

## A TRIO OF WOMEN NOVELISTS.



IN the realm of fiction England has done ample justice to herself by the variety and extent of her contributions to the world's literature.

Nor is it true, that the chief and most popular novels have been written exclusively by men, those beings who according to a general opinion are to be looked upon as the originators in all important works of high genius and noble art. Woman has clearly vindicated her right to speak on her own behalf and has shown by no uncertain signs that she is fully capable of treating successfully the complex problems of human life and presenting the results plainly and forcibly in books remarkable alike for depth and beauty.

To evidence this fact it would suffice to mention but the names of three novelists who have left their impress on the reading public of the age: George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen are without doubt justly entitled to be ranked among those who have wielded strong influence in attaching to the novel the widespread significance and power of which it is the acknowledged bearer.

The three worked on different lines, but each chose the sphere best suited to her special talents and aptitudes. George Eliot is unquestionably the greatest artist on account of the fertility of her genius and deep insight into human character and its affections. In the painting of character we are not concerned so much about the special tastes and moods and foibles of the personage portrayed but rather desire to view the general depth of human nature in them; its grasp and breadth, its capacity for love and trust and its scope of action under the influence of humanizing elements. Writers of skill do not present pictures of small men and women, but describe characters of stable worth and depth. For this reason possibly it is, that George Eliot indulges little in painting life in the high class English

drawing-rooms, where sham assumes such prominence, but seems to prefer delineating from the lower or middle classes, from among those, who, keenly alive to the perception of life's reality and import, speak their minds with fervor and directness rather than by suggestion. Hence the pages of her works are not the reportorial sketches of the doings and sayings of fashionable life as is largely the case with "society novels" whose principal and almost sole interest perhaps, for many of their readers, centres around those paragraphs adorned with quotation marks.

In George Eliot, to a brilliant imagination were added the essential qualities of a profound thinker. Her works possess the marks of striking individuality; they breathe forth a large spirit and are strong with the strength of one who appreciates the intricate nature and workings of the human heart. Her pen is especially facile in the delineation of actual life and conditions, all wrought with artistic skill. She is, in a marked degree, to be regarded as an objective writer, since in a large portion of her works the actors are drawn from real life; though in other parts it is clearly made evident that she possesses the power of subjective analysis by the clear-cut creations evolved from her prolific mind. In much the same manner as Goethe, she may be called objective. The characters presented are those of varied types complete and distinct in themselves. Throughout her stories the novelist takes occasion to ease her mind in the outpouring of self thought and moralizing reflections. And these constitute a prime merit of the artist's worth. They are never commonplace, and, though our views may not coincide with the sentiments often expressed, we must acknowledge that they display in the author the power of learned psychological knowledge.

Much has been said and written ament the philosophical principles which underlie the writings of George Eliot and the serious moral dangers which perusal of them is likely to effect. And indeed there is