

Book of the Week.

ABBOT'S VERNEY.*

If, as seems probable, this book is a first attempt, it is a creditable one. The writer should do far better one day. She can write really good English, and some of the dialogue and characterisation is distinctly above the average.

The fault of the book, as in so much writing of the modern school, is in its formlessness, its want of construction, its lengthy delineations of the un-essential, in short, the undeniable fact that it is tedious in many places and stands in sore need of cutting.

This fault is a part of the re-action against the old idea of the novel, with its plot and under-plot, its opening, its complications, its *dénouement*. No doubt the three volume novel of the old school was conventional; its very adherence to rule made it tedious; but the young writer, in casting off all such fetters as tied the author who held himself bound to supply a plot, sometimes forgets that, in order to make a book interesting, if he has no story to tell, his own style must supply all that is necessary to captivate the reader.

Miss Macaulay has no plot; and, unfortunately, she has opened her story with a bit of the frankest plagiarism I ever remember to have seen—so frank that I very nearly closed the volume without going further than page one. Very many people will remember "Colonel Enderby's Wife," the clever story with which Lucas Malet made her name. The first paragraph of the story stated that it was the history of a Deviation—the deviation of one member of a family from a well-defined and long-accepted family type. It is a thousand pities that Miss Macaulay should have borrowed both sentiment and language to open a book which is far from lacking in originality.

The Ruth family, whose history is told in these pages, are of the type which is still more or less characteristic of the nation in the provinces, honest, limited, obstinate, honourable, brave, and more or less stupid. The deviation was Meyrick Ruth, old Colonel Ruth's eldest son. The Colonel, who is an epitome of all the family traits, educates and brings up at his home in the North Country, the three sons of his second son, and the only son of his eldest son, the four grandsons grow up together, Verney, the heir, being the youngest of the four.

The point of the story lies in the fact that, Verney being the son of a rogue, his grandfather is always expecting him to show signs of moral depravity; and is not clever enough, nor controlled enough, to prevent the boy from finding this out. Verney, the boy in question, is by far the finest character of the four; but he is dogged through life by his father, the unscrupulous, fascinating ne'er-do-weel, whose incorrigible dishonesty all but ruins the young fellow's whole future.

Rosamund, the sole attempt to create a feminine interest in the book is one of those completely unsympathetic women who spring from the pen of the modern feminine novelist, the woman who is

*By R. Macaulay. (John Murray.)

all intellect and self-analysis, with no emotions. One hardly knows which one dislikes more, this type or the odious woman of another school of fiction, to whom passion is the only thing worth living for. Both seem almost equally untrue to life.

The end of the story is that the old Colonel finally decides that he must leave the place to his second son and his descendants, he dare not risk leaving it to Verney. So Verney is left, a placid martyr, victim of the sins of the father, without inheritance, and in love with a woman who does not care a straw for him.

The book shows a sense of the drama of common life, and has some strong moments.

G. M. R.

Verse.

Good thoughts his own friends,
His wealth a well-spent age,
The earth his sober inn
And quiet pilgrimage.

CAMPION.

Coming Events.

January 18th.—Lecture on Public Health and Hygiene by Dr. Newman, D.P.H., to the League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses, at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C. 5.45 p.m.

January 29th.—Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Registered Nurses' Society, 431, Oxford Street, W. 5 p.m.*

January 31st.—Annual Meeting of the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, 431, Oxford Street, W. 4 p.m.*

February 1st.—Meeting of Executive Committee of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 431, Oxford Street, W. 4.30 p.m.*

A Word for the Week.

SILENCE.—Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation. ORDER.—Let all things have their places, let each part of your business have its time. RESOLUTION.—Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve. FRUGALITY.—Make no expense, but do good to others as yourself; that is waste nothing. INDUSTRY.—Lose no time; be always employed in something useful but avoid all unnecessary actions. SINCERITY.—Use not hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly; and if you speak, speak accordingly. JUSTICE.—Wrong no one by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty. MODERATION.—Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries. CLEANLINESS.—Suffer no uncleanness in body, clothes, and habitation. TRANQUILLITY.—Be not disturbed about trifles; or at accidents common or unavoidable. HUMILITY.—Imitate Jesus Christ.—*Franklin's Moral Code.*

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