

Books and Bookmen

Days That Speak: Evelyn Goode (London: Ward, Lock, and Co., Ltd.)

Comparisons are said to be odious. But no comparison can be drawn between Miss Goode's style, and that of the charming Australian writers whose names have become a synonym for all that is pure and wholesome in young folk's literature. Miss Goode will never become popular in the sense or way that the Turners have. For in Miss Goode's book there is a depth which has not as yet been touched by the Turners. Indeed, so great is the dissimilarity between the two styles that comparison is impossible and unfair. In "Days that Speak," there is much that will be unintelligible to very youthful readers. But older folk will thoroughly enjoy a book which it is plainly evident has been written by one who loves and has studied children to practical purpose. The imitativeness of children is shown, and also their receptivity. Their sense of justice and their strong sense of the fitness of things, and their straight way of arriving at correct conclusions, owing to their being untrammelled by convention, is noted. As is also their endless questioning as to the why and wherefore of everything under the sun which is looked upon by older people as so annoying, and nearly always disposed of frivolously, equivocatingly, or untruthfully. Somewhere we have been told by some writer lately that there are numberless books written which tell people what they are not to do, or what is incorrect, but few that tell people what to do, or the correct way to do it. But the correct way to answer children's posers is indicated by Miss Goode in the following extract from the book: "Mother, why did God start when it's all to be ended? Mother had stood silent under all the probing questions. Silence was very often the only answer she had to give. Far was it from her to assume knowledge of things beyond human understanding; to hinder the searching speculations of these fresh young souls with platitudes. Often upon her lips were those words which are used oftenest by the world's wisest, 'I do not know.' 'I do not know, my little girl. There are many, many things I do not know any more than you do. Only this, that God has made the world beautiful to help us to be good, and we'll find out everything someday.' Small had left his mother's side again, and was meditating upon the hereafter of the dead rabbit. 'I aspec' he has be waked up in his heaven by now' he said, hopefully. And mother did not contradict him, having no authority." The above is a fair example of the good things with which this book is crammed, from cover to cover. Our copy of this exceedingly welcome contribution to the literature of Australasia has been received through the courtesy of Messrs. Wildman and Arey.

Paradise and the Ferrys: Lilian Turner. (London: Ward, Lock and Co., Limited.)

However much we may wish that the Turners would go farther afield for material for their increasing popular stories, so that by change of venue they could acquire a greater versatility, we can never sufficiently admire the perseverance with which they preach the gospel of Australasian resourcefulness. It would almost seem impossible, according to these authors, to create a situation that an Australasian would not be equal to. And truly we are a resourceful people—of necessity. The title is felicitous and illuminative, the particular Peri—but not the only Peri of the book—being the alternately optimistic, or pessimistic "Theo," who reminds us of that lovable tomboy "Jo," of "Little Women." Only we never wanted to smack "Jo," while we fairly itch to smite, and, indeed, annihilate "Theo" at times. "Addie" and "Mavis" we love, but we have only a qualified admiration for the volatile "Enid," while Mrs. Perry is a splendid, but not an uncommon, type of the Australasian gentlewoman. "Harvey" is a type that is becoming far too uncommon, owing, we think, to the greater independence of Australasian women, which, until rightly understood and perfected, will tend to unbalance the major-

ity of men. But all the book's characters are naturally drawn, and could be cited as typical of the best Australasian, who is resourceful, energetic, intelligent, and frankly independent. But it is too bad that the possible taint of insanity should be shifted from the strong "Harvey" to the poor, frail "Joek"—and concussion of the brain, too, to make matters worse. Fie! Lilian Turner. But, despite this injustice, the book is one to conjure with because it is not only wholesome, but suggestive, inspiring, and helpful. And we would like to see a copy of it in the library of every Sunday and day school, and on the bookshelf of every English-speaking boy and girl throughout the world. Our copy has been received through the courtesy of Messrs. Wildman and Arey.

Wroth: Agnes and Egerton Castle. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., St. Martin's-street.)

In these days of apathetic indifference a lover of the calibre of the "Mad Wroth" of this superlatively written narrative is as rare as the "rara avis." And no more vivid conception of the havoc that can be wrought in the heart and mind of man by passion, profligacy and revolt against law and order or of the cleansing and recuperative power of idealised love, could be conceived than that furnished by this story, which recounts the profligate history and subsequent conversion of the wildest of the wild Wroths, who, for generations, had made the countryside in which their estate lay ring with the knowledge of their mad doings. Hurley Abbey, formerly called Lady's Grace, had been a gift of Henry VII. to "Amyas Raby" (the founder of the House of Wroth), and was one of the great religious houses that had been despoiled by that so-called-zealous reformer. But though Henry had taken rich toll of Lady's Grace, it was still a rich gift, so extensive and so valuable was the demesne that lay about its beautiful and venerable walls. But successive generations of dissolute Rabys and Wroths had so impoverished its revenues that at the time of the succession of the Wroth who is the hero of this story, Hurley Abbey and its revenue had dwindled into insignificance and ruin.

The present holder of the honours of Hurley had succeeded his grandfather. This personage had substituted the family traditions by quarrelling with his only son; and, when the latter had hung him a final defiance by wedding a city mistress, had taken a characteristic revenge. He had laid waste the fair lands he could not alienate. For miles the father's anger had written itself hideously upon hill and plain. According to custom, the pious founders of the Priory had chosen its site with an eye to beauty as well as material convenience. The woods that sheltered their gaithe, the rivers and ponds that held their fish, the fields that grew their corn, the meadows that fattened their cattle, were all as goodly to the eye as they were prodigal in return. In the space of half a year the whole landscape was nullified. Every tree was levelled. It was a spite that absorbed an incalculable sum. In his frenzy, Lord Wroth had not paused to make bargains for his timber, and the available labour of the country had been employed at the work of destruction from dawn to sunset. Vast battalions of trees lay where they were felled; dealers were paid to remove the encumbrance from park and avenue. Whether from the effects of the thwarted rage or of belated remorse, whether prematurely worn out by the violent passions that had rent him all his life, it would be hard to say, but Lord Wroth was that day seized with a stroke—the country folk called it a judgment. For twenty years of ever-deepening imbecility he lived on in the midst of the desolation he had wrought—a body without soul, dead yet alive, a fairly apt example for the superstitious of the curse of Hurley—once Lady's Grace. When he passed at last, un mourned and unannounced, a faithful chronicler might well have described him as the greatest felon of a notorious line, had not his young successor hidden fair to outdo him. From the spring of 1813 to the fall of 1810, George, fifth Lord Wroth, had reigned at Hurley; and, short as the time was for the distinction, he was already known from end to end of the country as Mad Wroth.

In order to prepare the reader for the very ingenious tangle of affairs that follow before the hero's fortunes reach full tide, it must be explained that Wroth's rich city grandfather had left him an immense fortune, conditional on his marrying before he reached the age of 25. Now this condition, seemingly easy, was a condition that Lord Wroth, who had been disinherited too often by the fair, and in his case the too often frail sex, could not bring himself to contemplate, much less fulfil. And so matters were at a standstill, though the time was short. So short, indeed, and so desperate were the state of Lord Wroth's finances, that Mr Minchin, Wroth's man of affairs, became convinced that unless extreme pressure was brought to bear upon Lord Wroth, nothing but complete ruin and social extinction awaited the last sion of this noble and ancient house. In the meantime, Wroth had formed an ideal that had driven him to introspection and had half-resolved to become worthy of this ideal, and his grandfather's money might become a stepping-stone to its realisation. But Wroth found that his ideal was not to be realised. And after a greater bout than usual of debauchery, he caused it to be placed all over the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells that on such a date, and in such a place, he would interview intending aspirants to the honour of becoming Lady Wroth. Among the fashionable crowd staying at the Wells was "Countess Juliana Mor-dante," a lady of English birth and parentage, who had married an Italian count, who was now dead. Also staying at the Wells was "Peggy Beljoy," Juliana's foster-sister, and until latterly a dependent. Peggy Beljoy, now a variety actress and dancer, was as frail as she was fair, which is saying a great deal. And Peggy determined, for ignoble reasons, to become Lady Wroth, while Juliana Mor-dante, though, she knew Lord Wroth's past, was equally determined to marry him because she loved him, and wished to achieve his soul's salvation. Gorgeously attired, Peggy took her way to the inn where Lord Wroth purposed to make his choice. Juliana, heavily veiled, attended too. But, because of Wroth's behaviour in the choosing, she remained unveiled and almost unnoticed. And Lord Wroth chose Peggy. To recapitulate how Juliana substituted herself for Peggy at the altar, after extorting from her a promise of secrecy, and how Peggy turned this to account after the ceremony, Lord Wroth remaining in ignorance of whom he had really married, as he deserted his wife directly after the ceremony, and how on Wroth's discovery of the fact that Juliana (the lady of his ideal) was at the Wells and free to have married him, would be to exceed the space allotted to this review. But after a long and severe probation, during which the principal performers of this half tragic comedy make their exits and their entrances in splendidly dramatic style, Lord Wroth's passion for Juliana merges into the love that almost passes man's understanding, and becomes a fit mate for as perfect an ideal of womanhood as could inhabit a mortal world an divorcee. "If Youth But Knew," "French Nan," and "Incomparable Belairs" are but as water is unto wine by comparison with this strong virtue book, which intoxicates, enthralles, absorbs, interests, saddens, and uplifts in turn, while the glimpses it gives of Paris under the English occupation, and of Florence under the regime of the last of her Grand Dukes, are profitable both from an historic and a sentimental point of view. One of the most beautiful acts of the book is the restoration by Lord Wroth of the Church of Lady's Grace to its pristine beauty and use. For to desecrate consecrated ground is, as in the case of the wild Raby's, and the wilder Wroth's, to invite disaster and doom. The principal scenes of the book are vividly and realistically depicted, especially the Tonebrac scene, and we close the book with unfeigned admiration, both for the very high ideals it has been our privilege to contemplate, and for the originality of its subject. Our copy has been received from the publishers, Macmillan and Co.

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