

## GEORGE ELIOT.

BY REBECCA HART.

"Do not think that you will ever get harm by striving to enter into the faith of others, and to sympathize in imagination with the guiding principles of their lives; so only can you justly love them, or pity them, or praise."—RUSKIN.

WHATEVER may be the differences of opinion as to the wholesomeness of George Eliot's writings, the study of her life cannot fail to be interesting to those who like to watch the development of character, or to those for whom literary history has a charm.

Carlyle tells us that Robespierre, the tyrant who sent so many of his countrymen to the guillotine, resigned a judgeship, when a young attorney, because he would not sentence one man to death. History is constantly recording such contrasts between men's early and later opinions; and some such contrast we may find in George Eliot's life. At one time we find her sighing for the holiness of St. Paul, at another breaking the most binding law of morality; at one time wrapped in the devotion of the ascetic, at another "denying the Lord who bought her."

Indeed, her life forms a good commentary to her own words: "Character is not cut in marble, it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do." But, to continue the figure, are there not often certain weaknesses in the constitution which determine *what* disease outside causes will develop?

The surroundings of Marian Evans' childhood were the busy industry and substantial comforts of farm life. Her father, Robert Evans, possessed the keen, practical mind, the uprightness, and the energy with which his daughter afterwards endowed Adam Bede. He had a growing reputation for those qualities which make a good land agent, and for that business he afterward gave up farming. The mother was an energetic housewife, but delicate from Marian's infancy.

At the age of five the child was sent, with an older sister, to boarding-school, coming home every Friday evening to remain until Monday. School-life, begun thus early, lasted until she was sixteen. She was a clever student, and a great favourite with her teachers. She was her father's idol and pride, while she in turn worshipped her brother, who was a few years older than herself.

Two traits in her character, the ambition to stand well in the