

poultry-rearing and milking. What a delight it would be to stock our households with domestics trained after this pattern, in place of the shiftless, ignorant English servants, who have been brought up in the untidy, feckless homes, common to the British artisan, with whom at present we have to content ourselves.

The objection of Hindu women to being attended or seen by men is well known, and the officials have throughout the plague epidemic been handicapped in the performance of their duties by this fact. The prejudice is one which, in our opinion, should receive consideration, and the action taken by Mrs. K. M. Shroff, in the Parel district, is worthy of all praise. Mr. Shroff, who is a Justice of the Peace, found a difficulty in the matter of ascertaining cases of plague, among the women inmates, in houses occupied by Hindus in his house-to-house visitation, and Mrs. Shroff now therefore accompanies him on his rounds. It is stated that by this means the delicate feelings of Hindu women are not hurt, and easy access to their houses is obtained. The heartrending scenes which are encountered in the course of this house-to-house visitation must be hard to witness. To give an instance: in one house Mr. and Mrs. Shroff detected four cases of plague. One man was dead, and another dying; the wife of the second man was so moved by her husband's sufferings that she committed suicide by throwing herself into a well before her husband was actually dead. We are told that the misery of the old mother of the plague-stricken patient, who was her only son, in consequence of this double calamity in one hour, was heartrending.

A Parsee lady, Mrs. Freany Murzban, M.D., has been appointed doctor in the Fort district, which is in charge of Surgeon-Major Damanis. Mrs. Murzban will render assistance to the Justices of the Peace who have undertaken the house-to-house inspection of the district.

A Book of the Week.

"THE MASSARENES."*

UIDA has forsaken Italy as the theatre of her new novel, and laid the scene in London, with only a very occasional digression to Homburg. It seems a pity that she did not first, by a residence in London, bring herself a little more up-to-date. She has lived so long in Italy, that the dreams of the wealth, luxury, wickedness, and rottenness of English society, in which she indulges, have assumed preposterous dimensions, which, in this book, alienate the sympathies of the reader, and make one scarcely trouble to ask whether any, or how much truth, underlies this monstrous fabric of vice and shamelessness. The constant allusions to a certain prominent royal personage are in the worst possible taste; the characters, in true Ouida style, hardly ever make a remark without introducing into it a French phrase—a habit which is not usually considered universal among Englishmen—and the wealth of her millionaire is laid on with rather too large a trowel.

* "The Massarenes," by Ouida.

William Massarene is an Irishman, who has grown rich in the States by keeping gambling-hells, by cheating those more poor and more ignorant than himself, and by every species of villainy. His wife is an honest woman of the commonest description; but it would seem hardly possible for her to have remained, after her accession to fabulous wealth, so utterly unpolished, so absolutely common, so altogether impossible, as this story makes her. That the *entrée* to Court is as solely dependent on money as we are here told, is very likely the case! but in what section of English society, however exalted, does the butler, with two footmen, preside over afternoon tea in the drawing-room, and never leave his mistress *tête-à-tête* with a visitor even for an instant? There are several details of this sort which really recall the *Family Herald* in its palmy days.

Lady Kenilworth, the society lady who takes up the Massarenes and runs them, is an atrocious example of the type we are so familiar with in recent fiction—heartless, soulless, shameless. Becky Sharp was, of course, the brilliant forerunner of this type of damsel. Long afterwards, Lucas Malet took up the same theme in "Colonel Enderby's Wife." Then came "Dodo," and a host of others too long to mention; but for unmitigated vileness Ouida's "Mouse" beats them all.

Not only is she without decency, or honesty, or shame, but she is without the slightest trace of natural affection. She cares not a jot for her brother, who sacrifices almost all he has to prevent the public knowledge of her thefts—nor for the man who is the father of her children, nor for the children themselves. No motive of any kind, but that of self-love, appeals to her. She is, in fact, not human; and for that reason, like the father in Marie Corelli's "Mighty Atom," she fails to impress us, for we feel that she is but a travesty, and not a portrait of any real woman who ever walked this globe.

If there ever was a human soul that was utterly dehumanised, that had no one soft spot, no one point of contact with his or her fellow-creatures, then that soul was unique, a monstrosity that should not have seen the light of day—a thing that its literary creator ought to have strangled at birth, for it is a sin against all the canons of true Art, leaving higher considerations out of the question.

G. M. R.

Bookland.

WHAT TO READ.

"The Beginners of a Nation: a History of the Source and Rise of the Earliest English Settlements in America, with special reference to the Life and Character of the People," by Edward Eggleston.

"The Outgoing Turk," by H. C. Thomson.

"The Sultan and his Subjects," by Richard Davey.

"A Woman's Part in a Revolution," by Mrs. John Hays Hammond.

"In an Ancient Mirror," by Herbert Flowerdew.

"Told From the Ranks," edited by E. Milton Small.

"Cottage Folk," by Mrs. Comyns Carr.

"Did He Deserve It," by Mrs. Riddell.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)