

even the busiest of good men, may no doubt make his selection of books to be read and approved from a pretty wide range, as the list of works that cannot fail to improve any mind is large and increasing. But there are certain books which, on account of their commanding position in the world of letters and because of the moral and religious standpoint occupied by their authors, claim at once the attention of all earnest men, and, what is more important still, challenge a decision as to their merits, and seem to insist that we take a stand for or against them as weighty forces in the moral world. Pre-eminent among modern works which thus excite our interest and claim our suffrages are the writings of that wonderful woman, the late Mrs. Cross, known to the world as George Eliot. Her works are unique among the intellectual products of this century both for their commanding force of genius and for their singularly *moral* make up and substance. Literary works to the serious man are of significance in proportion to the revelations which they make of human nature, and their analysis of human motive and conduct in typical instances, and the force and fidelity with which they apply the moral test to all actions in things great or small. Nor is any apology needed now-a-days for including the novel among the classes of books that may have great moral influence. The necessity of the novel for modern life is universally recognized, and, I suppose, mainly for the two following reasons. First, the modern world has taken human nature for its proper study, and it is only in the novel that the workings of the human heart can be adequately portrayed—narratives from actual life being deficient, and from the artistic standpoint unsatisfactory, because the subtle motives that lead to recorded actions are untraceable or unverifiable in individual cases. Second, modern study of human nature, as distinguished from the ancient, takes up all grades, classes, and conditions of men, and finds all equally interesting and important, as furnishing illustrations of facts and principles that characterize the race. It is only the novel that furnishes scope for an adequate representation of the great tragedy of human life on the widest arena, of the ambitions, successes, failures, hopes and dreams, joys and sorrows of this chequered existence.

Nor do I apprehend that anyone now needs to defend the position that distinctive, conscious and intentional moral teaching