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The Diary Of A Nobody



George & Weedon Grossmith

The Diary of a Nobody



Read by **Martin Jarvis**



Synopsis

—A conversation with Mr Merton on Society. Mr and Mrs James of Sutton come up. A miserable evening at the Tank Theatre. Experiments with enamel paint. I make another good joke; but Gowing and Cummings [their two closest friends] are unnecessarily offended. I paint the bath red, with unexpected results.—• A quality text only reissue of the classic English comic novel. "I am hardly alone in rating 'The Diary of a Nobody' a singular work of genius. From the time it was published in 1892...it began to collect enthusiastic admirers. Hilaire Belloc deemed it 'one of the half-dozen immortal achievements of our time...a glory for us all.' It was a favorite of T. S. Eliot and John Betjeman. Evelyn Waugh declared it to be 'the funniest book in the world' and had his character Lady Marchmain read passages from it aloud to her family in 'Brideshead Revisited.'"

-The New York Times "It has had many imitators, and some of the imitations have met with considerable success, but not one of them has rivaled the original, and they have all faded away, and still 'The Diary of a Nobody' has held its ground....Who can define the charm of the book? Charles Pooter, who keeps the Diary, is an absurd person, a fussy, mildly conceited, blundering figure of fun, and yet in all his follies and ridiculous simplicities he remains wonderfully human and curiously likeable. He not only amuses you and keeps you laughing at his unconscious humor, but he interests you in himself, in his wife and his friends, in all the everyday ambitions, mishaps, triumphs, and public and domestic doings of his city and suburban life. The present reviewer has just read the book for a third time, with undiminished enjoyment of its quaint drollery, its whimsical satire and delightfully quiet irony, and he strongly recommends it to all who love humor and the best sort of laughter." -The Bookman "One of the most adequate, artistic, and impressive studies of vulgarity that have yet come under our notice. The book is throughout appalling, merciless, horribly true. As there is no historical instance of any person who believed himself, or herself, to be vulgar, we may take it for granted that all readers will delight in this study of vulgarity, and will find in it much that reminds them of their friends and inferiors....We have said that the book is artistic, and we do not mean anything less than that." -The Speaker "A century after the death of its author, George Grossmith, 'The Diary of a Nobody' still rings true....It offers a double pleasure. It takes you back in time to an age which is presented with mocking and accurate affection, and the characters ring true for our time too....Yet the book survives for a purely literary reason also. Its tone is exactly right. It flirts with absurdity, but never goes too far. It's a rare book, one which has perfect pitch, and so it continues to comfort and delight. Even to read only a few pages cheers you up no end." -The Telegraph --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you, like myself, are a neo-Victorian, you will "laugh till the bed shakes", as the hero of this 'diary' (and yes, 'hero' is the right word) himself does at his own punny jokes. Ten pages in and half as many persons have tripped over the mud scraperâ€¢ â€“ an unmanageable young son with 'forward' slangâ€¢ â€“ â€“ squabbles with servants, old friends and unpleasant new acquaintancesâ€¢ â€“ â€“ trouble at workâ€¢ â€“ â€“ social embarrassmentsâ€¢ â€“ â€“ everything a lover of Dickens could ask for and more. Even if you don't live and breathe top hats (Posh three-shilling hats, rather), you will probably get a kick or two out of this, especially if you erupt in mirthquakes whilst paging through it in a public library or at the doctor's office. The edition by Wordsworth Classics, besides being a steal at the price, is splendid in every respect. The footnotes are somewhat overattentive for me, but will serve most readers very well; it is far better to have a footnote too many than a footnote too few. The introduction by Professor Michael Irwin (University of Kent at Canterbury) is *excellent* (and should be read, like most introductions, after completion of the main contents). I heartily endorse the sentiments expressed on the back cover: "If you don't recognize yourself as some point in 'The Diary' you are probably less than human. If you can read it without laughing aloud you have no sense of humour."

Mr. Charles Pooter, a middle-class, middle-aged suburban Londoner in the late Victorian Era, decides to keep a diary. After all, it seems like everyone is publishing their diaries, so why shouldn't he? His only regret is that he had not begun the diary sooner. When part of the way through this

hilarious story related through his daily entries it seems that someone ripped out several pages to use for fire kindling, he says to his loyal wife and impudent son that he had hoped the diary would be a fond remembrance of him after he died and possibly that having it published could bring them some remuneration. His loved ones cannot suppress their laughter. The biggest joke is that in fact, this diary of a dedicated clerk in an old-fashioned accounting firm, who has done little else in his life and is quite comfortable with the status quo, is eternally priceless on for its comedy and what it reveals about the Victorian middle-class life and preoccupations that it satirizes. If Mr. Pooter and his friends represent a culture that has grown complacent and overly interested in its own hobby horses and etiquette, his adult son Lupin is the brash younger generation that seeks entertainment and gratification without apology, shaking off musty traditions. The Grossmith brothers--George largely wrote this and Weedon illustrated it as a magazine serial--had no idea that they were creating a historical document as much as a giddy entertainment. The comedy is absolutely winning. The Grossmiths don't sell Mr. Pooter down the river entirely--they allow him competence at work, some self awareness and wounded dignity--but every diary entry usually sets up his hopes and schemes only to be reported as dashed in the next. Long before Rodney Dangerfield complained that he didn't get respect, Mr. Pooter had every right to cry that out as younger clerks, the neighbors, his son, his son's friends and the servants feel free to regularly contradict and insult him. There is plenty of physical comedy and fashion gone bad. And there is that voice of Mr. Pooter, at once plaintive, hopeful, clueless, sweet but not stupid, who always picks himself up after a fall.

In my youth there was a BBC Radio program called ITMA - It's That Man Again. I kept running across a certain Charles Pooter and references to his diaries in much of my reading. Eventually I realized, from the comments that indicated sheer pleasure, that this was a book I should own and read, even if it was just fiction. I very quickly read and enjoyed this little book that I shelved it, for a later reread, and forgot to review it. Why is that important - just another reader's review after all - because people who enjoy reading, and have a sense of wit, need to know of it ... do read it!"I fail to see" said Mr. Pooter to himself one day," - because I do not happen to be a 'Somebody'-why my diary should not be interesting and published." So publish he does, or rather two brothers, George and Weedon Grossmith created and publish a series of humorous articles for the magazine Punch that were eventually published in 1892 as the book Diary of a Nobody. Mr. Pooter soon proves to us that he certainly is not a "Somebody" but the little details of his so little life are surprisingly engaging and eventually, as you close and shelve the book, you find that you can feel at least a "warm regard" for this character. Of course, few of us will be able to hold him in the highly pretentious

regard he holds himself, or enjoy his "puns" and little jokes quite as much as he does! But most readers will find they have a chuckling sympathy for Mr. Pooter's struggle for a decent life.

I've read this and also listened to the audio. A good old fashioned classic that isn't very long, but still enjoyable with subtle humor throughout. It reminded me a bit of the Augustus Carp book, only not quite as funny.

None of your respondents seem to be aware of Grossmith's first claim to fame: "Grossmith is best remembered for two aspects of his career. First, he created a series of nine memorable characters in the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan from 1877 to 1889, including Sir Joseph Porter, in H.M.S. Pinafore (1878), the Major-General in The Pirates of Penzance (1880) and Ko-Ko in The Mikado (1885)."

very nostalgic. Reminds me of the television series, Keeping Up Appearances with Hyacinth Bucket, early 90's.

A bit too vintage

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