

## ✦ Literature. ✦

### DAVID GRIEVE.

BY MRS. HUMPHREY WARD.

IT must be allowed that the prevailing impression left in the mind after a first perusal of "David Grieve" is one of weariness at its undue length. This is followed by the conviction that Mrs. Humphrey Ward is the prominent character rather than David Grieve himself. As in Robert Elsmere, the hero is made the medium for the expression of the author's views on social and theological questions, and to a certain extent loses his identity in consequence. We are not always sure whether the opinions he lays down are really his own. Sometimes he seems to be only a lay figure on which Mrs. Ward is pleased to hang divers doctrines, orthodox and heterodox. This is principally the case in the third and fourth divisions of the work, where his wavering thoughts crystallise and take definite shape. In spite of these drawbacks the book is one of engrossing interest, an interest which deepens with a second reading. From an artistic point of view the first section, entitled *Childhood*, is to our mind, certainly the best. Nothing could be more vivid and truthful than the description of David's and his sister's early life, the hard and grasping aunt, the weak and covetous uncle with his twinges of remorse, and the sordid surroundings of the farm on the bleak hill side. Louie's character is perhaps the best sustained in the whole book, repulsive as it is. In the wild and passionate child is clearly shadowed forth the heartless and reckless girl, the desperate and vicious woman. We are prepared for her miserable end from the first, it seems the natural fulfilment of a fate which could not have been averted, without a far stronger power at work for her salvation than any around her possessed. Her painful story is rendered doubly so by the callousness of David, who in the critical time of temptation in Paris, abandons her to her fate with an indifference which is in keeping neither with his past or future character. This inconsistency in the character of David, is, in our opinion a decided blemish. We feel that it would be impossible, for a man of David's tenacious affection and strong family instincts, to throw

his sister over in the midst of the temptations which surround her, however overwhelming the storm and stress of his own troubles. The patience and constancy with which he afterwards stands by Louie to the bitter end, under provocations which few men would have endured, are, we think, sufficient proof of this.

At the time of his sister's sorest need, however, his own passion for the young and fascinating artist, Elise Delauncey, makes him almost oblivious to the dangers of her path, and he only awakes to a sense of his responsibility when it is beyond his power to help. The first act of the Parisian drama closes at last for both David and Louie, for the one in an entire surrender to her worst instincts, for the other in a rude awaking from his dream of happiness. The whole description of the wild student life in Paris is given with wonderful exactness and fidelity. The author is, no doubt, convinced herself of the truth of the words which she puts into Regnault's mouth, which he says of the French youth, "they will never strike anything out of nature that is worth having—wrestle with her to any purpose. Why? Because they have every sort of capacity, every sort of cleverness, and *no character!*"

From the chaos of thought and belief which ensues David emerges a new man, and by slow degrees and with painful effort at last reaches a firm standpoint of principle and action. His marriage with the hitherto extremely weakminded and frivolous Lucy, which follows so quickly on his Paris experience, though at first sight improbable, is the not unnatural action of a lonely and affectionate nature longing to escape from his solitude, and feel something of the happiness of family life, "yet was it Lucy he kissed? Lucy he gathered in his arms? Or was it not rather love itself? the love he had sought, had missed, but must still seek and seek?" } Neither Lucy, nor her unselfish, if somewhat narrow minded cousin Dora, who has long loved David, seems to have greatly influenced his development. On Lucy, on the other hand, David's influence, after long years, tells in an almost miraculous manner, for it is only thus that we can account for the wonderful transformation which takes place so suddenly in