

bitter cup of want and wretchedness, a strange and ennobling sight it was to see these two, between whom in the eyes of the world she was an impassable barrier, depriving themselves of comforts and pleasures that they might support and care for her during her miserable existence. Certainly it was the crowning act of human benevolence!

But the grandest result of this union was the development of that dormant genius, which till now had slumbered, unconscious that ere long it should charm the world. She was now thirty-seven years old and thoroughly ignorant of her power as a novelist, but Lewis keen and discerning, caught gleams of that great spirit as around their fireside she related scenes from her early life. At the suggestion of her affectionate husband and supported by his constant encouragement, she dipped her pen deeply into the fountain of human joys and tears and presented the world with her first intellectual birth, "Scenes from Clerical life." For a first attempt her success was unparalleled and clearly announced the advent of a new and mighty power among novelists. This was confirmed when in the following year "Adam Bede" firmly established the position of the author and immortalised the name of George Eliot. Then one by one with the passing years she laid upon the altar of the world her many acceptable gifts, among which "Middlemarch" has received tribute as her master work. The applause that followed her appearance as a novelist was loud and continued, and amongst that mighty throng were recognised the pleasing voices of Dickens and Thackeray enthusiastic in her praises.

Not simply as an interesting story-teller did George Eliot discover the secret of success, nor did she find it in amusing her readers with man's inconsistencies and absurdities, nor yet again by ridiculing his faults and follies. Hers was a higher mission, for she pierced down deeply to the very source of human actions and successfully unveiled the motives that actuate men in their behaviour. 'Tis this that distinguishes her from other novelists; for whilst Scott, Brontë and a few others may occasionally perform this duty, yet with George Eliot it is the end she has in view, to which all things else are subservient. She thus uses fiction as a vehicle for a grand purpose and that purpose is to teach us to know human nature, to analyse motive, and thus truly to know ourselves.

Her characters are neither God-like nor Satanic, but earthly men and women living and acting as we find them in daily life. Her most successful characters belong to village and provincial life, with which she is more intimately acquainted and hence more successful in delineating. Clear-cut and well defined are they and possessed with a personality which stamps them indelibly. So real are they that they become our acquaintances and with a more tangible existence for us than actual historical characters. But her greatest skill lies in her synthesis of character, in that gradual life-like growth and development, which is constantly going on in each of us subjected as we are to the more or less moulding influence of events and circumstances. In this power George Eliot, that keen and subtle student of human nature, has never found an equal, and stands so far removed from other novelists as to be without even a second.

But analytical mode of thought has left its impress deeply traced upon her rhetoric, and accounts for both the excellencies and defects of her remarkable style. Pure, pellucid, and ornate is that style, but sometimes marred by a superabundance of scientific words and phrases. Some of her sentences, with much propriety, have been described as mental landscapes. Her terse, epigrammatic expressions have given her readers such keen pleasure and delight, that they have passed into those popular and widely circulated quotations, which have gained such a firm grasp upon the English world.

Law is inexorable, was the great lesson that this wise and salutary teacher ever strove to impress upon mankind. In vain is repentance and mental anguish, the effect must follow the cause, the quality of the harvest will be as the seed sowing. Yet when man did err none knew better the secret springs and causes of his wrong-doing, hence 'twas with pitying tears she viewed his follies and frailties, whilst from her yearning heart went forth sympathy deep as the sea and boundless as eternity.

Faith in humanity was George Eliot's religion; the love of her fellow-man, her inspiration and God. 'Twas this faith that cheered and supported her when borne down with afflicting disease; 'twas this faith that caused her to forget her natural distrust of self and gave the inspiration in writing her immortal books. Truly her mission was to make mankind better, to make the accomplishment of good