

noble impulse struggling under prosaic conditions. Among the many remarks passed upon her mistakes, it was never said in the neighbourhood of Middlemarch that such mistakes could not have happened, if the society into which she was born had not smiled on propositions of marriage from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age—on modes of education which makes a woman's knowledge another name for motley ignorance—on rules of conduct which are in flat contradiction with its own loudly asserted beliefs. While this is the social air in which mortals begin to breathe, there will be collisions such as those in Dorothea's life, where great feelings will take the aspect of great errors and great faith the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it." With the remark on female education we fully agree, and the last sentence contains a truth no one will be likely to deny; but there is ground for complaint that in the author's theory the word "greatly" is exaggerated into "entirely," to the exclusion of human volition and the positive influence of individual character altogether. The first count of the indictment which charges society with the ill-starred marriage is not only not proven, but clearly disproven by the narrative itself.

This discrepancy between fact and comment excepted, the figure of Dorothea is nobly conceived and exquisitely finished. She commands the reader's admiration in spite of her illusions, although it can hardly be said that she wins his love. Her victory over the shallower nature of Rosamond is complete in every respect—and is altogether the most powerful passage in the work. Dorothea's second marriage is also dwelt upon as the unfortunate result of "the meanness of opportunity." Having first married a cold-blooded pedant, "old enough to be her father, in a little more than a twelvemonth after his death she gave up her estate to marry his cousin— young enough to be his son, with no property, and not well-born." Will Ladislaw was a somewhat rash, capricious and petulant young reformer, but this second marriage was one of mutual affection. "They were bound to each other by a love stronger than any impulses which could have marred it." Still the author thinks that a love-match, happy as this one admittedly was, was another mistake. Dorothea's life was necessarily a life of emotion, and her affections were satisfied. But her great ideal was to remain for ever unfulfilled; her personality had been lost in her husband's, and nought remained for her but the activities of domestic life. "Many who knew her thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother." Most of our readers, whilst they will differ from the author's reflections on Dorothea's fate, will thank her for leaving her so happy even in the "inferior" position of wife and mother. We are pleased to find a woman so noble in character happy and contented, even under circumstances lowering to her dignity as a high-minded woman. Before leaving Dorothea, we cannot avoid noticing the touch of genius which makes her faithful to the task she undertook on her first marriage. Taking up after Casaubon's death the "Synoptical Tabulation, for the use of Mrs. Casaubon" of his mythological work, she sealed it in an envelope, and inscribed upon it these words:—"I could not use it. Do you not see now that I could not submit my soul to yours

by working hopelessly at what I have no belief in?" Locking the paper in her desk she showed that "the pity which had been the restraining, compelling motive of her life, still clung about his image, even while she remonstrated with him in indignant thought, and told him he was unjust." Lydgate the surgeon, is a gentleman with an ideal which "the meanness of opportunity" also disappoints. Rosamond Vincy, who became his wife, is, we think, hardly treated by the author. She is held up to our scorn before she has done anything to merit it, and we are expected to hate her at first sight. As the story proceeds, the dark tints are deepened, and we begin to dislike her, though with the vague suspicion that her character has suffered from the prejudices of the chronicler. Mary Garth, the plain girl of the story, is a sweet, good, commonplace little creature, and we are gratified to find that her fate is not marred, as her superior sister's is represented to have been.

Mrs. Cadwallader is a perfect marvel in her way. "The country-side would have been duller," we are told, "if the rector's wife had been less free-spoken and less of a skin-flint." On all social topics, she retained details with the utmost accuracy, "and reproduced them in an excellent pickle of epigrams." To quote all the sparkling bits of humour uttered by this village diplomatist would be to reproduce all the conversations in which she takes part. We laugh heartily with her, but we laugh at Dorothea's uncle, Mr. Brooke, the gentleman "of acquirement temper, miscellaneous opinions and uncertain vote," who goes with everybody, and coincides in every proposition "up to a certain point." His election utterances are exceedingly rich. Bulstrode, the philanthropic banker, "who predominated so much in the town, that some called a Methodist, others a hypocrite, according to the resources of their vocabulary," comes to grief, as such men are sure to do in the hands of George Eliot. Then there is Standish, the old lawyer, "who had been so long concerned with the landed gentry that he had become landed himself," and therefore uses oaths properly pertaining to the soil. Mr. Chichely belongs to the same group. His study of the fair sex had proved detrimental to his theology, since he was clearly of opinion that "there ought to be a little of the devil in a woman."

Here our space admonishes us to pause. As we have already remarked *Middlemarch* cannot be surpassed in the delicate art of its construction, and the breadth of delineation shown throughout. George Eliot does not label her characters with a single eccentricity, and expect the reader to recognize them by it, when they turn up in the story. Every figure is conscientiously formed, and laboriously worked out into perceptible shape and proportions. The moral tone of the work is of the highest kind, as it is in all the author's works. The undertone which runs through the whole is melancholy, but the sadness is not often obtruded. The author is too great a master of the art to fail in the distribution of light and shade.

Still we must confess the conclusions to which we are invited are disappointing and unsatisfactory, not to say repulsive. A theory which at once ignores God's guidance and man's will in the affairs of life is a cheerless creed even for genius to work with. We can well rejoice that so powerful a champion of woman's just claims to a higher culture and nobler opportunities has arisen. But when she tells us that "the Supreme Power" has fashioned woman's