

never been exhibited in any art gallery, nor her photograph ever seen. Mr. G. A. Sala says, that during thirty years of wide intercourse with literary people, artists, and those who sought for their society, he had never seen George Eliot, and had met with very few people who had her acquaintance. To the general public "George Eliot" signified merely an abstraction, an impalpability.

"Whether it man or woman only were
That could not any creature well descry ;"

and for a long time, even in literary circles, the real name concealed by this *nom de plume* was unknown. It was owing to this that one of those foolish frauds which seem like a species of mania on the part of the concoctor, aided by the ignorance, vanity, and credulity of his dupes, became possible, and a daring attempt to claim the literary laurels, which, through the reticence of the rightful owner were held, as it were, suspended above a *nominiis umbra*, was made. After the publication of "Adam Bede," following close on that of "Scenes of Clerical Life," had shewn that a new novelist of great and original power had appeared, and conjectures as to the author were rife in the literary world, a letter, signed by the Rev. H. Anders, Rector of Kirkby, came out in the *Times*, in which the writer informed the public that the author of "Scenes of Clerical Life" and "Adam Bede" was Mr. Joseph Liggins, of Nuneaton, Warwickshire, adding that Mr. Liggins himself and the characters he had painted were as well known there as the twin spires of Coventry. A reply from George Eliot appeared the following day, distinctly denying the statement made by Mr. Anders, and emphatically stating that Mr. Liggins had never seen a line of "Scenes of Clerical Life" or of "Adam Bede" till they were printed, nor had any knowledge of them whatever. But

this did not put down the false claimant. Mr. Liggins exhibited a drawer of MSS. which he declared to be the rough copies of the famous novels he claimed to have written, and a subscription was set on foot by his friends to compensate him for the injury which he was supposed to have received from the so-called George Eliot. Whereupon Messrs. Blackwood, the publishers of the works in question, came forward with a solemn declaration that they were certainly not written by Mr. Liggins, and if he, or anyone else, was receiving charitable contributions on the ground of being their author, that person was obtaining money on false pretences.

This is only one among the many fictions which at different times found a nucleus in the hidden personality of George Eliot. Even, after her real name, her residence in London, and her literary achievements were better known, inaccurate and conflicting statements about her birth-place, her parentage, and early life, continued to appear in newspapers and magazines. It was said that she was the daughter of a poor curate, of a Methodist minister, of a working carpenter, and also that she had been educated by a clergyman of the English Church, whose character, and family circumstances she had depicted in the Rev. Amos Barton. In a series of articles which appeared in an English magazine* in 1875, we were told that the people of Wirksworth, in Derbyshire, were perfectly well acquainted with the actual persons from whom the characters in "Adam Bede" were drawn. Dinah Morris, they said, was in every respect an exact description of Elizabeth Evans, a Methodist preacher, well known among the hills and dales of Derbyshire. The plain dress, the quaker bonnet, the whole personal appearance, speech and manner, occupations and incidents of life, were pre-

* *London Society.*