

Literary Notices.

MIDDLEMARCH: By George Elliot. Harper Bros., New York.

This story has been read by many under great disadvantages. It is not in its construction well adapted for serial publication. Being intended to represent Provincial life in England, it deals with the various classes of people which are or were to be found in an English country town, and instead of being only one story, it is in fact three, which might almost have been published separately, so entirely distinct are they in interest and incident. This complication of plots has perhaps prevented the readers doing full justice to the work when read serially, and kept them from recognising the fact that it is a masterpiece. There, is however, in spite of the admiration aroused by a leisurely re-perusal of the book, a slight sense of disappointment in the working out of some of the characters. They do not turn out so interesting or satisfactory as we are led to expect, and our sympathy does not seem to fall exactly in a line with the claims made upon it by the author. We need not say that "Middlemarch" abounds in epigrammatic thought, nor that the characters are individualized with remarkable power, for this is true of all George Elliot's books; nor is it necessary to remark that our extracts are far from doing justice to the work, for this is of course. However, we will venture to give a few scenes from the life of the principal character:—

DOROTHEA.

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible—or from one of our elder poets—in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper. She was usually spoken of as

being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense.

Dorothea knew many passages of Pascal's "Pensées" and of Jeremy Taylor by heart; and to her the destinies of mankind, seen by the light of Christianity, made the solitudes of feminine fashion appear an occupation for Bedlam. She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life, involving eternal consequences, with a keen interest in gimp and artificial protrusions of drapery. Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamored of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it.

THE AGED LOVER.

Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought; had opened much of her own experience to him, and had understood from him the scope of his great work, also of attractively labyrinthine extent. For he had been as instructive as Milton's "affable archangel;" and with something of the archangelic manner he told her how he had undertaken to show (what, indeed, had been attempted before, but not with that thoroughness, justice of comparison, and effectiveness of arrangement at which Mr. Casaubon aimed) that all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed. Having once mastered the true position, and taken a firm footing there, the vast field of mythical constructions became intelligible, nay, luminous with the reflected light of correspondences.

Dorothea was altogether captivated by the wide embrace of this conception. Here was something beyond the shallows of ladies'-school literature: here was a living Bossuet, whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety; here was a modern Augustine, who united the glories of doctor and saint.

ENGAGED.

In an hour's *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Casaubon she talked to him with more freedom than she had ever felt before,