

BOOK NOTICES.

Famous Women: George Eliot. By MATHILDE BLIND. Pp. 290. Boston: Roberts Brothers. Toronto: Willing & Williamson.

George Eliot, as a personality, was little known to the million readers who admired her works. She had an aversion to public notice which made her shrink from portraiture by either pen or pencil. Even since her death the sketches of her life have been, till now, very meagre and unsatisfying. Miss Blind, from local studies and private sources, has presented the only adequate account of the life-story of this greatest woman-writer of the age or of any age. It is not a morbid curiosity which makes us wish to know the personal character and trace the mental development of the great souls who moulded the thought of the time. It adds fresh interest to George Eliot's fine descriptions of nature to know that she was often moved to tears by its sublime aspects, and sometimes to uncontrollable emotion.

We do not think that the author of this biographical study has given full credit to the Methodist influences of her father and especially of her aunt Elizabeth Evans, a zealous local preacher, portrayed as Dinah Morris in "Adam Bede" on the young mind of Marian—or as she is here called Mary Ann—Evans. It was her misfortune that in her opening womanhood she passed from evangelical to skeptical influences and wasted three years of her life in translating Strauss's *Leben Jesu*—a book which is now as dead as an Egyptian mummy. For this three years' work, by the way, she received only £20.

For her relations to George Henry Lewes while his wife was yet alive—however unworthy that wife may have been—no language of extenuation can avail. But to the credit of the English writer be it said, she did not, like the great French woman George Sand, attempt in her books

to impair the most rigid code of morality. It is strange that a lady who so boldly defied the conventions of society, should be so morbidly sensitive to literary criticism as is indicated on page 201 and elsewhere in this volume. Doubtless her female admirers could forgive her anything rather than her marriage, in her sixty-first year, with Mr. Cross, a gentleman much younger than herself. Seven months afterwards she died—the foremost writer of her time. If not a thorough disciple of Comte, she was more Positivist than anything else. Had she remained true to her early Methodist training, her life would have been happier, she would have been saved from grave mistakes, and she might have accomplished far more for the world than she did by her brilliant novels. Of these the present volume furnishes much intelligent criticism. The noblest of them all we think is "Romola." With the great preacher of Florence, Giralamo Savonarola, she had much akin. She possessed in large degree the same strength of character, the same mental austerity, the same lofty eloquence, and even the same facial expression. This study of her life is a valuable contribution to literature.

The Little Pilgrim. Reprinted from "Macmillan's Magazine." Boston: Roberts Brothers. Toronto: Willing & Williamson. Pp. 120; price, 75 cents.

This is a tender and reverent little allegory which has attracted much attention on both sides of the sea. It has been attributed, we know not on what grounds unless it be its resemblance to her "Beleagured City," recently reviewed in these pages, to Mrs. Oliphant. But it is much superior to that book and also to Miss Phelps' "Gates Ajar," which it also somewhat resembles. There is a craving in the soul of man to realize to the imagination the unseen world