

The Portfolio.

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THE OLD CASTLE.

It was a grand old mansion as it stood
Upon a gentle slope, half-hidden in trees,
And reached by shady avenues and winding paths
That form a very net-work through the grounds.
The castle walls were built of stone, rough hewn—
Their very roughness made them seem more grand.
With many lofty turrets standing close
Against the full-arched dome of deepest blue;
And from the turret windows could be seen
Miles upon miles of woodland, rich and green,
Pastures rich in flocks, and here and there
A peasant's little hut, run o'er with vines
That hid from view the rudely-thatched walls.
The castle grounds were beautifully laid
In mimic lakes, and babbling silver brooks,
With graceful rustic bridges thrown across,
And tiny minnows leaping in the air
And falling back again with gentle splash—
And flowers! such banks of flowers of every hue!
Which filled the air with perfumes rich and rare;
And fountains, shedding sparkling silver spray
On laughing cherubs, and on naiads fair;
And there were spreading lawns, and gravel walks,
And garden seats, and arbors trellised o'er
With climbing roses, hiding tempting seats.
Oh, 'twas enchanting beauty everywhere.
But now 'tis changed, so changed, all lone and drear.
The castle walls fast crumbling into dust,
The ivy creeping over them with clinging feet,
And hiding from our view their mouldering shame;
The flowers, all weeds, the gravel walks grass grown,
The smooth, green lawns run high in coarse, lank grass,
The brooks but empty channels, and the lakes
But quiet pools, and covered with dank weeds.
The fountains, once so full of sparkling life,
Now parched and dark, and crumbling fast away:
The marble nymphs, their lips once wreathed in smiles,
Now mock us sadly, as they mutely call
For their protecting veil of silver spray;
The very trees are changed, all bent and old:
All, all that once did charm is mouldering now;
What once was beauty, now is all decay.

GEORGE ELIOT'S SAYINGS.

“WHAT Shakespeare did for the drama, George Eliot has been, and still is doing for the novel; she has forever sanctified the novel by making it the vehicle of the grandest and most uncompromising moral truth.” But it is not needful to gather up the opinions and statements of eminent literary judges in order to form a right estimate of George Eliot's writings, for no intelligent reader of her works could fail to perceive,

even though they could not appreciate, her ability, or could doubt her rank “among the most illustrious of English authors.” Reading her novels, instead of elaborate highly colored plots, we find simple narratives of life whose parallels are everywhere around us, and scarcely need be sought for to be seen, and instead of the made-to-order perfections termed heroes and heroines, to be found in ordinary fictions, we meet with men and women who to us live, move, and speak, whom we learn to love, while thought of them is as the memory of friends separated from us only by time. She deals not merely with characters already formed, but rather with the influence of circumstances and surroundings upon the development of character. Her strength lies in her wonderful knowledge of human nature, and in her power of tracing words and deeds to their source in thoughts and feelings; her skill in analyzing these very sources, delineating with a master hand the shades of difference between motives and impulses, comparing intentions with actions, the end with the beginning, and “what is” with “what might have been.” Her works are rich in wise, witty and tender sayings, and the reader is continually constrained to pause, contemplate, and admire some profound truth, some fresh thought uniquely framed, or shrewd sarcasm, whether put in the mouth of a character, or thrown in as an aside. “One of the most accomplished of amateur pianists in England,” conversant, besides, with almost every branch of art, alike learned in history, medicine, and philosophy, a clever linguist, and a student of Nature's lore, George Eliot weaves threads from all into her grand fabrics, and so delicately are the colors adjusted and so fittingly placed, that they serve only to heighten the beauty of the whole. But quotations from her works speak best for themselves, and need no comment save the name of their author.