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HAD the authoress of Robert Elsmere laid aside her pen at the conclusion of chapter eighteen, book II., or had she written a single book more by way of epilogue in which the reader might catch a glimpse of a union near or far of Thought and Art in the persons of Rose and Langham, she might have done so with the pleasing consciousness of having written one of the most exquisitely charming novels of the age. True, a more appropriate name for the work in this case than "Robert Elsmere" would have been "Catherine," but

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," and after all what the world wants in these-times is the fragrance. Up to this point the work is clear-cut, artistic, and as delightful as the Westmoreland hills and meads in which her heroine rejoices.

There are scenes in the first two books which for grace and finish will hold their own against anything in modern literature. We do not pretend that there are not more eloquent declamations on the subject of Love than are

found here, or that it will compare in the analysis of character and motive with the writings of George Eliot; but we have yet to find in the works of the latter a passage that will surpass in grace of touch or finish the scene between Catherine and Elsmere, in which she first becomes aware of his devotion, or the scene between Rose and Langham, which closes chapter sixteen. We consider the manner in which the last-mentioned scene is written to be simply perfect.

* * *

Indeed throughout the whole work there are individual passages, sketches of scenery and character, touches of thought and emotion, which are admirable. But, taking the work as a whole, it begins to be a failure from this time forth. From the *debut* of Squire Wendover, however interesting the work may be as a study of soul development or as a polemic upon theology, it ceases to have any interest as a work of art—a novel. The agony of spirit, which at first quickens our pulses in sympathy with the hero, begets in us at length a rude, but none the less natural, desire to yawn, when the torture is spun out through hundreds of pages.

* * *

There are other difficulties which present themselves in painting the hero's spiritual development in such detail which would, we fancy, deter most authors from such an experiment, and in many cases, if not in that of Mrs. Ward, prove fatal to the success of such an attempt. We think it has proven so with her also. Take, for example, the case of Langham. This character, up to the close of the second book, is, so far as we are able to judge, a perfectly natural, and it is certainly a possible one. That a tutor in a university such as Oxford,—given such a disposition as his,—would under like circumstances withdraw himself more and more—

"From the din of a world he despised," until finally although "in the world" he was literally "not of it," is, for a time at least, certainly possible.

* * *

But that, after the soul within him had been once aroused, as was Langham's by contact with Rose, he should turn him back with satisfaction to the old life, is, we believe, impossible. We think our own young poet a thousand-fold nearer the truth when he sings

And I—I who have sometime stepped
Upon the paths of Paradise,
Where odorous, opening roses crept
Up palms whose tops were in the skies,