

enthusiasm over each new author who swayed her for the time, very precise in language, and a little pedantic, with some hardly concealed scorn for "those who cared for none of these things."

She found time, with all her domestic cares and her studies, to work among the poor, visiting them, forming clothing clubs, and in other ways looking after their interests. From her contact with the poor at this time, we must have the characters of Silas Marner and Dolly Winthrop, for she was never personally active in charity in after-life. Indeed, many of George Eliot's character studies are the result of her experiences in the apparently barren period of her girlhood. Much of the scenery, too, of her books is faithful description of what was familiar to her childish eyes.

It was well for her future success that she was not born in a more cultured and exclusive circle. With her studious and fastidious tastes, she would never willingly have placed herself in a position to study human nature in all its phases—could never have studied it as one of the people. The higher classes of English society are so hemmed in by the prejudice of caste that it seems a necessity that her poets and novelists, those whose work it is to portray human character and passions, should come, with few exceptions, from the commonalty; that Shakespeare should be an obscure village boy, and Keats a stable-keeper's son, that Dickens should have that sorrowful apprenticeship to the blacking business, and should himself, for a time, be a "child of the Marshalsea." To obtain a knowledge of the course of a stream, the eye may trace it, at one's leisure, from a neighbouring hill, but to know what flowers grow on its sides one's feet must follow all its windings through the moss and bushes of its banks; so with a human life—by observing it from a distance one may gain wise views as to its duties and destiny, but to learn what poisonous flowers of temptation, and what healing herbs of comfort surround its way, one must walk very close beside it.

The first important change in George Eliot's life took place in her twenty-first year, when her father gave up Griff Farm to his son, and took a house at Foleshill, near Coventry. Miss Evans was delighted to change her quiet country home for one nearer the town, as she hoped to find better opportunities for culture, and more congenial friends. All unconsciously she was approaching the crisis of her life.

Her family had formerly had a slight acquaintance with Mr. Bray, of Coventry, and the acquaintance was now renewed. Mr. Bray was a wealthy ribbon manufacturer, and one of those men whom Emerson says, "are nowhere better found than in England; a cultivated person, fitly surrounded by a happy home." At his