"George Eliot as a Philosopher"

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Among the great English novelists of the nineteenth century, who were moving force in the great world of that of that time, George Eliot occupies a foremost place as a representation of the realistic type of literature. Of not only of that time was she a moving force; for influence today it is strong as it was then, and will continue so to be. Because of the firmness and universality of her works, permanent in that they express feelings which are common to people of all times, and universal, because no country is free from such characters as she deals with. Rarely do we find an intellect so perfectly contrived, in its sphere, as hers, in its refinement of human life. Of human life as found among the weak, the uneducated, and the unholy. An English writer ranks her next to Shakespeare in her power to picture the tragedy underlying such life by artfully analyzing character and unravelling the web of complex human motives. After reading one of her best works illustrative of this power, we feel that we have witnessed the life of a man of the world, and not of an imaginary being who exists only in a book. With hers, we visit the homes of these common place people, they in the work ships, on the farms: we go with the soldier, outset from place to place, the evil; the Fundid Foundr
and the distress prevalent among the middle classes, and the outward influence often upon their lives just as today influences are present upon similar lives, making them better or worse.

The realistic element of her genuine pride is the source both in birth and association. Born in the rural district of Hampshire, England, amid the simpler and less educated classes, her sympathies were naturally with them, and the thirty years or more following, seeing them shift, but found her to their side. She cared little for higher society, in fact, she rather avoided it. She found a pleasure in associating with those around her, because by her power of penetration and her deep human sympathy, she was able to see the inner, the more essential, and view within a hidden meaning, unspoken to many—seen about in many of the higher class. Her failure to show this meaning to the public, however, was not towards until many years later, when her provincial home had been exchanged for that of London. Then her genius brought forth those works which are so truly factures of real life, impressions upon her in her early days. She helped, by these representations, to realize the world to turn a less cold, less sham, so that actions and instead of rituals
There still lingers to lift them to a higher plane.
The qualities for which Mike Fiot is
classed as a realist, are apparent on a study of
such of his works as Adam Bede, Silas Marner,
Mill on the Floss. The first is the most typical
work of this kind. Throughout the story, we realize
the innumerable points of coincidence with two
of many a person today. On the opening chap-
ter we are made to feel the power of the des-
crictive ability, as the painter paints the work picture
of that canel in the English workshop:

"The afternoon sun was warm on the
furrows where, upon doves, and window
frames, and winnowing. A scent of new wood from
the turf piled of planks outside the open door mingled
itself with the scent of the elder bushes
which were bearing their summer corn close
to the shearing window. Opposite, the slanting sun-
frames shone through the translucent shavings that
flew before the steady flame, and lit up the fine
grain of the oak handling which stood propped
against the wall. On a heap of those soft
shavings, a rough, gray, shepherd dog has made
himself a pleasant bed, and was lying with his
nose towards the fire, the occasional wrinkle his
claws to cast a glance at the dallet of the two wheatmen."
He saw a tall workman—the stalwart Saxon, Adam Bede—and hear his singing in a strong baritone as he worked; his voice subsiding into a low whistle when his work required concentration, then breaking out again into his full voice, and with renewed vigor.

Again, in 'Silas Marner' is set forth the lonely life of a poor weaver in his cottage on the moorland—'in Ravloke, that village where many of the old echoes linger, overshadowed by new voices'—'eh. one of the old Daemon-worshippers among the gray-haired peasants'.

Only one who is fully acquainted with the life of the farm could have pictured such a scene as that in the Coyner farm-yard one Sunday morning:

"You might have known it was Sunday if you had only waked up in the farm-yard. The rooks and hens seemed to know it, and made only cawing, subdued noises; the sunshine seemed to call all things to rest and not to labor; it was a sleep itself on the more-grown cowshed; on the roof of which ducks were hanging together with their little duckies under their wings; on the old black pot-stretched languidly on the stove, while her largest among one simmered an excellent chine 'ot ven.
his mother's fat ride."

In character delineation, George Eliot excels. With her gift of natural insight she has penetrated to the innermost soul of the most common place and insignificant of lives, and revealed their actions, their joys, sorrows, and sufferings, in the common light of day. What a picture does she portray in the group of characters in Adam Bede—the headstrong, noble, worldly young carpenter, vigorously contending in his work, intolerant of "meaners," full of early love for the non-dancing, fiery little Kitty—The sympathetic, broad-minded, self-sacrificing, Sir—The thoughtful, inscrutable, shallow little fairy maids, conscious of her beauty, always longing for pleasure and afraid of harm—The saucy, factory-girl, Duah—The pleasant, the weak, self-deceiving, and self-interested Arthur—The loving and complaining Frederic—the fair, loyal Mrs. Parry—these from a future attesting to their author's power in the sphere of her art. She shows us the struggle of human beings against the evils of life, and their helplessness to reach it of themselves.

Arthur Dimmesdale in 'Adam Bede' and Godfrey Cass in 'Silas Marner' are good illustrations of this. Both having weak, indecisive characters, but...
are not carried out in their good resolutions when
meditating on past actions and the consequences.
Miss Elliot's works are a true representation of the
common people in that as many of her characters
are of the uneducated class. In the night school
described in "Adam Bede" with its cheerful, back-
for instructor, Bathsheba Everhart, it is a sight to make
one see three grown men
stubbornly struggling with their lessons, endeavoring
to make out such sentences as "The grass is green.
"The pinks are dry," and to learn what such words
as "boy" spells. To them the letters seemed so un-
comon alike. There was no fellow one from a-
other," and they were not used to taking into account
each small difference as "a letter with its tail
turned up, and a letter with the tail turned down."
In the monotonous life of the Sullivans and Dott-
sons, with their selfishness, their worldliness, their
ignorance, having no purpose in life but each to
 satisfy his own, regardless of the distress of a
brother or sister, and them we see a typical exam-
ple of the same class. Of John, a door wanderer,
trickily packman, with his fellow travelers, "Mumps"
represent another type of humanity, a type frequent-
ly seen in these times. A number of her most
important characters are taken directly from real

life in Maggie Sullivan, she represents the same
early struggles and yearnings; in Seth and
Adam Bede, her two brothers, and in "Gareth of Midle-
march" and Mr. Burgoyne of Adam Bede" her father, whose
death was an important turn in the latter.

George Eliot increases the seeming reali-
ty of her pictures of life by keeping the narrative
clue within the proper bounds. She never
loses sight of her character in the unfolding
plot, but the reader is kept aware of their
daily activities as much as he is of the plot.
The Two move together, as if it were.

In yet another sense is George Eliot a
realist. Her works have a life-like quality. The
important characters do not come out in the way
the idealistic novel would have them. When her charac-
ters are often left a sense of sadness at the tragic
ending of the life of one we have loved, admired, or
fancied, so that we feel that we would have had it
otherwise had we had the power, but she was con-
sistent in her books, and did not commit the
mistake in the love of the realist, of making all
things have a happy ending. So Thoby so well this
she will illustrate. She, retreat only on her own
pleasures, not unconscious of danger. "Failure to
her ruin, like a moth into the flame." The future
of her life grew darker and darker. True, she escape from the execution to which she is condemned, but is it not to suffer a greater agony in that living death banished from home and friends? Take again the example in "The Mill on the Floss," where the Maggie whom we learned to love despite her many failings, with Tom, whose manliness we admire, are swept into the swift currents of the River slope, and the sister and brother thus meet death locked in a last embrace. Their sad death seems one with a painful feeling of incompleteness and a realization of how hopeless often is that we most long for. In "Middlemarch," this element is also present. As we read the record of those two typical marriages with their sad results, we cannot but feel that many such are realities.

George Eliot's writings are criticized by a number of literary men because of this realistic element in them, but their critics seem to have but little effect on the people, no doubt because the latter realize it is the "right current to swim in." By making use of it, has she not given us a much deeper insight into the fount of life, and thus helped us to realize its flower and beauty with a greater meaning? She has revealed to us thoughts in the most ordinary life, will worth trio
It is in such subjects that the depths of the human nature are best seen, for they, because of the indifference shown them, suppress none of their feelings, or thoughts, as do those of higher life. It is not the special qualities of individuals that are of diverse importance, but it is the common qualities lying much deeper, and of which each has a share. These help us to understand such people as her in her books, and that we do understand them so necessary, because constituting as they do such a large percent of the human race, their relations to people of other classes will be close. George Eliot would have closed the reach entirely by a tone of human feeling and sympathy. The educational force of her works are great. He who is well acquainted with her surroundings, has a much better preparation for life than one who has studied idealistic novels the most of his life and obtained a perverted view of it, by thinking it is all pleasure and no pain. To be able to discriminate in affairs of practical values is no small matter.

It is true, that the woman to whom was given this great power, is dead, yet her works remain and make her name immortal. The relation between her and us is but an introduction. The sublime story continues, and she must still live "to bleed and to undermine her God to use."