

The Owl.



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A LEARNED OWL.

At the edge of a wood deserted
I came to a hollow tree,
In the sad winds sadly moaning
Its desolate song to me.

I peered in the inky darkness,
And there in his feathery cowl,
With eyes like big gold buttons,
Was perched an ashen owl.

Oh, never a feather fluttered,
And never a foot he stirred,
But sat there softly brooding,
A happy, contented bird.

"Toowho, toowho," I murmured,
Right into his home of gloom ;
To which he deigned to answer :
"Pray, pardon me, sir, 'to whom' !"

"Tuwhit, tuwhit !" I shouted.
He said : "I'll be explicit ;
I'm the College Owl, and never
Say 'to wit,' but 'videlicet' !"

Adapted from Puck.

GEORGE ELIOT.

IN the literature of the present day the novel is an all-important factor. Everybody reads and the majority of readers draw from the novel their only intellectual nourishment. During the past few years, but few brilliant stars have risen on the literary firmament. Dickens and Thackeray were men of an earlier generation than ours, and their brightest laurels were won before the beginning of our period. Among the novelists of our

own day, Miss Marian Evans, under the *nom de plume* of George Eliot, has gained the highest distinction, and the charm of her fiction has extended far beyond the English-reading public. For psychological analysis, for earnestness of purpose in the pursuit of lofty ideals, she stands first among English writers of fiction, and her most noted works challenge comparison with the best contemporaneous productions of Continental literature.

What critical writers have said of the effects of culture upon genius finds an apt illustration in the career of George Eliot. Like Walter Scott, she was a close student, and by study acquired a great amount of scientific knowledge, as well as familiarity with general literature. Her literary career began as an essayist and a translator. She turned into English the theological works of Feuerbach and the study of the writings of this German champion of the theory of evolution and of rationalism, had much to do in the moulding of her intellectual faculties and in the shaping of her subsequent literary career. It is to this source must be traced her sceptical views concerning revelation and man's future existence. She regarded God and the divine as inscrutable ; immortality was to her a myth. Humanity was her idol and her religion consisted in an untiring and enthusiastic devotion to its advancement and elevation. These early studies developed in George Eliot a taste for metaphysics, and hence we perceive in her that which is seldom met with, a profound, speculative