

Book of the Week.

MEZZOGIORNO.*

Mr. Ayscough deals with the problem of mixed marriages in this volume.

A Greek Vice-Consul, taking advantage of the friendless position of a young English girl, marries her before the Poppos, and omits the further ceremony in the English Consulate.

"Several months after their marriage he had occasion to go to Benghazi, and this time he did not take his wife with him. . . . He had written fairly often, and she did not expect any news from him more important than the news of his return. She was in the garden when the letter was brought to her, and she at once shut her book and began reading what Eustachio might have to say. She hoped he was coming home soon; she was not well and was feeling rather lonely."

"Dear Gillian," wrote Eustachio, "this letter will be hard for you to read, as it is for me to write. I do not even know if I ought to begin as I have begun. Perhaps I have no right to call you anything more than 'Dear Miss Thessiger.'"

The substance of the remainder of the letter was that he intended to repudiate their marriage, and Gillian, alone in Tripoli, turns to her Arab servant, Bringali, for help in her terrible position.

"I sent for you because you are the only friend I can call mine in the world."

She spoke in a plain, even voice, that made her words seem much more terrible to Bringali. He had always thought of her instinctively as a great lady, belonging to the greatest of all great people; her marriage had seemed to his faultless instinct an inconceivable condescension. Perhaps he was even shocked at hearing himself called her friend.

He touched his forehead, his lips, and his breast, and then the ground at her feet. "Your slave," he said.

We next meeting Gillian in England, a beautiful young widow, bearing the title of Duchesse di Torre Grecci. The old Duke, her husband, had married her fully cognisant of her misfortune, and died leaving her "all he could, for he adored her, and she had been a devoted wife."

An unusual episode in the book is the wonderful effect her superb vitality produces on Mark Herrick, a young labourer, whom she accidentally discovers during one of her rambles.

"In a bed opposite the open door lay the young man. . . . His frame was large and had been unusually strong, but every time he coughed he was almost shaken to pieces. . . . No one could look at him and fail to see how closely death was pressing on him; nor how passionately he clung to life."

He himself describes his former *joie de vivre* in a remarkably fine passage:—

"I like the sun and the earth, the night and the stars, seeing them, I mean; not hearing folks telling fine things about them. I liked ploughing and the smell of the new furrows, and to watch the starlings and rooks waddling along after me. I liked going out of a January morning when everything was frost

white, before the sun was up, and I had it all to myself. . . . And I liked it, too, coming home to my meat, when the fog was crawling along the river bottoms, and the smoke stood out from the cottage chimneys, and folks bawled out 'Freeze again to-night, Mark. Turble rotten weather for the roads; but 'elthy. 'Ope yer mother's pretty spankish. It's grand to be alive. I expect nothing else will come up to it. . . ."

His dark, burning eyes were fastened upon her, and he shook as he said:

"Order me to live."

"Order you!"

"Yes. . . . I would obey you and come back if I were already dead."

"He made no effort to keep back the adoration that flamed in his eyes. . . ."

"Mark," she said, I cannot order you. . . . And it should be enough if I were to ask you to do what you can to live."

He recovers, but we have no space to record the sequel.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

November 19th.—Nurses' Missionary League. Sale of Work, 52, Lower Sloane Street, S.W. 11.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

November 19th.—Meeting of the Central Committee for Registration of Nurses, Council Room, British Medical Association Office, 429, Strand, London. The Right Hon. the Lord Amptill, G.C.I.E., will preside, 3 p.m.

November 19th.—Mr. John Burns, M.P., President Local Government Board, inaugurates the Park Hospital, Hither Green, as a Children's Hospital. 2.30 p.m.

November 22nd.—Nurses' Missionary League. Lecture: "What the Twentieth Century Nurses may Learn from the Nineteenth," by Miss Fox, Matron, Prince of Wales's Hospital, Tottenham, 10.30 a.m.

November 24th.—National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland. Private Conference on "Hygiene in Relation to Rescue Work," Caxton Hall, S.W. Admission by ticket only. 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

November 24th.—Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives. Meeting of the Council, 2, Cromwell Houses (23, Cromwell Road, S.W.), 3 p.m.

November 24th.—Central Midwives' Board, Caxton House, S.W., 2.45 p.m.

November 26th.—Mr. John Burns, M.P., President Local Government Board, opens the Wandsworth New Infirmary.

November 29th.—Prison Reform League Meeting, Caxton Hall, 8 p.m.

December 7th.—Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. Lecture on "The Nursing of Neurasthenic and Hysterical Patients," by Dr. Edwin Bramwell. All trained nurses cordially invited. Extra-Mural Medical Theatre. 4.30 p.m.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"My mother taught me never to laugh at myself, but always to remember that I was the handiwork of God."

LAMARTINE.

* By John Ayscough. (Chatto and Windus.)

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