

## SCEPTICAL NOVELS BY WOMEN.

NO. I.

ROBERT ELSMERE.

PART II.

THE readers of my first paper on *Robert Elsmere* may have thought the second has been unduly delayed. May I say in exculpation that the claims of more pressing duties, the continual drawback of ill-health, and the wish to do full justice to the argument have all thrown me back? Mistaken my view may be, but not through lack of care or study. While re-perusing the novel, I took great pains to note all that could help to a juster assessment of the *pros* and *cons* in regard to orthodox Christian belief, and its theistic substitute set forth in *Robert Elsmere*.

Some of the headings under which I gathered the more salient points were—Robert Elsmere's character; the influences which determined his religious views and work; Catherine Elsmere's religion, both as regards herself and its effect upon her husband; and that belief in God on which the authoress lays so much stress. There are other matters not at all devoid of interest or lacking in importance, but the above will indicate the basis of my present remarks and argument.

That word "argument" reminds me that in one or two criticisms I read on my opening paper, there was an expression of some regret that I had not dealt more with the reasonings of the authoress of *Robert Elsmere*. I must confess to a little disappointment that my suggestions produced so little conviction; for my purpose was far more to indicate the duty and the consequences of substituting the human for the purely intellectual way of regarding all such books, than to deal with one particular novel. Whatever may be the results produced, for good or for evil, by *Robert Elsmere*, they cannot be compared with those which would be produced if,