save her.

What Miss Claxton is concealing, and why—these are the points that constitute the mystery. It is not until quite the end of the tale that we are told the answer to the puzzle.

The tale cannot be pronounced to be Miss Dougall at her best; but it is interesting in many ways.

G. M. R.

## What to Read.

"History of Queen Elizabeth, Amy Robsart, and the Earl of Leicester; being a Reprint of 'Leycester's Commonwealth,' 1641." Edited by Frank J. Burgoyne.

"Women's Industries in Liverpool: an Inquiry into the Economic Effects of Legislation regulating the Labour of Women." By A. Harrison, D.Sc.

## Coming Events.

July 11th.—The Duchess of Albany attends, and receives purses from children at, a Concert in aid of the Infants' Hospital, Bechstein Hall, 3.30.

Lord Onslow distributes the prizes at the Horticultural College for Women, Swanley, 4.

July 13th.—Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, opens the New Building of the North-Eastern Hospital for Children, Hackney Road.

July 15th.—The Princess of Wales and Duke and Duchess of Connaught give their immediate patronage to a grand evening fête in aid of the East London Hospital for Children, Shadwell, E., at the Botanical Gardens, 10.

July 21st.—The Prince of Wales presents medals and other honours in connection with the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England.

July 21st to 26th.—Royal Institute of Public Health Congress at Folkestone. July 25th.—"State Registration of Nurses." Papers by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Miss Plum, Matron of the Victoria Hospital, Folkestone, and Miss Barling, Matron Folkestone Sanatorium, 10 to 1.

July 25th to 30th.—The Sanitary Institute, Congress at Glasgow. July 28th.—"State Registration of Nurses." Paper by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick.

### SELECT COMMITTEE ON NURSING.

July 12th and 14th.—The Select Committee on Nursing will sit to receive evidence in Room 17, House of Commons, at 12 noon. These meetings are open to the public.

\* By L. Dougall. (Hutchinson and Co.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)