

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"MR. TEDDY."*

If Mr. Benson gives us rather well-worn themes, he dishes them up with such attractive flavours that we forget that we have really heard it all before. He has a passion for youth and introduces us to the two latest young lovers of his creation, Rosemary and Robin, quite delightful young creatures, the best specimens of their kind. So in love is he with their extreme fresh youth that he rather overdoes the faded Daisy, who after all is only thirty-five—and the "elderly" Mr. Teddy, who is forty on the day the story opens. We fear Mr. Benson does not appreciate the fact that in the present day these respective ages are not necessarily accompanied by faded hair and scraggy necks.

Mr. Teddy and Miss Daisy had lived as neighbours in the village of Lambton, which was situated in a Sussex valley. They were the leaders of the Lambton society, and the life of all its gaieties.

It is intimated that at one time Mr. Teddy had thought of Miss Daisy in the way that she still secretly hoped for, but he was the son of a very determined and selfish lady who posed as an invalid, and she had put an effectual spoke in the wheel of his budding affections.

Mr. Teddy was something of an artist, in addition to his many other gentle accomplishments. When Robin came to stay with his uncle, Mr. Teddy, and when the house next to Mr. Teddy was let to a widow and her charming daughter Rosemary, the whole of the society of Lambton was revolutionised. Mr. Teddy was no longer the champion sportsman, and Miss Daisy had to retire from the leadership of the Lambton Musical Society.

The climax was arrived at in the Christmas carols. "Good King Wenceslas proceeded to look out. Here Daisy was accustomed to take the part of the page and remark on the coldness of the weather. For twelve years now she had done that, and yet when it came to her turn to begin she felt unusually nervous. All through the practice Daisy felt her sovereignty slipping from her, and she knew in her heart there had come to Lambton a more melodious swan than she." It was the same with Mr. Teddy and Robin in the skating contest. Robin with his brilliant achievements had put poor Mr. Teddy in the shade entirely.

Mrs. Vickary, the vicar's wife, found a seat near Miss Daisy.

"Well I'm sure I'm very much surprised," she said. "To think that all these years we have thought dear Mr. Teddy was such a wonderful skater, and now to find out that he can't skate at all. Look at him trying to imitate Mr. Robin. Is it not quite laughable?"

* By E. F. Benson. T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., London.

Mr. Teddy fell in love with Rosemary, and had not his mother told Daisy when she lay dying that once Teddy had thought—like that—of her? Daisy had heard the girl's voice calling back to her companion as they cycled along the frost-bound road. "I bet you I beat you, Teddy." Upwards they swept with a whirr of wheels and a wink of sun on the spokes, and passed out of sight. And Daisy remembered that in all these years in which he and she had passed from youth to maturity together she had never called him Teddy. But after a few weeks only of acquaintanceship he was Teddy to the girl. This careless *tutoyer* struck her like a lash across the face."

But, as might be expected, it was Robin who won pretty laughing Rosemary.

Teddy asks him:—

"Is anything wrong with you?"

"Nothing whatever," said the boy, "it's only that it's all—it's all so awfully right. It's too wonderfully right. There was never anything so right. I said I would tell you before she came. She shirked it; aren't girls mean?"

On the last page Daisy loses her sister in death and finds Mr. Teddy in marriage. Mrs. Vickary wrote a neat note of condolence and congratulation. "But joy, dear Miss Daisy, cometh in the morning." H. H.

THE FATES.

1917.

It was the three grey Sisters
Spun the everlasting thread
Said the youngest Sister to the second Sister,
"It has never been so red."

Said the second Sister to the eldest Sister,
And pursed her thin white lips,
"It clogs about my spindle—
Huh, Sister, how it drips!"

Said the eldest Sister, bowed adown
With the weight of the endless years,
"The thread is red, the thread it drips,
And blunt have grown my shears."

"Since Time began we spin the thread,
The thread of life and fate;
It is nought to us, it is one to us
If we spin love or hate."

"It is one to us, it is nought to us,
The black, the gold, the red;
Till Time shall cease the wheel shall turn,
My shears shall clip the thread."

M. MOLLETT.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

I am not ashamed of being an optimist, for optimism means faith in life, in your fellow-men, the justice of your cause, and the moral government of the world.—*Mr. Prothero.*

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