

## BOOK REVIEWS.

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD. By Thomas Hardy. Leisure Hour Series. New York : Henry Holt & Co. ; Toronto : Adam, Stevenson & Co.

Mr. Hardy is one of the new lights of the school of novelists variously denominated psychological, realistic, or analytic—the school of which George Eliot is the greatest living representative. As might have been expected then, “Far from the Madding Crowd,” depends for its interest not so much upon an exciting plot, as, upon natural delineations of character, keen observation of nature, shrewd remarks, and quaint humour. The scene is laid in an out-of-the-way part of the West of England, among homely rustics and sheep-farmers, of whom it can be truthfully said, in the well-known words of the poet Gray, that :

“Far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife,  
Their sober wishes never learnt to stray,  
Along the cool sequestered vale of life,  
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.”

In fact those who are not partial to the realistic class of novels will perhaps complain, not altogether unjustly, that their wishes are altogether too sober and prosaic, that they never rise above the commonplace level of ordinary life, and are about as uninteresting a set of people as the bores of Teniers are to everybody except enthusiastic connoisseurs in Dutch paintings. The plot turns upon the contest of three men, Gabriel Oak, Boldwood, and Troy, for the love of the heroine Bathsheba Everdene. Of these four perhaps the heroine herself is the most interesting ; still she has some unpleasant points about her, and, though a charming girl, is cast in a decidedly more commonplace mould than the hapless heroine of the author’s touching story, “A Pair of Blue Eyes.” In fact, none of the characters in the present work are as interesting as the principal ones in that charming novel. In the case of Gabriel Oak, this is to be regretted, as he is a noble fellow, who should have been spared the humiliation of being made a servant to such a man as Troy. Many readers will feel too that he loses some dignity in becoming a mere patient drudge, even though it be of the heroine. The total absence of the ideal element is indeed the main defect of the book as a work of art. This is a mistake that George Eliot never makes. No matter how realistic a novel of hers may be, she always retains enough of the ideal element to prevent it degenerating into a mere photograph, instead of a painting. Still, “Far from the Madding Crowd” is a very excellent novel of its kind. Readers who like a sensational

plot full of startling incidents, will probably pronounce the conversational scenes of Mr. Hardy’s unlettered rustics, tedious ; but those who prefer subtle insight into character and motives, shrewd remarks, and quaint humour, will find the novel one after their own heart. Even readers of the former kind will derive enjoyment from one very powerful scene ; that in which Bathsheba is alone with the coffin containing the dead body of Fanny Robin.

HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE. By John William Draper, M.D., LL.D. International Scientific Series. New York : D. Appleton & Co. Toronto : Adam, Stevenson & Co.

This work could not have appeared at a time more opportune than the present, when the conflict, the history of which it relates, is raging over a wider area and with greater intensity than at any previous period of the world’s history. The author’s masterly work on “The Intellectual Development of Europe” naturally led to very high expectations of the present one, and was in fact a guarantee that it would be of a sterling character. These expectations are to some extent fulfilled. The work in many respects is a very able one, such indeed as would have made the reputation of any less celebrated author. It is as full of matter as an egg is full of meat ; in general the learning is ample and varied ; and the style is compact, vigorous, and occasionally eloquent. While making these general acknowledgments, however, we have to confess to a certain sense of disappointment. To a great extent the book is a re-hash of the author’s previous work, the readers of which and of Mr. Lecky’s masterly History of Rationalism (both far abler works than the present) will find little that is new. Moreover, Dr. Draper seems hardly to have got to the bottom of his subject ; at least there is a want of unity in his presentation of it. In the contest between Religion and Science—or, as the Comtists would say, between the Theological and Positivist stages of human knowledge—there has been no solution of continuity. The conflict has been essentially one, not half-a-dozen separate ones, as Dr. Draper makes it out to have been. The work, also, bears many marks of haste, not to say carelessness, as though it had been written to order to be ready by a specified time.

Dr. Draper’s general view is this : Modern Science had its origin in the campaigns of Alexander, which led the Greeks of that age to