

merely a gossip shop, where idle women pose as mannikins, smoke, drink liqueurs with their tea, and meet the latest "n'ce boy." At the Lyceum the atmosphere so far is thoroughly wholesome, and with Lady Frances Balfour as President, it will no doubt remain so.

## A Book of the Week.

### THE CELESTIAL SURGEON.\*

Miss Montrésor always gives us an unusual motive, something not too hackneyed, something original. The present story claims attention first perhaps by its remarkable title. The idea is taken from a short poem by R. L. Stevenson, in which the poet prays God, if there be no other way of waking his spirit to a true appreciation of life, to take "a piercing pain, a killing sin, and to his dead heart run them in."

The process of having her spirit "stabbed broad awake," is undergone by Lucilla Merridan, a woman who is the prototype of many women of the present day. She was the only child of dotting parents. She always did as she liked. She had as much money as she could possibly want. She had a very good time in general. Her tastes were intellectual, she prided herself on the fact. But there was really nothing to fill her heart. Her life had been baulked of desire. She was unmarried, and it was difficult to believe in the singleness of purpose of such men as came about her. She became neurotic and out of health. She went to consult Dr. McIlvert, a lady's specialist.

This type of society doctor is as true to our own day as Lucilla herself. Miss Montrésor avoids the one particular way in which the man who doctors the fashionable woman is most likely to make shipwreck; but she makes Dr. McIlvert blast his professional reputation through the infatuation of a lady patient, who has apparently poisoned her husband in order to be free to love the doctor, and expected that the man who had not scrupled to flirt with a married woman, would condone murder and hush up the result of his autopsy.

But Wallace McIlvert is one of those men who are bad enough up to a certain point, but not bad all through. One is left, however, under the impression that, had he loved the lady-poisoner, he might have stretched a point; but he did not—and the lady's evidence ruined him professionally.

This man it is, who becomes a shaper of Lucilla Merridan's destiny. He was really a clever doctor, and his prescription for Lucilla's nerves was that she should adopt a child, to give her an interest in life. This she did, and the child she adopted was the illegitimate daughter of the man whose estates adjoined her own. There was never any true sympathy between her and the little Jeronime from the first. By the time the child was a grown girl there was something very like active antagonism. The doctor, who had gone to America and disappeared, now comes once again upon the scenes. In spite of his bad reputation, in spite of all that anybody can say to dissuade her, Miss Merridan marries him.

The sequel seems to be specially planned to delude the reader. The doctor neither ruins his wife financially nor breaks her heart by unfaithfulness.

\* By F. F. Montrésor. (Arnold.)

Her money is lost, but in spite of him, and not through his means; and he works like a horse to get together a practice in Paris—after blackmailing Jeronime's mother in order to get her to recommend him to her friends in the gay city.

Evil and good in the human heart! That is evidently the idea in Miss Montrésor's mind. She gives us no love affair. She avoids it, as she did in "The Alien." She does not feel that her strength lies there. The episode of Jeronime's marriage with the old Mr. Knight is a little disgusting. But the whole book is unusual, and there are many excellent passages.

G. M. R.

## Stains.

The three ghosts on the lonesome road  
Spake each to one another,  
"Whence came that stain about your mouth  
No lifted hand may cover?"  
"From eating of forbidden fruit,  
Brother, my brother."

The three ghosts on the sunless road  
Spake each to one another,  
"Whence came that red burn on your foot  
No dust or ash may cover?"  
"I stamped a neighbour's hearth-flame out,  
Brother, my brother."

The three ghosts on the windless road  
Spake each to one another,  
"Whence came that blood upon your hand  
No other hand may cover?"  
"From breaking of a woman's heart,  
Brother, my brother."

"Yet on the earth clean men we walked,  
Glutton and Thief and Lover;  
White flesh and fair it hid our stains  
That no man might discover."  
"Naked the soul goes up to God,  
Brother, my brother."

—THEODOSIA GARRISON, in the Christmas (December) *Scribner's*.

## What to Read.

"The Englishwoman's Year-Book and Directory, 1905." Edited by Emily Janes.

"Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh." By the Marchioness of Londonderry.

"Memoirs of the Martyr King: Being a Detailed Record of the Last Two Years of his Most Sacred Majesty King Charles I." By Allan Fea.

"Under Tropic Skies." By Louis Becke.

"The Closed Room." By Frances Hodgson Burnett.

"Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay (1778-1840), as edited by her Niece, Charlotte Barrett."

"Life and Letters at Bath in the Eighteenth Century." By A. Barbeau.

## Coming Event.

December 3rd. — The Winter Social Gathering, League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses, in the Medical School Library, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C., 4.30 to 6.30.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)