A CRITICAL STUDY OF CHARACTER-ANALYSIS
IN THE NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT.

by

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CHAPTER I.

The Growth of Character-Portrayal

in Fiction up to 1855.

Although the intensive analysis of character—analysis such as we call "psychological"—has become an inherent part of the twentieth century novel, it is an element of comparatively recent growth. In the primitive stages of fiction, man had been content to "hold the mirror up to nature," and with clear and vivid strokes, draw what he saw there. But when science in its research began to change the whole scheme of life, philosophy also came hand in hand with it, probing into the mystery of the individual to find the ultimate reason for his being. It was not enough to describe what he felt, but why he experienced those feelings and what processes of thought were involved. Interest was beginning to centre upon the causality of things. This psychological aspect which began with Richardson was more fully developed in the novels of George Eliot. In the carefully prepared development of her themes, she has shown the new scientific attitude to life that has widened and clarified down to the present day and is reflected in the works of Meredith and Hardy. In the following study I shall attempt to show how the portrayal of human nature has developed in fiction from mere objective description to accurate psychological
analysis of character, and what specific contributions were made to it by George Eliot.

In the early history of story-telling, the interest in character did not hold a place of very great importance. The folk-lore, handed down from one generation to another, and recreated within the tribal group, was primarily a history of the whole tribe in its origin and struggles for supremacy. It consisted of a series of heroic exploits culminating in the success of the warrior in the pursuit of a worthy cause. In the Odyssey we find the oldest and finest collection of tales of adventure in which a hero is finally favoured by the Gods and arrives in safety at his Kingdom of Ithaca. Virgil followed the same theme when he traced the wanderings of Aeneas until he succeeded in founding the city of Rome. His opening line in which he speaks of "arms and the man" as his subject is significant; the incident is exalted far above the individual. The Early Anglo-Saxon traditions and sagas were in the same manner preserved in "Beowulf," a series of magnificent scenes of duels and battles. The people delighted in heroic action, while the hero was often merely a type, and the embodiment of physical or military prowess.

A change in point of view came into English literature shortly after the Conquest when the French brought in their own legendary romances. The Arthurian and the Charlemagne cycles, created in France by the troubadours, were translated
into English became fused with British and Welsh folk-tales. The early epics exalted valor; the romances added to this the elements of love and religion. The period of conquest was over, and as English life was settling down, and Norman and Saxon were growing into one nation, they were able to make a more intimate study of human nature. The difference in national culture and customs had forced them to a keener observation of differences in personality. Man was only dimly aware of his potentialities, but he began to take a keener delight in expressing the more intimate emotions of his heart. A new spirit in human nature was revealed, and gave rise to the Middle English lyrics, exquisite for their naïveté of expression and depth of emotion.

In the 14th century, Chaucer used the material of both mythical and legendary tales, and delineated popular figures of his day with unfailing accuracy. The characters of his pageant are clear-cut pictures of real men and women. Every lineament of feature carries with it an unobtrusive lineament of character. He is the genial philosopher who sees man and his motives, and probes the thin surface of conventional sham. This art lies in disguising art. By the subtle suggestion of a well-chosen phrase or word, he is able to carry the external facts of sense perception into the recesses of the heart, where they are given a deeper significance.
The following century saw the revival of the early romances by Malory. He has gathered them into a series of the most charming stories in our literature. The restraint and simplicity of his thought and style has the same moving power of the ballad. He is the first to create the prose romance, portraying the Knightly ideals of his age in a form that is invariably picturesque and fresh. There was all the material in his romances for a modern novel, and we shall see how it was gradually developed.

The 16th century was essentially an age of creative genius and daring exploit which expressed itself in dramatic and lyrical poetry. Geographical discoveries and scientific invention had set the current of individual achievement, and man was beginning to see that life held untold possibilities for him yet unexplored. He was breaking the confines of old customs, and unconsciously widening the scope of his own individuality. But prose was not yet ready to portray the spirit of the times. The Elizabethan Age saw the flowering of the drama, which could take a cross-section of life and reproduce it at a moment of action best calculated to reveal the characters. The drama was limited in time and place, but vigorous and incisive in its criticism of human nature. It could gather within its compass the lyrical effusions of romance, and the grim foreshadowing of the drama. But the prose of the period, with a few exceptions, lacked both precision and power. It was gathering its
material from French literature and was rather uncertain in form. Where the trend of thought was more philosophic in nature, the style became more precise, as evidenced in Bacon. Sir Philip Sidney's pastoral romances were doubtless a copy from L'Astree, the forerunner of the French novel, and which, in spite of its beribboned sheep and tuneful shepherds, had a wealth of philosophy under its artificial verbiage. The pastoral romance was at times satirizing society while it pretended to entertain it. Sidney is remembered more for his lyrics than for his romances. It was he who gave the impulse to the someneers by his art in the expression of the individual emotions in verse, which is the inherent quality of lyricism. The only other prose of note in this period was "Euphues" which gave a careful transcript of court life and manners, and became almost a "code-book" for good form in manners and in speech. The individual was not drawn any more clearly than before, but the type was elaborated.

We have found that in the Elizabethan Age the drama was most powerful in characterization. The code-books and the "humors" of the drama had been developing "types," and now the interest focussed more directly on the "characters." These demanded a more intimate study of the individual, in order to reproduce all his whimsicalities and foibles. The vogue was also spreading all over Europe, and in France it had many peculiar traits. In their novels,
which by this time had acquired considerable precision in theme and form, the "portraits" as they were called, held a very important place; they were always put in as a prefatory pageant before the story opened. Sometimes, from the longest of Mlle. de Scudery's novels, these portraits were extracted and published separately as codes of deportment and dress. In England it had become the custom to publish the biographies and diaries of men in social and political circles, giving at the same time a sketch of the times and manners. Such naive and charming records as "Samuel Pepys' Diary, which was not discovered and deciphered until 1825, give a very intimate and faithful revelation of the man's personality and of the virtues and vices of his social circle. Not infrequently, as in the case of the Duchess of Newcastle, around whom a group of literary people had gathered in the fashion of the French salon of Mde de Rambouillet, fictitious letters were compiled, whereby the author had unlimited scope in character-portrayal. The "diaries" show a definite effort to catch the real personality, not as a "humor" or type, but with the definite strokes of a Chaucer and on a wider canvas. It was not only the man they sketched, but the milieu in which he moved.

(1) cf. "La Princesse de Cleves" and "Clelie."
During this time, the essay was gradually becoming more popular for every kind of subject. Montaigne had popularized it and shown how adaptable it was, and from the latter part of the 17th century it gained great prominence in England. The essayists took up the work of the diarists in an effort to bring to perfection the "character." One of the finest sketches in our literature is that of Sir Roger de Coverley, the famous figure who appeared in the Spectator of 1711-12. Here the character is given a more dynamic quality by presenting him in a variety of scenes in London and provincial life as the central figure of the series. He is shown at home and at church, at the assizes and at the theatre, and entertaining his friend 'Will Wimble' at his country seat. The sketch even gives, incidentally, a retrospective view of his life, and tells with infinite pathos the story of his death. It is the finest effort to portray all the facets of a character without a plot.

In the meantime the incident story had also been developing, and it would seem as if the two streams of character and incident fiction had as yet little inter-relation. The success of the essayists in drawing their characters to the life was unquestioned. The incident story, on the other hand, retained its interest because of its wealth of adventure and farce. It had been copied from the Spanish and French picaresque novel, and gave
full scope to broad humor and horse-play. But there was little variety in the chief character; he was always the typical picaro, falling into disgrace and out of it again with the same careless jests. In these stories the novelty of incident soon exhausted itself because of the submergence of character.

The interest in human nature, however, was gradually and inevitably developing. Some writers found themselves expanding the characters in the picturesque novel so that they became more closely a part of the incident. Cervantes revels in the adventure story, depicting life in its general aspects, but he also excelled in particularizing his character. Swift had left the essay form in his later life, and in his Gulliver's Travels was seeking with more vigorous and incisive strokes to reveal human nature. Bunyan has also succeeded in individualizing some of his types, so that they become real characters. His work, however, is admirably surpassed by the autobiography of Defoe, who succeeds in presenting his characters with true "reality," maintaining the illusion throughout the book with ingenious invention. His art lies in disguising art, for amongst all the great creative pieces of narrative, it carries the impress of naive truth.

The personal aspect of the drama of life, which had been originated by the diarists, was picked up again and developed by Richardson, the first creator of the character-novel.
The difference of his prose from what preceded lies not so much in theme, as in point of view, method and intention. The letter form was popular, and afforded him greater intimacy in details, but making the characters reveal themselves from their own lips. For the first time in prose fiction, the interest centres upon the mind of the characters, and there is a definite attempt at psychological analysis. In intent it has all the heart-searchings and elements of tragedy that the French novel displayed a century before in the "Princesse de Cleves", and with astonishing subtlety of detail. His character analysis is a slow, gradual process, developing by the accumulation of petty detail into a great moving force in the book. Richardson started the vogue of the sentimental novel, which elaborated the analysis of feeling and the casuistry of love. His novels were translated into French almost as soon as they came off the English press and were read and imitated with great enthusiasm. It is here interesting to note the stream of fiction which had come from the continent for about two centuries, now reversed, developing along more extreme lines.

The most important figure in this new cult of sentimentalism was Rousseau. He seemed to divest emotionalism of either moral or religious restraint and based his philosophy upon the supreme importance of the individual
and the inherent goodness of his nature. The "Nouvelle Heloïse" of 1761 and the Emile the following year, in which he explains his cult for freedom and expansion of the individual, were met with great applause all over England. Impractical as much of his theory was, he undoubtedly started a great movement for individualism, which extended its influence to the French Revolution and also to a group of social reformers led by Godwin in England. Through the force of his ideas, man became more conscious of himself and of his value in relation to society. He sounded the first definite note of altruism which was to re-echo more clearly in the next century.

The early wave of sentimentalism in England was modified by the realistic novels of the same period. Fielding is the consummate realist of the century. His characters stand out as real "flesh and blood" people, seeing life "as it was and not as it ought to be." The virility and accuracy of his character portrayal, his humor, and his easy manipulation of character and incident, have won for him a high place amongst novelists. We find the same energy of delineation in his disciple Thackeray, although the style of the latter is greatly modified and his development more subtle. The aim of reality, which was the chief characteristic of Fielding's work, was manifest in the Vicar of Wakefield. Here there is little action, and the characters are naive
and simply drawn, suffused in genial humor and unobtrusive philosophy. The contemplative quality of this novel is much more valuable to the development of character-analysis than the erotic wave of sentimentalism that was coming from France.

As we have noted, one outgrowth of sentimentalism was the cult of individualism tending towards social reform. Another branch, however, which gained considerable popularity during the later 18th century, developed in the Gothic romances. They dealt with the supernatural and were written to satisfy a taste for mystery and horror. This particular phase of the novel had not appeared before except to some slight degree in Moll Flanders. But linked with sentimentality, it grew apace in the hands of Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe. The plot was cleverly worked up with melodramatic force to a tense climax, but the characters had no real personality. They were all erotic types, swayed by the emotion of the moment, and they developed no other characteristic, because of the nature of the plot, except super-sentimentalism.

No healthy point of view could be maintained in such an atmosphere, and a strong reaction was inevitable. Jane Austen came in "like a draught of pure air," says Mr. Phelps, "and blew out the candles, bringing daylight back to English fiction." With her delightful sense of humor, her keen
observation of men and manners, and her realistic burlesque of the excesses of sentimentalism, she revived the novel of manners. As we have seen, this type of novel had been introduced by Goldsmith and it was further developed by Fanny Burney. Her works, although they have not the mark of the first quality, are important historically, as they stand in a direct line of development from the essays in the evolution of the character-sketch. In Miss Austen's books we find plain, everyday people, and there are hardly any but "rose-water and rose-leaf revolutions," recalling the genial diffuseness of the Vicar of Wakefield. The plot sinks into the background, but the characters in their felicitous detail are amongst the masterpieces of literature.

During this period, an entirely new genre of novel was originated by Sir Walter Scott, arising directly out of his own personality and training. From his earliest years his mind was filled with "Border" legends and romances which became vividly real to him. In his historical romances, therefore, he depicts his native country with actual scenes and actual people. His characterization is broad and vivid, lacking the subtle analysis of Richardson, the realism of Fielding, or the satire of Jane Austen. Yet he proves that both realism and romanticism are complementary, and that the romantic implication can be drawn from everyday facts.

Over the character and

(1) Saintsbury: History of English Literature.
scenes of his novels he casts a glamor of romance which will hold, I think, in spite of many opinions to the contrary at the present time, a permanent interest. By the insight and genius of his own personality, he has penned some pictures of Scottish character that will never grow dim, for in the simplicity of their words and actions there is warmth and intensity, and in their silence, tragedy.

For the next twenty years after the Waverley novels had ceased, Dickens was producing in rapid succession his most popular books, all dealing with social problems. Dickens was himself a man of the populace, and was keenly aware of its restrictions and abuses. He was writing in the interests of the Individual, and no writer has ever done more for social reform by the appeal of his characters. His drawing of child-life, when it is not oversentimentalized, is true to the type of society in which he worked, and carries a sincere note of pathos. The pageantry of his characters is colorful and vigorous, and he has the peculiar art of presenting them in an atmosphere to which they belong. Even the rooms and the pieces of furniture seem to have a "personality." But, in the minute analysis of character he takes less interest and tends more towards dramatic incident. He himself brought his characters before the public by giving readings from his books, and so realistic were they that his audience
was always deeply moved.

There is little in his contemporary Thackeray however that would invite dramatic presentation; he is, like Fielding, too fond of bringing his chair up to the proscenium arch and taking the audience into his confidence. In his satire and burlesque of the shallow conventions of a society to which he himself belonged, he has never been surpassed. He is unflinching in his realistic presentation of character and motive; not the slightest movement escapes his notice or interpretation. He is not content with the broad lines of Scott, or with the minute detail of Dickens; his satire probes into the very heart of society.

Now, finally the interest in character and motive was worked out in a different way by George Eliot. In the mass of varying influences upon the novel up to this time, one fact stands out, - the growing interest in personality and its motivation. From the essayists down to Thackeray, the portrayal of character had been gradually developing into something more subtle and significant. The delineation of Sir Roger de Coverley is just as clear-cut as that of Colonel Newcome, but there is a very great difference. In the former no attempt is made to analyse the feelings of the character. Human nature is essentially the same from age to age, but the portrayal of it has become a finer art. Never before had the author looked so intently into the complexities of the feelings. "The perfect photograph of life," says Bliss
Perry, "is not sufficient; the subjective element in it modifies, selects and adjusts and gives the highest value to art." This subjective analysis is the peculiar method of George Eliot who from the publication of her first book in 1855 gave greater power and scope to the psychological novel. Her interest was primarily with the interior drama of human life the intricate blending of psychological processes that go to create that elusive thing; called "personality." In this kind of novel she is distinguished alike from the great sentimentalists and the sweeping satirists. She was writing at a time when traditional beliefs were being uprooted, but in the midst of it she worked out a philosophy of her own, which controlled her life and her writings. The following chapters will explain this philosophy and deal with the characterization in her novels as it is developed by her philosophy, her humor, and her use of setting.
CHAPTER II.

George Eliot's Philosophy.

"The author of a book," says Henry Van Dyke, is not an algebraic quantity, but a human being with a certain life history." This thought is particularly applicable to George Eliot. Unlike Scott, she has projected her own personality into that of her characters, so that the two are inseparably bound together. In estimating her work, therefore, there are two elements to be considered. The character of the author herself, by the standards of which she interprets all other characters, and the great intellectual movements of her age by which her opinions have been strongly influenced.

George Eliot's life shows three distinct phases - the early period from 1819 to 1840, spent in the heart of the provinces, the period of study until 1855, during which she became both translator and journalist, and finally her matuer years as novelist when she produced some of the best along with some of the worst novels of our literature.

Her early life was spent near the little village of Griff in Warwickshire, where her father, Robert Evans, had a small farm. It is from this vicinity that she draws much

of her setting for her early novels. Her mother was a woman of great vivacity and energy of mind, and from her George Eliot inherited her sprightly humor and keen perception. She was later to choose her as a model for Mrs. Poyser in Adam Bede. Marion Evans, who was later to become the "George Eliot" of the novels, lived in this part of the country for about the first twenty years of her life. She loved the country, and the beauty and silence of it made a great impression upon her child-mind. She seemed to have absorbed its tone and temper, so that she was able in later life to interpret the character of the peasants who had spent all their lives there. She was accustomed to continuous and solitary brooding upon the things around her, a habit which developed quite early into a habit of questioning and theorising. At the age of twelve, she was sent to a private school at Coventry, where she was educated on strictly Methodist principles. The religious ideas of these early years, so firmly impressed by the most orthodox\(^1\) of teachers, had a lasting influence all through her life. Positivist as she inevitably became through her later studies, she never openly asserted her belief, or attacked the simple faith of others. She respected their form of religion although she could not hold it, and because of this respect could create a character like Dinah Morris

with true sympathy and understanding.

After three years of training at Coventry, she had to return home where she continued to study eagerly whatever books were within her reach. That her reading was promiscuous is evidenced in one of her letters to her friend and tutor, Miss Lewis. "My mind presents a chaotic assemblage of disjointed specimens of history, ancient and modern; scraps of poetry picked up from Shakespeare, Cowper, Wordsworth and Milton, newspaper topics, morsels of Addison and Bacon, Latin verbs, geometry, entomology and chemistry, reviews and metaphysics - all arrested and petrified, smothered by the fast thickening anxiety of actual events and household cares and vexations." (1)

It was then she developed her taste for probing into the thoughts of the past - a taste which finally led her to formulate her own peculiar philosophy of life. Throughout these early years we can see the original Maggie Tulliver, impulsive, impressionable, absorbing an extraordinary amount of varied knowledge. Of these early impressions, the one which is most clearly stamped in her books is her love and understanding of the peasants and their surroundings.

The second period of her life opened with the friendship of Charles Bray and his circle of transcendentalists. She was keenly interested in his theory. He believed in the "unity of the universe, the oneness of matter and mind, the evolution of all forms of life and being from the lowest, the universal dominion of law and necessity, and the influence of (1) J. W. Cross: George Eliot's Life, Blackwood & Sons, 1885, Vol.1, P. 60."
nature upon man."(1) After many discussions of possible theories with Mr. Bray, she read Hennell's Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity. (2) As Hennell was Mrs. Bray's brother, the book was fully discussed in that household, where George Eliot frequently visited. She was profoundly interested in the book. Hennell rejected (3) the miraculous and the supernatural and regarded Christianity as the natural development of Jewish history. The cause of the greatness of Jesus, he said, lay in a long course of events which had come to a crisis at the time of his appearance, and his personality derived its power from the accumulated force of many generations. Hennell was a thorough rationalist, valuing highly the moral teaching of Christ, but discarding the myth which had been rapidly accumulating around it. The impression his thoughts made upon George Eliot is expressed in another letter to Miss Lewis. She writes, "My whole soul has been engrossed in the most interesting of all inquiries for the last few days, and to what result, my thoughts will lead, I know not - possibly to one that will startle you; but my only desire is to know the truth, my only fear to cling to error." (4)

(1) G. W. Cooke, George Eliot, P. 19
(2) Book published 1838.
    Read by George Eliot, 1841.
(3) G. W. Cooke, George Eliot, P. 20
(4) J. W. Cross, Life of George Eliot,
    Vol.1, P. 103.
Stirred by the influence of both Charles Bray and Charles Hinnell, she zealously applied herself to further study which led her to German literature. Germany at this time was greatly in advance of the rest of Europe in scientific and philosophic research, consequently German books on the "new thought," as it was called, were being translated in great numbers into both French and English. George Eliot's first translation was Strauss' *Leben Jesu*, a long, strenuous piece of work not of her own choosing, but undertaken for Mr. Bray who was not versed in German. The work completely disillusioned her, striking at the very roots of her orthodoxy and shaking her religious beliefs. She complained in her letters of being "Strauss-sick" at the time of completing the translation, for the book had offered much destructive criticism, leaving grave doubts in her mind. But the introduction which Strauss had given her to German thought, aroused in her a desire to search further for an answer to her recurring doubts. By 1854 she had completed a translation of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. This book proved very stimulating to her mind. Feuerbach, like Kant, took as his premise the subjective element\(^{(1)}\) of all knowledge. He postulated that religion was a product of the human mind, embodying the wants and aspirations of the soul, but having no objective facts corresponding to it. God

existed, he said, only in the mind of man, as a perfect type of his own nature, and as an aspiration in his life. To George Eliot this doctrine came as a great inspiration. According to this theory the individual took on greater importance and dignity, having the power within himself to shape his life and give it its fullest expression. At a time when rationalism was disintegrating every form of religious faith, she conceived how great would be the influence of this philosophy upon the character and conduct of man and upon the ultimate welfare of humanity.

While she was thus deep in the study of German philosophical thought, the great Tractarian Movement was at its height in England. It was a momentous struggle between liberalism and orthodoxy not only amongst clericals but in the mind of every thinker. The liberals insisted upon applying scientific methods of investigation to their religious faith, to test its truth. The orthodox minds, on the other hand, continued to base their faith upon antiquity and utterly distrusted scientific investigation. At the time, George Eliot was reading widely on both sides of the question. "What a pity," she writes, "that doctrines infinitely important to man are buried in a charnal heap of bones, over which nothing is heard but the barks and growls of contention." She is speaking in 1841 when the famous Tract 90 had been issued, and doubtless she has in mind the pathetic figure of John Henry Newman striving

to find the ultimate truth in a mass of man-made creeds. Her thrusts at "dogmatic schemes" of religion are very pointed. She strongly discounts the mass of legend growing around the principles of Christ's teaching, and what Arnold aptly called the "aberglaube" of religion. In an article in the Westminster Review she voices her indignation. "Fatally powerful as religious systems have been, human nature is stronger and wider and although dogmas may hamper, they cannot repress its growth; build walls around the living tree as you will, the bricks and mortar have by and by to give way before the slow and sure operation of the sap."(1) She is here undoubtedly joining with the liberals in an effort to apply scientific principles to the investigation of orthodox faith.

This liberalism which she adopted implied a thorough understanding and appreciation of scientific thought. This she had acquired from various sources and to an extraordinary degree for a woman of her time. She was moving in a circle of literary people who were all keenly interested in advanced thought. By 1851 she had been appointed sub-editor of the Westminster Review, one of the foremost papers in scientific and philosophic theories. It became the organ of such men as John Stuart Mill, Spencer, Emerson and Lewis, besides publishing from time to time articles on German philosophy and literature. For this work she had to read very extensively and rapidly; it was heavy work but she applied herself to it.

with great energy and success. Although the mass of the work was great, her interest in it spurred her on. She was always eager for discussion with those who contributed articles to the Review. With Lewis she would spend hours theorising upon possible developments in science and philosophy. Lewis was working on the *Biographical History of Philosophy* at the time, and discussed his material at great length with George Eliot. In science Huxley was working on an evolutionary theory by experiments in comparative anatomy. Herbert Spencer in philosophy, also championed evolution, believing in the collective life of the race and linking the past with present and future in his theory. Thus we find she came into direct contact with scientists and philosophers through her journalistic work, and was well versed in the advanced thought of her day.

During this second period of her life, there had been three distinct influences at work. She was trying to piece together Charles Bray's theory of the "unity of mind and matter," Feuerbach's theory of the subjectivity of all knowledge, particularly of religion, and the growing belief in evolution expressed by Huxley and Spencer and discussed at length by Lewis. The result was that she discarded her early religious faith definitely, regarding religion as a purely subjective force, urging the individual towards perfection. She also began to put emphasis upon conduct in the building up of character, showing that if the past is inevitably linked up with the
present and future, each individual is responsible to posterity for his actions. These ideas were to be further developed during the third period of her life, and applied in her novels.

It was in 1855, two years after her union with George Lewis, that the journalist turned novelist under the pseudonym of "George Eliot." Within the following six years she produced her four most charming novels. They picture the simple beauty of Warwickshire where she spent her childhood, and where she says, "Leisure still dwells."(1) "Fine old Leisure! Do not be severe upon him and judge him by our modern standard; he never went to Exeter Hall, or heard a popular preacher, or read Tracts for the Times or Sartor Resartus." It seems as if she delights in living over again her childhood days, when life had no complexities and presented no problems. She has no urgent theory to propound in her first two books, merely presenting life as it appears to her, describing it and commenting upon it. But the same year in which she published Adam Bede was to see the beginning of a change in her philosophy.

The great scientific discovery of the century to which all research and discussion had been leading for several years, was the evolutionary theory. We have seen how Spencer and Huxley had championed the theory in philosophy and science. Then came the simultaneous publication of the "Origin of Species" theory by Darwin(2) and his fellow-scientist Wallace in 1859,

(1) Adam Bede, Ch. 52, P. 532.
(2) G. T. Bettany, Darwin, P. 75.
(Walter Scott, London 1887.)
by which they affirmed what had already been conjectured. They showed by hundreds of experiments how the higher forms of organic life had evolved from lower species, with several variations. These variations they traced back to the influences of heredity and environment. This was the part of the theory which was eagerly seized upon by the philosophers, and developed extensively.

At that time it was felt that science had the power to explain every "unknown." Scientists had made such rapid advances in knowledge that they thought they might be able to probe the secrets of the universe. Religious dogma was again and again subjected to scientific analysis with drastic results. No balance could be found between science and religion, religion and philosophy. During the latter years of George Eliot's life England was disturbed with grave doubts and torn between the extremes of rationalism and dogmatism. It was to be many decades before the scientists realized that, even with its ever-widening circle of influences and possibilities, science has its limitations. In recent years the fact has been very definitely stated by Professor J. A. Thompson (1) in his Outlines of Science. "It is the aim of science," he says, "to inquire into the formulation of things as they are, and as they have come to be, and to gather data concerning their nature, origin

and behaviour. Science does not inquire into the "why" of things, the purpose or significance of the cosmos. Philosophy attempts the answer by binding science and religion.

Such a balance was not yet in the minds of the philosophers of George Eliot's day. By far the greater stress was laid upon science, while the spiritual was almost lost sight of. George Eliot, herself, had discarded her religious beliefs and began to adopt the theories of the school of thought to which Charles Bray belonged. She had read Carlyle's theories and from him inevitably turned to Goethe whom he admires and quotes continually. In this study she was greatly helped by George Lewes who had made a thorough investigation of Goethe's life and works and had published a critical biography in 1855. She was impressed by the brooding note of sadness in all Goethe's work. He makes renunciation the keynote of life, asserting that out of pain and suffering rises greater good. So deeply did she feel the truth of this belief that she introduces it repeatedly into the theme of her novels. There is no solution for Maggie or for Romola except in renunciation of their individual desires for the common good. The same theory she found in Carlyle's works, the same gloom of renunciation, together with the grim philosophy of work and duty. Both philosophers saw the need of individual sacrifice for the
sake of the greater good to society - a philosophy from which George Eliot developed her doctrine of humanitarianism. "Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then," says Carlyle, "that fliest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to eat; and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe," (1) and with these words he closes out individualism and individual inspiration, while he makes altruism his religion. George Eliot has applied this doctrine in Romola with such deadening effect, that she gives no place to the spiritual influence in life, an influence outside rationalism and uncontrolled by it.

All the ideas on the evolutionary theory, on environment and heredity, and on the claims of humanity upon the individual, which she had gathered from these above-mentioned sources, George Eliot found crystallized in the philosophy of Auguste Comte. George Lewes made an intensive study of the man and his philosophy for several years, translating his books and bringing his theories before English students of philosophy. Comte's ideas, which George Eliot studied with great enthusiasm, made a deep impression upon her. Writing from Biarritz (2), she says, "My gratitude increases continually for the illumination Comte has contributed to my life."

The foundation of Comte's positive philosophy was in no way peculiar to him, nor did he claim to be the originator of it. It is his presentation of it which is new and carries with it a certain conviction. He originated the three-stage philosophy of thought. (1) The first he calls *theological*, in which man accounts for phenomena by the volitions of a real or imaginary intelligence. The second stage of thought he calls *metaphysical*, which ascribes phenomena not to a God, but to a force or power which is occult and abstract. In the third stage, these two modes of thought have step by step given place to a positive philosophy which explains facts by the discovery of an increasing number of invariable laws. This three-stage development had been previously stated by others, as a logical sequence in the history of the physical sciences. Comte's own contribution was that he believed the same development took place in every class of human conceptions. (2) It is interesting to note here that George Eliot's own thoughts had passed through these three stages, from the theological mood of her childhood to the positive belief of her later years. She was grappling with the positive conception when she found Comte's particular explanation which strengthened her convictions. She seized upon his belief in invariable laws, from which came her theory of

(2) Ibid. P. 12.
the inevitableness of retribution so frequently introduced into her novels. Tito, Arthur Donnithorne and Godfrey Cass are all victims of this law.

But there is another aspect of Comte's philosophy which greatly interested her. Comte was looking for a middle course between the two extremes of philosophy. The Cartesian doctrine had held that man was only conscious of himself as a part of and absorbed in nature. The other extreme was held by Locke, who exalted the power of the individual, believing that all knowledge was a product of the human mind, and man was the centre of the universe. Comte saw that both theories were untenable and formed a theory similar to that of Kant. (1) It stated that both man and nature were in themselves abstractions and that man could not know himself except in relation to something else. "Nothing is real but humanity," he said, and in the later years of his life he made this doctrine his religion. Kant, Goethe and Carlyle had already recognized the claims of humanity but Comte (2) went much further. He instituted the worship of altruism as a religion, with a visible church and dignitaries over whom he held the position of High Priest. He was followed in these extreme beliefs by few. The power of his theory lies in the impetus he gave to the study of

(2)
sociology by stressing the claims of society upon the individual. George Eliot came to feel also that altruism was not only the finest, but the only worthy aim in life. Dorothea is the living embodiment of it, Felix Holt preaches it, and Dorothea sacrifices her life for it. In her later years, George Eliot was obsessed by the theory, and as a result, her later novels almost became philosophic treatises, and lack the freshness and reality of the four early books.

Throughout the three periods of her life, George Eliot was moving step by step from orthodoxy to positivism. The faith which she had accepted in her childhood was shattered by the rationalism of scientific and philosophic thought. The crowning influence came from Auguste Comte's philosophy from which she accepted the theory of positivism based upon invariable laws, and the cult of altruism. The main theories which she introduces into her books may be summed up in the words renunciation, retribution, environment, heredity, and altruism. Her methods in applying these in the development of her characters will be the subject of the following chapter.
CHAPTER III.
The Characterization of the Novels as Influenced by her Philosophy.

The portrayal of character in fiction, as we have seen, has been gradually growing in detail from the time of the earliest epic. Along with the growing consciousness in man of his own potentialities, we can trace the evolution of a literary form which reveals more adequately all these new subtleties of his nature. Dramatic art portrays a cross-section of life at a moment of action which can most clearly reveal character, while narrative art progresses in a more leisurely manner, using greater detail and showing longer processes of character development. In either case, the purpose is the same - to delineate reality in human nature in a way that will call up an involuntary response in the reader's or spectator's mind.

The question then arises as to what constitutes a "real" character in fiction and how far George Eliot succeeds in portraying that reality. Clayton Hamilton(1) has said that "the novelist is the social sponsor for his own fictitious characters, and must be responsible for their success with his readers." They must be like Aristotle's tragic hero, neither too good nor too bad, but with enough human frailty to arouse sympathy. Super-men and super-woman are unnatural because they do not exist except in theory.

Some novelists have used "types" as their characters, and with a fair amount of success. Bunyan brought Christian and Greatheart amazingly near reality, even if his minor characters are less natural. Again Jonson characterized the "humors", taking only one particular quality and developing it as a whole personality. Dickens also overstressed individual traits, until he produced mere caricatures, while H. G. Wells continually loses the individual in the ideal type. The essential power of a great novelist lies in fusing the type and the individual characteristics. The true character of fiction must possess supereminently all the qualities of the type, and at the same time to individualized like Tito Melemia in *Romola*, so that he cannot possibly be confused with any other of the same type.

In drawing her characters, George Eliot has been fully aware of the necessity of this fusion. Although she has adopted a truly scientific method in gathering real facts from observation, her characters are more than a mere transcript from the life. She has infused in them something of greater power and permanency than the average person possesses. Speaking of Adam Bede(1) she says, "I will not pretend that his was an ordinary character among workmen; and it would not be at all a safe conclusion that the next man you may meet with a basket of tools over his shoulder has the strong conscience and the strong sense,

the blended susceptibility and self command, of our friend Adam." Thus she strives to make her characters more thoroughly representative of their class than actual people would be, while she individualizes them by realistic detail, using "the suggestions of experience and working them up into new combinations."

In her choice of character, and method of portrayal, George Eliot is determined by her philosophy. As we have seen in Chapter II, her theory of life which is based on positivism, stresses the themes of renunciation, retribution, environment, heredity and altruism. She believes also in the three-stage development of thought from idealism to rationalism. All these ideas her characters have been created to illustrate, and as a result she has adopted a particular method of delineation. She makes a lengthy survey of the life of her character in order to include every detail, and to unfold the gradual changes that are brought about. The change is taking place in the mental attitude of her character who is inevitably shaped by some of these forces. Her chief characters, therefore are Kinetic, working towards the development or limitation of their own lives by the power of their will over circumstances. They stand in contrast to a great number of the Dickens and Thackeray characters who do not change in their mental outlook upon life. Micawber never learns his lesson, Mrs. Nickleby never sees the humor of her loquacity, Becky
is worldly from the beginning to the end of her life, and Beatrice is always a coquette. These characters are portrayed by an "exterior" method, while those of George Eliot are revealed by the subtle analysis of their thoughts. The study of mind is more important to her than the study of action. Her characters, motivated by the ideals of renunciation and altruism, or pursued by the fate of heredity or the inevitability of retribution, must necessarily be subjective and drawn from within. The mental development of her characters is the one essential in the illustration of her theory, and to this end her method is a careful and detailed psychological analysis.

Let us consider now with what success George Eliot applies these theories in her characterization. The ground-tone of all her novels is renunciation, a drab ascetic sort of self-effacement sometimes, which lacks inspiration while it crushes out the last spark of individualism. In the case of Maggie, one is impressed more by the pity of her renunciation than by its beauty, because neither Lucy nor Stephen is worthy of the sacrifice she is making. The first struggle in her mind between duty and impulse occurs just after the reversal of the family fortunes. The impulsive girl realizes that she can have no more education, and that there seems to be nothing before her but the dull monotony of her home life. Just at the moment of doubt as to a possible
escape from these conditions she receives the parcel of books from Bob Jakin, her old school fellow and peddler. She is arrested in her reading by the words of Thomas à Kempis, which come like a voice from the past to guide and instruct. Up to this time she knew little of saints and martyrs, but the sound of the name seems familiar to her. "A strange thrill of awe passed through Maggie while she read. She went on from one brown mark to another where the quiet hand seemed to point. "Know that the love of thy self doth hurt thee more than anything in the world. .......Resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace." Comforted by this thought, her child mind begins to apply it with deadening results. She does not allow herself to think of the pleasures she cannot have, and will not give way to the desires for a fuller life. In this mistaken renunciation she finds peace until Philip Wakem shows her that this asceticism is unnatural and that she is depriving herself of the power of self-expression.

The second crisis of her life comes when Tom exacts a promise from her to renounce her friendship with Philip. Again she chooses the path of renunciation, out of respect for her father's wish by which Tom is bound, and because she has learned to subordinate her own desires to those of her brother. But she has not yet learned the true meaning of renunciation. She is keeping her promise
to the letter but not in the spirit for she meets Philip frequently at her cousin's home, and allows his friendship to continue. At the same time she is dimly aware that her affection for Stephen is growing daily, yet she has not the resolution to face the situation squarely. Her youth has been so empty of affections or admiration that she welcomes this romantic episode inspite of its danger. Whenever her resolution to adjust the situation asserts itself, some new incident, as if conspiring against her, drives her nearer to her temptation.

In the third crisis of her life, when she must choose between her own happiness and that of other two people, Maggie learns the full meaning of renunciation. It is George Eliot speaking when she says, "Many things are difficult and dark, but I see one thing clearly - that I must not, I cannot seek my own happiness by sacrificing others."(1) Again she says, "I know this belief is hard; it has slipped away from me again and again; but I have felt that if I let it go forever, I should have no light through the darkness of this life."(2) The mental struggle which Maggie experiences upon her return to St. Oggs is portrayed at great length and with intense pathos and vividness. She pays the full price of renunciation,

(1) Mill on the Floss, P. 480.
(2) Ibid., P. 511.
which is sweetened at the close of the book by the reconciliation between brother and sister.

George Eliot is continually proving the refining power of self-sacrifice upon human character. She does not choose the dramatic sacrifice of a Sidney Carton. Her interest lies in the gradual development of the character by a series of small incidents by which the will is strengthened and fortified. In Romola about one third of the book is devoted to the preparation for her final sacrifice. She is shown in her home under the calm restraint of her scholarly father. Utterly absorbed in his books, De Bardi has no thought of the natural impulses of the girl, and as a result she has learned to suppress them. She vigorously disciplines her mind to grapple with the books he loves and to be able to help him in his commentaries. Into the midst of this dull existence comes Tito with his charming grace and learning. Romola's mind seems to open out like a flower to the sun in her simple trust of him. But soon she begins to realize Tito's insincerity, as day by day he shows some new trait of selfishness or cruelty, and she decides to leave her father's house and seek peace elsewhere. Then comes the scene between Romola and Savonarola where he condemns the pagan teaching which exalts individualism, self-expression and cultured ease. He shows her where duty lies, and that
she cannot forsake it without suffering. "Sorrow without duty - bitter herbs and no bread with them."

She is loyal to her father's teaching, and pleads that a life that is restrained cannot give of its best to the world. But he scorns her "dead wisdom," and holds the cross as the only way to freedom and blessedness. "My daughter, sorrow has come to teach you a new worship; the sign of it hangs before you."

And so Romola learns to go back to her duty, and finds peace in it. To Lillo she expresses the theme of the whole story. "It is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures."

George Eliot has thus worked into the texture of the novel the significance of the struggle between culture and religion - the one developing individualism while the other represses it in the interests of humanity. Her theory is clearly illustrated in the character of Romola who, even if she has been filled with the spirit of Greek literature and has enjoyed a much more liberal education than Maggie, yet chooses renunciation as the only solution to her life.

(1) Romola, P. 381.
(2) Ibid., P. 38.
(3) Ibid., P. 209.
In Adam Bede, the problem is somewhat different and allows of no choice. Along with Adam's "strong conscience and calm self-command," we find him capable of very deep emotions. His love for the "flower-like" Hetty is the strongest influence of his life, and causes his greatest suffering. The pain which this love brings into his life is gradually deepening from the first discovery of Arthur's deceit to the final trial scene. Revenge gives place to despair, so that you could hardly recognise the same Adam in that upper room at Stoniton before the trial day, with sunken eyes and unkempt hair. The mental battle which he has been fighting for days had left its mark, but in time it gives way to calm resignation. (1) "Deep unspeakable suffering," says George Eliot, "may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state."

In later years his love for Dinah has none of the fervor of youth; it is tinged with a sadness which Adam can never forget, yet it is all the fuller because of that sorrow. George Eliot is convinced that (2) "the fuller life which a sad experience has brought us is worth our own personal share of pain, ...... we can no more wish to return to a narrower sympathy, than a painter or a musician can wish to return to his cruder manner, or a philosopher to his

(1) Adam Bede, Connoisseur Ed., P. 440, g2.
(2) Ibid. P. 547 g3
less complete formula." In the development of the character of Adam Bede, therefore, we see the strengthening and deepening process of suffering and resignation.

In Middlemarch, we find a different type of character whose life shows potently the power of renunciation. Dorothea is introduced as a modern Theresa living in a society where there is no particular demand for St. Theressas. Her natural love of renunciation is noticeable from the time when she gives up the most beautiful pieces of her mother's jewelry to her younger sister. She shows a worshipful admiration for Casaubon's erudition, and feels that in marrying him she can devote her whole life to him and his work and so be of great service to the world. It is not until after his death that she fully realizes she has sacrificed her life for the sake of a hopeless egoist. The experience, although bitter, develops in her a wider and deeper sympathy than she had previously known and a greater capacity for sacrifice. The influence of her fine spirit upon the Lydgate household is able to divert the impending tragedy and bring about a clearer understanding. Even the hard-hearted selfish Rosamund must admire her. That Dorothea has no better destiny than to become the wife of her shallow and impulsive cousin is somewhat to be deplored. The high ideals of her early years seem to have come down to a rather prosaic level. Yet George Eliot shows that even if her idealism is res
trained by the demands of conventional society, her unobtrusive influence has very far-reaching effects. The sacrifice and pain of her early life has turned aimless idealism into practical helpfulness and sympathy.

With equally great power of portrayal, George Eliot shows the retribution that follows those who do not choose the hard path of renunciation. She has an extraordinarily keen insight into the moral issues of life and presents them with unflinching precision. She chooses those characters who have no vicious traits, and because they have never developed their will power, fall victims to the invariable laws of life. That these laws are invariable and uncompromising she is convinced by science, and so she expounds her doctrine of retribution with all the unrelenting vigor of the Greek dramatists.

Tito is the most carefully drawn character who illustrates this principle. "A youth of splendid grace, who seemed quite without vices, as if that beautiful form represented a vitality so exquisitely poised and balanced that it could know no uneasy desires, no unrest - And then the quick talent to which everything came readily from philosophical systems to the rhymes of a street ballad caught up at a hearing."(1) There we have grace and charm together with infinite possibilities for good or evil - qualities typical of his pagan inheritance and

(1) Romola, P. 107.
culture. Tito has not the slightest power of curbing his desires. The easiest path is to him always the best. From the moment when he sells Baldassarre's ring until he publicly disowns him at the feast, George Eliot shows him committing one small act of indifference after another, and gradually incriminating himself until there is no possible withdrawal from his position except by an open avowal of his crime. Tito has not the strength of character for this. He spends hour after hour trying to silence what sparks of sentiment or conscience he has left. (1) "Having once begun to explain away Baldassarre's claim, Tito's thought showed itself as active as virulent acid, eating its rapid way through all the tissues of sentiment." Throughout, all the development of his character we feel that the cloud of retribution is hanging over his head. Romola has become aware of his deceit, the Florentine government is suspicious of him, and Baldassarre is gloomily biding his time. He satisfies his revenge when he eagerly grasps Tito in the Arno and crushes out his life amongst the reeds. But is justice done? The author shows that the evil deeds of men bring consequences that are hardly ever confined to themselves. There is no retribution, she says that does not spread beyond its mark in pulsations of unmerited pain.

(1) Romola, P. 125.
A somewhat different type of character is presented in Arthur Donnithorne. Unlike Tito, he has a keen sense of honor and is well aware of the consequences of laxity in moral principles. But he is easily influenced by circumstances, and all his fine resolutions of yesterday are put to flight by the power of his impulse today. From one act of weakness he goes on to the next, reconciling each in the light of the previous one, and drifting gradually away from his original principles of integrity. "Our deeds determine us," says the author, "as much as we determine our deeds. . . . . . . There is a terrible coercion in them which may first turn the honest man into a deceiver and then reconcile him to the change." By a careful psychological study of his mind, George Eliot shows with consummate skill the gradual change taking place subtly and almost imperceptibly in Arthur's viewpoint. It is not until Adam discovers his deceit and exposes his conduct in its true light, that Arthur becomes fully aware of what he has done. "Nemesis can seldom forge a sword for herself out of our consciences; there is rarely enough metal there to make an effective weapon. Our moral sense learns the manners of good society and smiles when others smile; but when some rude person gives rough names to our actions she is apt to take part against us." She levels her bitterest

(1) Adam Bede, P. 324.
(2) Ibid, P. 322.
satire against the smug complacency of the evildoer who thinks that grace and good nature can disarm punishment. Arthur returns at the end of the story, subdued and saddened having sacrificed the best part of his life because he would not recognize the simple truth of Adam's words, "There's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for."

The same grim truth is uttered by Silas Marner to Godfrey Cass, when he comes to claim Eppie as his own child. As a boy, Godfrey had been fully aware of the line between honor and dishonor, but he is the victim of a wascillating will. At one moment he decides upon making an open confession to his father, at the next he can see nothing but its evil consequences. Like Arthur he feels misgivings, but he succeeds in silencing them by new acts of deceit. He hopes against hope that some chance will turn the current of his trouble, but in vain. He has to suffer the agony of retribution, for the old inevitable law of cause and effect works its will. "The evil principle, deprecated in that religion of Chance is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its own kind."(1) Godfrey achieves a certain amount of worldly prosperity but in his mind there is no true happiness, only the pathetic realization that the evil consequences of his past actions still live and demand redress.

(1) Silas Marner, P. 289.
The bitterness of the punishment, George Eliot emphasises, lies in the individual's inward sense of wrongdoing. Throughout the greater part of Mrs. Transome's life, she conceals the secret of her youth, and because she cannot confide in anyone, the burden of it oppresses her almost beyond the point of endurance. It traces furrows in her face, and in her very soul, and every day it brings a new reminder to her. The torture of Gwendolen Harleth's mind after her husband's death, for which she held herself responsible, is also very vividly portrayed. She has only the one thought - to get away from the scene which continually reminds her of the tragedy. "For what place, though it were the flowery vale of Enna, may not the inward sense turn into a circle of punishment, where the flowers are no better than a crop of flame-tongues burning the soles of our feet?"(1)

The third great principle which George Eliot inculcates in her delineation of character is the law of environment and heredity. The two elements are so closely connected in the formation of character that they can be treated most adequately together. By the recognition of this law she is able to explain much of the so-called mystery of some characters, and at the same time make our judgment of them a little less severe. For Tom Tulliver - the man - we can

(1) Daniel Deronda, P. 370.
undoubtedly show more tolerance when we have known him as a boy, and understand his parents and the environment in which he developed. As a boy he has a strong sense of justice which makes him reprimand poor Bob's falsehoods in no uncertain terms. He will not shield Maggie when she is in the wrong; even in his tenderest moments he cannot refrain from pointing out her mistakes. He has inherited the obstinacy and pride which drove his father to the "law" and finally to disaster. He is bound by his promise to his father to revenge himself upon Lawyer Wakem and win back the family fortunes, and to this end he devotes his whole career. It is duty alone which he obeys, and clings tenaciously to it in order to attain his goal. The pride he feels when he is finally able to retrieve the family honor, pay off his father's mortgage and buy back his old home is the inherited family pride of the Dodsons.

From his mother, also, he inherits a certain dullness and lack of susceptibility which leads to a complete misunderstanding of Maggie. He distrusts her impulsiveness as he had deplored it in his father, and feels that her display of emotion is a deplorable weakness. He exacts from her a promise to break off her friendship with Philip, regardless of what it may cost her. Of the power of deep emotion he has not the least conception. Therefore when Maggie returns to St. Oggs after her flight with Stephen, he has only one standard by which to measure her conduct - the
standard of St. Oggs where he has always lived. To him an act is either right or wrong, and this case is so obviously wrong, he thinks, that he relentlessly turns Maggie from his door. Even Mrs. Tulliver's protection of her is the instinctive action of a mother, rather than the understanding of a sympathetic heart, for she cannot understand the mental struggle which Maggie has passed through. She cannot see that what is conventionally wrong is often morally right. That Maggie is right Aunt Grlegg does not believe for a moment, but her family pride asserts itself more strongly than ever and after a day spent with Baxter's "Saints' Rest," she is fortified against any criticism that St. Oggs may venture against her niece. All three are so thoroughly controlled both by environment and inheritance, that their attitude to Maggie is inevitable. Tom has been accustomed to see only the more obvious facts of life, as his mother and all the other Dodsons had done, so that he could conceive of no subtler force underlying them. Only when he is alone with Maggie on the flooded river does he begin to understand a greater force than reason. "It came with so overpowering a force - it was such a new revelation to his spirit of the depths in life that had lain beyond his vision, which he fancied so keen and clear - that he was unable to ask a question."

(1) Mill on the Floss, p. 556.
The forces of heredity so clearly displayed in Tom's character may sometimes, however, be very puzzling and may direct the character in opposition to his environment. Such a complex situation is created in Daniel Deronda. Daniel is brought up as the ward of an English baron whom he imagines to be his uncle. He is educated at Cambridge according to the tradition of his class, and grows up in the belief that his life will be very much like that of his indulgent uncle. His environment has developed in him a love of ease and well being, and the assurance that he also will be a "gentleman by inheritance." The suspicion that this inheritance is not to be his is aroused by Sir Hugh's suggestion about a stage career for him. He knows well that that is not the career of a gentleman and he begins to wonder why Sir Hugh could have thought of it. As his mind expands, he begins to long for some ideal, some Knight-errantry which will test his courage and endurance. He is living in a conventionalized society which limits his scope, and he longs to enter a broader life where he may accomplish some real work. From incident to incident he gradually draws nearer the final goal of his life - to perpetuate the glory of the Jewish race whose greatness is vested in tradition and heredity. His natural affection for the Jewess, Mirah, whom he rescues from the banks of the Thames, his interest in her family history leading to the subsequent search for her relatives,
and the joy in the discovery of the visionary Mordecai who is her brother, all point towards the final event. When he learns from the lips of his own mother that he is of Jewish parentage, his dream is realized. His yearning for an ideal is satisfied in the adoption of Mordecai's vision. "You have given shape," Deronda tells him, "to what I believe was an inherited yearning, the effect of brooding, passionate thoughts in many ancestors—thoughts that seem to have been intensely present with my forefathers."(1)

One must admire the skill in minute detail by which the character of Deronda is at first developed in harmony with the laws of heredity and environment. By heredity comes his idealism, and from his environment, the manner of and breeding of a gentleman of birth. But as the story approached the climactic statement of its thesis, the character loses its reality and becomes merely theoretical. The power of his Jewish blood, which would incline him towards his own race, would not, I think, lead him into such an impractical scheme as that of which Mordecai dreamed.

In the character of Tom Tulliver we have seen that the forces of heredity and environment do not conflict. His business ability, slow mentality and passionless nature are all the natural product of St. Oggs and the Dodson family. Consequently he pursues his way, thinking that life is an open road on which the traveller needs only energy and integrity. But in the life of Deronda the two

(1) Daniel Deronda, P. 366.
forces do conflict, for conventional society crushes out idealism. The same theme is developed in the delineation of Romola, Dorothea and to some extent Lydgate. I shall deal only with Romola where the author shows greater care of detail in the preparation of her heroine for the climax.

Romola is a true product of the fifteenth century in Italy, influenced alike by the liberalism of Renaissance literature and the ascetic discipline of the church. She inherits the integrity, depth and unconquerable pride of her father's nature. Growing up as his sole companion through her impressionable years, she is entirely controlled by his wishes, and disciplines herself to his moods. While he is absorbed day after day in the translation and annotation of his Greek manuscripts, she sits by him, stifling her weariness and patiently searching and reading wherever he demands. Her mind absorbs the ideals of the ancient literature, which teaches that life comes to its finest fruition through liberal culture and self-expression. In Romola there is a curious mixture of wisdom and naïveté, for which her father has trained her in the philosophic thought of the Greeks, he has kept her jealously from the "debasing influence of her own sex with their sparrow-like frivolity and enslaving superstitions."(1) Her cousin Brigida, a very real and animated "modern" character, is her only link with Florentine life.

(1) Romola, P. 59.
In the light of this inheritance and environment, it is easy to conceive of the effect of Tito's love upon her. His grace and learning attracts her at once, while his youth and love awakens a deep responsive affection in her heart. To her he is the living embodiment of her ideals, worthy of her deepest trust. When she realizes his deception, her pride will not allow her to question him. Her love turns to bitter hatred. Not knowing the sordidness to which human nature will stoop, or its capacity for evil, she cannot understand him; yet her mind for a time is fortified by her inherited pride and she will not admit the failure of her romance. Later when despair reaches a climax, she feels that it is impossible to remain in subjection to Tito's heartlessness and egoism. She has never learned to bow to any obligation apart from personal love and reverence, and their love being dead, she reasons that she has no further duty to him.

The influence of her brother who had turned monk, and of Savonarola whom she meets in her flight, bring her to understand that there is something stronger in life than the call of the individual for freedom - and that is the recognition of a moral obligation. Once convinced of this, her natural integrity drives her back to perform her duty to the end, - a duty which is illuminated by the ideal for which it stands. And so Romola meets the crisis of her life with fortitude because she had been endowed with
greatness of mind and trained by severe discipline. At first Romola seems a rather unnatural character, perhaps because of the labored attempt to give her an adequate background. Oscar Browning says, and with some truth, that in *Romola* the characters are "nineteenth century people in fifteenth century costumes."(1) But upon re-reading the book we feel that Romola gains in intensity of feeling and in reality, and that it is the peculiar circumstances of her life that gives point to the denouement.

Finally, in the worship of altruism George Eliot has found the crowning theme of her novels. She has shown the workings of the invariable laws of nature by which the past influences the present, and counsels the supreme importance of conduct. "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment."(2) She has also illustrated the purifying power of renunciation upon the human soul. Now she proceeds to explain why such self-discipline is necessary. Man can no longer be considered as a being apart from the rest of humanity. He is a part of society, influencing it and being in turn influenced by it. His struggle towards perfection is not for his own sake - for the individual, as such, is a mere abstraction according to positivism - but in the

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(2) *Mill on the Floss*, P. 508.
interests of humanity. The ideal that man has been striving after is discovered to be in his midst - it is the love of humanity. George Eliot is convinced that there is no finer, broader or more inspiring ideal and that it is the only logical and practical solution to life.

Leading to this solution is the three-stage development of thought, from theology through metaphysics to positivism which George Eliot has applied to her characters. She shows the fervor with which Maggie practices her early self-denial, only to realize at last that she is limiting her possibilities and helping no-one. Maggie finds that renunciation in and for itself has no meaning. In the second stage of her thought she is looking behind the ideal for the reason of it. Through greater suffering she is able to see why renunciation is necessary. "The long past came back to her, and with it the fountains of self-renouncing pity and affection. The words that were marked by the quiet hand in the little old book that she had learned long ago rushed to her lips."(1) At last she learns their meaning, and realizes that renunciation is our inheritance from the past and our duty to the future. The third stage is reached when she rises from pity of her own situation to consider the needs of others, and in her venture on the swollen river to save her brother and Lucy she proves to us the triumph of altruism.

(1) Millon the Floss, P. 550.
George Eliot shows us another aspect of altruism in *Silas Marner*. It is a study of the power of society to bring the individual back to the enjoyment of life and friendship. Silas has lost faith in his God, his friends and in himself. He comes into Raveloe, a silent sinister-looking figure, down-cast and misunderstood. For a time his life has no meaning for him. Then the work at his loom with which he fills every moment of his waking hours in order to exclude thought, becomes an end in itself. His nature, still groping for something to love, turns to the material, and gloats over the growing pile of golden guineas. In the absence of human companionship, he feels the bright faces of the coins becoming almost human to him, and he is obsessed by the frenzy of a miser in their accumulation. All his desire centres in the pot of gold. Then by some cruel trick of fate, his gold is stolen, and he is once more crushed and bewildered by circumstances. Just when the very springs of his life seem to have dried up into a thin thrickle, there appears the little helpless figure of Eppie at his hearth as if by magic. "Gold, his own gold - brought back to him as mysteriously as it had been taken away. He leaned forward at last, and stretched forth his hand, but instead of the hard coin with the familiar resisting outline, his fingers encountered soft, warm curls."(1) From this point in the story the change in

(1) *Silas Marner*, P. 329.
Silas is gradually perceptible - a slow and uncertain awakening to the realities and the affections of life. The child fills his little dull room with the warmth and gladness of youth, and day by day she creates a link between his old life and the outer world. The impulsive kind-hearted Dolly Windthrop is the first to come to Silas, with offers of help. Not only does she minister to his physical wants, but unasked for, she gives him much spiritual advice which, if amusing, has at least the merit of sincerity. From the moment of the theft, Silas becomes a figure of interest to the frequenters of the Rainbow. In spite of their slow stupidity we are made to realize that they have warm hearts. Following the ill-fortune of Silas, they begin to take a friendly interest in him, and help him in their blunt way whenever they can.

Silas is at last recognised in the community which has helped him to gain back his self-respect. The fine integrity and depth of emotion which he displays in that last dramatic scene between Eppie and her acknowledged father proves just how much the altruistic spirit of Raveloe has done to develop the best qualities of his nature.

In Felix Holt the author preaches the doctrine of altruism unfalteringly as the only solution for political unrest. Although the theory is on the whole sound, Felix himself is an unnatural figure. With his high ideals and breadth of vision, he does not seem to be the true son of his parents, the one weak and superstitious, the other a
compounder of quack medicines. He has imbibed his ideas at a Scottish University which he attended for a short time, and is eager to put them into practice. He feels that the acquisition of the vote is of little importance to the working man until he is sufficiently educated to use it. Educate public opinion, he says, in order to give it the power to distinguish between right and wrong. What is the value of a vote to the whole population (he is speaking before the Reform Bill of 1867) if it is abused by bribes and ignorance. The solution of the political question, he says, lies in spreading the spirit of altruism until every member of society lives and works in the interest of his fellow-men. "This world is not a very fine place for a good many of the people in it. But I have made up my mind that it shan't be the worse for me, if I can help it."(1) With the ability to earn for himself material wealth and ease, he sternly chooses the harder path, living as a workman and experiencing a workman's hardships. In the end Felix Holt effects nothing. The book lacks the spirit of a political novel - it is the expression of a mind that can theorise, far away from the movements of the world. We are aware of our author moving her puppet around from place to place, making him say what she wants him to say. We are much more attracted to the Transome story of passion.

(1) Felix Holt, the Radical, P. 65.
and retribution which is developed with considerable skill, than in the wooden figure of Felix Holt in whom the theme of the book is so lamely illustrated.

In both this novel and *Daniel Deronda* the author has attempted to weave her altruistic theory into a living plot, but the two continually separate and in the end we feel that she has made her theory too impractical.

In reviewing the characterization of George Eliot, we find that she is doing something more than portraying the simple emotions of human nature. That had been done successfully centuries before her day. What she does see more than any other novelist before her is the complexity of man's nature developing out of a more highly civilized society. At first the character is described by his exterior appearance. Then by a series of small actions he begins to reveal his personality step by step. He creates a sphere of influence around himself, either for good or bad, which ultimately becomes so strong that it reacts upon himself and controls his will power. Her interpretation of life thus develops into a study of the individual mind in all its aspects. George Eliot is a psychologist in her power of revealing the thoughts of her characters with scientific penetration, but she is also a novelist in the art of catching the throb of life in pages which are still fresh with the stir of human emotions. In all the novels except the two last - and in these the Transome and Grandcourt stories are excellently
presented - she has illustrated her philosophy of life with sincerity, and has reproduced the more intense experiences of the soul with a breadth of sympathy and understanding that no other author of her century surpassed.
CHAPTER IV.
The Humor of the Novels.

Although George Eliot is primarily a psychological novelist who can delineate character by the intensive analysis of mental processes, she is not confined to that method of characterization. It is, as we have seen, the direct result of her philosophy which deals with mind rather than with action. But there is another element in her personality which comes not from training but from inheritance and experience, and which she uses to advantage in her characterization—this is her sense of humor. She inherited it from her mother, a woman of great vitality and shrewd common sense who never lacked a ready answer. George Eliot was doubtless accustomed to hear much pointed and humorous criticism of the people amongst whom she lived. It was natural, therefore, that she should develop a keen sense of humor and that in the light of it she should interpret human nature accurately and with genuine sympathy for its whims and foibles. She is no longer theorizing; she is merely drawing from the facts of her experience, and through the power of her humor reaches amazingly near reality.

The type of character which she presents through her humor is entirely different from that discussed in Chapter III. For her psychological studies she chooses characters of a romantic type, having in their nature, to some extent...
at least, the qualities of introspection, self-analysis and susceptibility; in every case there is the imminent possibility of tragedy in their lives. In drawing this type of character George Eliot is undoubtedly at her best. She seems keenly aware of the ever-present tragedy in life and like Hardy, becomes readily vocal to it. Whether the characters are of the unlettered class, like Hetty and Silas Marner, or from the cultured society of Tito and Romola, their minds are quickly responsive to the subtlest influences. Mental struggles do inevitably take place which the psychological method alone can reveal. But there are those who do not experience a mental struggle; who have not the habit of introspection or the capacity for a deep emotion. They deal with facts rather than fancies, and believe in the possibility only of the visible. These are the characters which George Eliot portrays most successfully through her humor.

Here it is necessary to define George Eliot's humor. It may be contrasted alike with the broad coarse humor of the picaresque story, the sly humor of Jane Austen, the rollicking humor of Dickens, or the piquant humor of Thackeray and Meredith. Sometimes, it is true, she displays the incision and the sting of satire when she is exposing the manners and morals of society. It is an entirely different kind of satire from Meredith's and frequently
just as effective; it is imaginative rather than intellectual. Lowell has drawn a very clear distinction between the two. "Intellectual satire gets its force from personal and moral antipathy, and loves to say Thou, pointing out its victim. But imaginative satire, warmed through and through with the genial leaven of humor, smiles half sadly and murmurs We."(1) This vein of humor or imaginative satire in the novels is one of their most pleasing aspects, contrasting with the psychological element and effecting by the contrast an artistic interplay of light and shade. It is slow and shy, insinuating its fun into your heart as far as your appreciation will allow it to enter.

The humorous characters may be divided into two groups displaying conscious and unconscious humor. The latter exist in a sort of mist of solid stupidity, puzzled by the world's ways and hemmed in by its traditions and conventions; the others, of more critical bent, are inclined towards broad jokes at the expense of their dull-witted neighbours. George Eliot herself takes keen delight in poking fun at both groups. In the first group, she has succeeded in portraying human nature from three different points of view. We have the opinions of Bob, the peddler, of the shrewd farmer's wife, Mrs. Poyser, and of the acidulous Mrs. Cadwallader, one of the "gentry" of Middlemarch - all in

widely different walks of life. Bob, with his snub nose, his close-curled red hair, his glib tongue and natural cunning, has a very broad sense of humor. He enjoys the story of his "broad thumb" by which he worsts the astuteness of the women of St. Oggs in a bargain. "I clap my thumb at the end o' the yard, and cut on the hither side of it, and the old women aren't up to it yet." He goes through life with a twinkle in his eye, is not impressed by the shams of society and in his humorous criticism of it comes singularly near the truth. Of Mr. Kehn he says, "He isn't one o' them gentlefolks as go to cry at watering-places when their wives die." When he is questioned about his church-going, he replies, "Lor, Sir, a packman can do wi' a small allowance of church. It tastes strong, and there's no call to lay it on thick." Once started, his garrulity knows no bounds, but it has the saving qualities of humor and freshness. He gives a frank unvarnished picture of human nature as he sees it from his station in life, and with a knowing smile which takes the reader into his confidence at once.

Mrs. Poyser, more deliberate and incisive in her humor, is one of the finest of her type that George Eliot or any one else ever created. It is said that she has many of the characteristics of the author's mother of whom we have

(1) Mill on the Floss, P. 521.
already spoken. Mrs. Poyser is ready to supply a running commentary upon every occasion, colored by the freshness and piquancy of her native wit. Her conversation is packed with concrete illustrations of her thoughts, those famous "Aesop's fables in a sentence" which Mr. Irwin admired so much. Of the self-importance of the Scotch gardener at the Chase, she remarks, "He is like the cock who thought that the sun had risen on purpose to hear him crow." (1) She seems to have little admiration for the man. "It was a pity," she continues, "that he could not be hatched over again, and hatched different." (2) Her tongue was not less keen than her eye, and when any of the servants came within earshot, "She seemed to take up an unfinished lecture, as a barrel-organ takes up a tune, precisely at the place where it had left off." (3) She has no patience with the stupidity of some people who would hold a sieve under a pump and expect to carry away the water. "There are some folks," she says, "'ud stand on their heads, and then say the fault was in their boots." (4) She likens Hetty to a peacock which struts all day in the sun admiring its own beauty. Her axioms on life in which she reveals unflinchingly the foibles of human nature are clear and crisp, and make one of the finest collections of shrewd

(1) Adam Bede, P. 362.
(2) Ibid., P. 213.
(3) Ibid., P. 75.
(4) Ibid., P. 195.
native wit in our literature. The most humorous passage which portrays Mrs. Poyser to the life is the Chapter entitled, "Mrs. Poyser 'has her say out!'". The old Squire has been exercising all his tact to urge her to assume new duties on the farm, but she soon probes his strategy. Her words continue to pour forth in a steady stream, and as the Squire recedes before it, she follows him to the door with a fresh charge. The scene over, she turns back into her kitchen, beginning to knit with lightning speed. She knows full well that this outburst will be the means of turning her out of her farm, but for this she has no regret. She has "had her say out," and will rest the easier for it. "There's no pleasure i' living if you're corked up for ever, and only dribble your mind out by the sly, like a leaky barrel." (1)

Thus in the portrayal of Mrs. Poyser, George Eliot has given us one of the best humorous characters in fiction. She has drawn "reality" with clear, unfailing precision and by the quick perceptive power of her humor. In this way, through the lips of her character she has been able to attack more definitely the weakness of human nature as they are seen from the villager's point of view.

The third aspect of conscious humor in the novels is found in the character of Mrs. Cadwallader, the wife of the genial rector. "A lady of immeasurably high birth,

(1) Adam Bede, P. 361.
descended as it were, from unknown earls, dim as the crowd of heroic shades — who pleaded poverty, pared down prices, and cut jokes in the most companionable way, though with a turn of tongue that let you know who she was."(1) She has a weakness for gossip, and feels it her duty to give her dictum on everything that passes. Through her we get some rapid and excellent vignettes of the other characters. For those who come under her displeasure she reserves a very caustic wit. Poor Casaubon, the drab scholar who has given his life of the compiling of a "Key to All Mythologies" draws no respect from her. He is as dry and dusty, she says, as the folios in which he reads. "He has no red blood in him," says Sir James Chettan one day, in violent indignation, to which she replies bitingly, "No. Somebody put a drop under a magnifying glass, and it was all semi-colons and parentheses."(2) She has no illusions with regard to Mr. Casaubon's scholarship, and speaks of him "crunching dry bones in a cavern."She thinks Mr. Brooke's pamphlets need no drying, and would recommend them to the lady with the dropsy.

Although she possesses the art of fixing the character of her neighbours within a few cryptic phrases, she lacks the vivacity and the colorful language of Mrs. Poyser and the spontaneity of her wit. Hers is not the pure, homely

(1) Middlemarch, P. 52.
(2) Ibid. P. 72.
humour which leaves no sting. She is opinionated and some-
times bitter, striking off her criticisms with deadly effect.
At times, however, "Mrs. Cadwallader does not sustain her
humor consistently, and we feel that she is trying to say
something which fades in the making. It is evident that
in the more caustic kinds of humor, George Eliot is not
successful. But inspite of these defects, she shows, in
the delineation of her characters, be they peddlars, pea-
sants or gentry, a keen observation of all stations of life,
linked with a ready wit which can seize a situation in a
phrase.

In these sketches the author introduces her humor
indirectly through her characters. In the next group,
the characters themselves are unconscious of the humor of
their situation, while the author draws you aside into a
corner to enjoy it with her. She is levelling her humor
especially at the slow stupidity of the villagers, their
superstitions, their limiting traditions and their religion.
One of her best scenes is at the Rainbow Inn - a scene which
in execution is only rivalled by the famous tavern scenes of
Shakespeare. We enter the inn in the evening, and the con-
versation in the room is slow and intermittent. "The pipes
began to be puffed in silence which had an air of severity;
the more important customers, who drank spirits and sat
nearest the fire, staring at each other as if a bet were
depending upon the first man who winked; while the beer-
drinkers in fustian kept their eyelids down, and rubbed their hands across their months, as if their draughts of beer were a funereal duty, attended with embarrassing sadness."(1) She is also greatly amused by the smug satisfaction of these bucolic minds in their accomplishments, as we find it in the village choir. "The greatest triumph was when the slate announced an anthem, with a dignified abstinence from particularization, both words and music lying far beyond the reach of the most ambitious amateur of the congregation - an anthem in which the keybugles always ran away at a great pace, while the bassoon every now and then boomed a flying shot after them."(2)

But the individual who is most cleverly and humorously drawn is Mrs. Tulliver. She seems to have a genius for missing the point of every conversation and saying the wrong things. "She is like an amiable goldfish which, after running its head against the same resisting glass for thirteen years, will go at it again today with undulled alacrity."(3) While Mrs. Tulliver is puzzling over Tom's education, she is engrossed in her china, her silver teapots and her Holland sheets. Her mind refuses to fasten itself upon either Tom or her husband, and returns again to the sheets. "And if you was to die tomorrow, Mr. Tulliver, they're mangled beautiful and all

(1) Silas Marner, P. 258.
(2) Scenes of Clerical Life, P. 5.
(3) Mill on the Floss, P. 79.
ready, and smell o' lavendar, as it 'ud be a pleasure to
lay them out." But Mr. Tulliver, not being a susceptible
man, is not greatly perturbed by this grim spectacle of
"laying out." He continues, "But what I'm afraid on is,
Tom's a bit slowish. He takes after your family, Bessie."(1)
"Yes, that he does," said Mrs. Tulliver, accepting the last
proposition entirely on its own merits; "He's wonderful for
liking a deal o' salt in his broth. That was my brother's
way and my father's before him." And so he continues
through her rambling conversation, gravely unaware of either
her stupidity or her drollery.

In delineating characters, like this, George Eliot
cannot resist poking fun at their superstition. Her humor,
however, is still genial and sympathetic. While she smiles
at their stupidity, she pities their limitations. She tells
us of Mrs. Glegg's belief in the possession of mutton bone
to prevent rheumatism, of the little bags which the women
of Rayeloe wore round their necks as charms, and the red
threads they tied around a child's toe to drive away evil.
Reveloe was ensnared in superstition, so that the appearance
of Silas, who makes known his knowledge of herbs, has
something sinister in it for them. "When a weaver who came
from nobody knew where, worked wonders with a bottle of
brown waters, the occult character of the process was evident(2)

(1) Mill on the Floss, P. 9.
(2) Silas Marner, P. 230.
Their beliefs frighten Silas, and he denies any such power, but they shake their heads and think that "he is worth speaking fair, if only to keep him from doing them a mischief." Step by step, and with a sly, insinuating humor, George Eliot puts before us the dullness and the appalling limitations in which these people are living, while at the same time she is interpreting their characters in her most sympathetic way.

With somewhat more vigor, she attacks the slavish worship of tradition, and pokes fun at every phase of it in her characters. The four Dodson sisters were enchained by their family traditions, which develop into a variety of whims and eccentricities. Mrs. Glegg is the most amusing of the four. We see her first at Mrs. Tulliver's, with her heavy gold watch in hand, waiting impatiently for her other sisters to arrive. She is in a particularly irate mood, presaged by her bonnet being worn indoors, pushed back from her "best" set of curls at a menacing angle. She despises the advantages of dress. "Occasionally indeed Mrs. Glegg wore one of her third-best lace fronts on a week-day visit, but not at a sister's house, especially not at Mrs. Tulliver's, who had hurt her sister's feelings greatly by wearing her own hair. —"But Bessie alway was weak!"

They had always followed tradition in their dress, and with the Dodsons a new dress or bonnet was an "event"
in life. Maggie never forgot her first visit to her Aunt Pullet when the famous bonnet was shown - the solemn procession along the corridor, the locked door, the furniture in white shrouds, the delicious scent of rose leaves, and the silver paper, until Maggie quite expected something supernatural. "Mrs. Pullet maintained a silence, characterized by head-shaking, until they had all issued from the solemn chamber, and were in her own room again. Then, beginning to cry, she said, 'Sister, if you should never see that bonnet again till I'm dead and gone, you'll remember I showed it you this day.'"(1)

This habitual melancholy in the stolid peasant mind George Eliot brings out very frequently. The Dodsons seem to glory in the number of funerals they have had in their family, and the "laying out" which they have done. Next to that comes their interest in sickness. It is almost a fetish with Mrs. Pullet, who doubts the respectability of a household which has not a family doctor. Her great ambition is to fill the third shelf of her cupboard with empty medicine bottles before she dies. She moves about her darkened rooms with a funereal air, and sheds tears on all occasions.

By a great variety of such trifling incidents, George Eliot shows the limited and inconsequent lines these people are leading. They attach such importance to trivialities

(1) Mill on the Floss, P. 96.
that they never see the real things in life. They are matter-of-fact and uncompromising. They are so bigoted in their traditional beliefs that there is no room in their minds for any new ideas. Yet, because she has lived amongst these people, and sees their good qualities also, her humor has more pity than censure.

Finally, when she has revealed their stupidity, their superstition and their limiting traditions, she pokes gently at their religion. It is an easy comfortable religion, which does not disturb their every-day lives, and consists chiefly in church-going and psalm-singing. But in some inexplicable way, this traditional faith seems to have a definite influence for good in their lives. When we read Dolly Windthorp's exhortation to Silas Marner about church-going, there is more tenderness than humor in the words. "I feel so set up and comfortable as niver was, when I've been and heard the prayers and the singing...... and if a bit o' trouble comes, I feel I can put up with it, for I've looked for help in the right quarter, and if we've done our part, it isn't to be believed as Them as are above us 'ull be worse nor we are, and come short o' Their'n."(1)

A strange philosophy, and yet somehow bringing comfort to her soul and developing her into a sincere, good-hearted woman. The religion of the Dodsons, like their family love, was based on precept and tradition. If their Bibles

(1) Silas Marner, P. 300.
opened more easily at some parts than others, she says, it was because of dried tulip leaves.

All these characters of her early memories are flesh-and-blood realities. Her quiet humor, allied to her keen observation, has exposed the limitations, the shams and the incongruities of life. It has dissected the falseness of society in Middlemarch and sympathised with the dull stupidity of St. Oggs. Although she has ridiculed the stolid gravity of her characters, her humor is never fancical, but a curious mingling of tenderness and amusement. Her humorous vein, tempered by her philosophy, helps her to view the beliefs and instincts of the ignorant peasant people with a desire to appreciate and sympathise. She shows genuine pity for the aspirations of their muddled and limited intellects. In the first group, the humor seems to belong to her entire conception of the character from which it cannot be separated any more readily than from its setting. It illuminates the prosaic, lifting it into the light of interest, and covers the grotesque and the crude with genial sympathy.
CHAPTER V.

The Use of Setting as an Influence upon Character.

There is a final element of interest in the novels of George Eliot that is neither in character, nor in action, but inseparably bound up with both - namely the setting. She has made a very definite use of it in the portrayal of her characters, giving it the power to project its mood into theirs and influence their thoughts and actions. "It is the habit of my imagination," she says, "to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves, as of the character itself." Consequently we find she is not content with the intensive psychological analysis of the mind, but is eager to recognise also the mysterious force of environment. In her early novels the characters and their surroundings are so skilfully fused together that neither is fully comprehensible without the other. Silas could never have existed in any other village than Raveloe, or Adam Bede apart from Hayslope. They are indisputably a product of their environment.

The use of setting has undergone a great variety of changes in fiction, ranging from almost complete insignificance to a definite control of the action. Clayton Hamilton has made an interesting comparison between the evolution of background in painting and fiction. The earliest

frescoes, he says, were all foreground, presented on a blank wall which had no relation to the figures of the story. Then Italian art made an advance upon the Greek, and introduced an artistic background in drapery or landscape which blended in tone with the picture, but in no sense bore any relation to the figures. The third stage brought in a detailed background, like the Dutch genre pictures, representing by it an integral part of the lives of the characters, and lacking it, they lost some of their color and significance. A similar evolution of setting has taken place in fiction. From the early folk tales which were seldom localized, down to the pastoral novels with their conventionalized landscapes, the setting was either vague or artificial and very obviously independent of the theme. When the romantic novelists discovered the possibilities of setting, they ran riot in pages of word-pictures when the harmony between nature and man was sentimentalized and strained to extravagance. In Mrs. Radcliffe's mystery novels, the setting acquired a chameleon-like nature ready to reflect the immediate color of the character's mind. It was against this unnatural use of setting that Ruskin wrote his tirade on the "pathetic fallacy." He made it clear that although man will read into nature's mood his joys and sorrows, nature herself remains the same unemotional and unconscious of man's mind. George Eliot also comments on this point. "If it be true that nature at certain moments seems charged with a presentiment
of one individual lot, must it not also be true that she seems unmindful of another? For there is no hour that has not its births of gladness and despair, no morning brightness that does not bring new sickness to desolation, as well as new forces to genius and love."(1)

In the works of regional writers, like Scott and George Eliot, therefore, the pathetic fallacy has entirely disappeared, and a new and rational attitude towards natural setting is apparent. The setting they choose is a very real part of the life they are depicting. Their peasants have grown up in it; it represents their world and its limitations are theirs. It colors their mind, yet it has little color of its own without their presence. The man and his milieu enter into a living relationship. This milieu or atmosphere is produced, not so much by giving every detail, like the Dutch pictures already mentioned, but by a strict selection of details pervaded by some common quality. For this to be done successfully, the author must possess a very intimate knowledge of the lives of those whom she portrays. Like Thomas Hardy, George Eliot knows her native county thoroughly and makes use of it in the development of character in its subtler aspects, giving true local color and reality to her novels.

(1) Adam Bede, P. 302.
In estimating her use of setting, as an influence upon the characters, there are only four of the novels to be considered, the Mill on the Floss, Adam Bede, Silas Marner and Romola. The plots of the others, being more theoretical, might have been developed anywhere, but these four have each a specific atmosphere of their own and depend upon it for their true significance. The tragic power of the river Floss, the romance of flowering English hedgerows, the fragrance of Mrs. Poyser's diary are all found there. Or again we see the sinister slopes of the Stone Pits and the lonely cottage of the weaver at the edge. Or we are taken back into medieval history, into the gray sunless library of De Bardi, the scholar. In each case, however, we shall see that George Eliot has made a greater use of this medium for fuller character-portrayal than any of her contemporaries attempted to do.

In her early years spent in Warwickshire, she seems to have absorbed the very temper of the landscape, and became keenly sensitive to all its phases. The pictures have remained so real in her mind that she can reproduce them again with extraordinary vividness. She is not yet obsessed by the idea of a moral to be taught; she is merely drawing upon the material of her youth, and describing it with truth and reality. In the opening chapters of "The Mill on the Floss" there is a true lyrical quality. The
river rushing down to the great freight ships, the red-brown sails against the green hedge-rows, and the moist brown earth just turned over, - all are painted in with fresh color in language that is simple and adequate. The whole tone of the book is set by the description of the impetuous river which is to become inevitably woven into the tragedy. It rushes on past the Dorlcote Mills, oblivious of the human joys or sorrows there, a symbol of the great unheed ing world. And then at the end of the picture this ingenious touch of reality occurs - "Ah, my arms are really bemummed, I have been pressing my elbows on the arms of my chair, and dreaming that I was standing on the bridge in front of Dorlcote Mill."

Another characteristic description which seems not only to illuminate the character of Maggie but to foreshadow the tragedy that is to occur is in the chapter on "The Red Deeps." The place is full of awe for her, and yet it holds a wild freedom where she can indulge her vagrant imagination. "It had the charm for her which any broken ground, any mimic rock and ravine, have for the eyes that rest habitually on the level." (1) Maggie's nature, restrained and confined by a false sense of resignation, is easily lured by the charm of the unusual. Here, nature seems to be satisfying her longings, and

(1) Mill on the Floss, Ch. 1, Bk. V, P. 48.
allaying a vague sense of uneasiness and doubt. "She seems to have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch firs at which she is looking as if she loved them well."¹ The Red Deeps, with its ominous cloven tree, seems to be the motive of tragedy in her life, a motive that brings to her the extremes of joy and of pain. The river, too, shares in the tragedy, and as she floats along in the boat with Stephen, its presence seems to break through her consciousness like an overpowering fate in which her will is submerged. The river comes in again at the close of the novel with great dramatic force to reconcile the brother and the sister. They are swept along by a power mightier than themselves, to forget petty differences, and find peace in an act of self-renunciation. There could be no fitter ending for the impetuous Maggie than in the storm swollen waters of the Floss.

In the descriptive passages in the Mill on the Floss, the Round Pool where the children used to fish from the bank of willows, the Ripple where the purple-topped reeds grew, the pond with the pike in it at Garum Firs, and the meadow where the gypsies encamped - in all these George Eliot shows a lightness of touch and a genius for romantic setting which is entirely absent from her later books. In these the dominance of her philosophy, which was repressive

(1) Mill on the Floss, P. 49, Ch. 1, Bk. V.
at the best, has entirely crushed out these pure transcripts of nature, and it is a decided loss to English literature.

The nature setting in *Adam Bede* is more elaborated than in the *Mill on the Floss*. It is fresh and charming, "preserving a piece of that old vanished England, with its scents of the dairy and of the flowery copse at evening, with its pristine housewives and labourers." (1) Every page breathes the free, wholesome air of the broad expanses of the country meadows, where men like Adam grow up close to Nature. She is describing the England of her youth, with its manor houses and its peasants, its generosity and fidelity, its silvan content in the midst of great movements and revolutions. For *Adam Bede* appeared in 1859, the year of the publication of the "Origin of Species" which was to open the way to a newer and wider scientific understanding of the universe. It was written, too, at a time of political unrest when the lower strata of society were urging for a suffrage which the ruling classes averred they could not use. At the same time, however, it is true that there were hundreds of villages like Hayslope, more remote from the storm centres, where life continued its even tenor, undisturbed either by scientific or political questions. At every turn we come upon "some fine old country-seat, crowning the slope, some homestead with its length of barn and its clusters of

golden ricks, some gray steeple looking out from a pretty confusion of trees and thatch and dark-red tiles."

Some of the chapters in *Adam Bede* are almost entirely word pictures, possessing a true poetic quality. We find such rapid brush-strokes as - "the level sunlight lying like transparent gold among the gently curving stems of the feathered grass and the tall, red sorrel." With the scene there often arises a very definite personal atmosphere, so that we feel it is the only setting which would fit the event that is to take place. The best of these is the description of the Feast Day, celebrating the young heir's twenty-first birthday. Everything had been prepared for the entertainment of the tenants, from the shady seats under the trees and the long tables laid out in the old stone cloisters of the ruined abbey, to the gay striped marquees erected in from of the Chase mansion for games. "It was a pretty scene outside the house, the farmers and their families were moving about the lawn, among the flowers and shrubs, or along the broad straight road leading from the east front, where a carpet of mossy grass spread on each side, studded here and there with a dark, flat-boughed cedar or a grand pyramidal fir, sweeping the ground with its branches, all tipped with a fringe of paler green."(1) Thus, by a profusion of such scenes,

(1) *Adam Bede*, P. 17.
George Eliot gives a very definite tone of calm and strength to the background which is reflected in some of her characters. Some times the setting clearly suggests the mood of the scene that ensues. "It was a still afternoon - the golden light was lingering languidly among the upper boughs, only glancing down here and there on the purple pathway and its edge of faintly sprinkled moss - an afternoon in which destiny disguises her cold awful face behind a hazy, radiant veil, encloses us in warm downy wings, and poisons us with a violet-scented breath."(1) George Eliot skilfully works into the story the languorous effects of these scenes upon two temperaments, susceptible to every exterior influence and having no anchor or balance within themselves. "Such young unfurrowed souls roll to meet each other like two velvet peaches that touch softly and are at rest."(2)

In the scene where Hetty appears, the setting is powerfully drawn, exercising a very definite influence over her weaker nature. She is carried away by vague expectations as formless as the sweet languid odors of the garden at The Chase, which had floated past her as she walked by the Gate."(3) Together with the drowsy perfumes of the garden, she feels the hypnotic influence of this carefree, nonchalant young squire. Arthur himself, while

(1) Ibid., P. 133.
(2) Ibid., P. 136.
(3) Ibid., P. 139.
struggling with his passion, seems also super-sensitive to his surroundings. "These beeches and smooth lines - there was something enervating in the very sight of them; but the strong knotted old oaks had no bending languor in them - the sight of them would give a man some energy."(1)

At other times George Eliot uses her nature setting as a direct contrast to the mood of her characters. One chapter opens with a bright windy day in the middle of August, a day which seems to scatter gladness and high hopes. "The sun was hidden for a moment, and then shone out warm again like a recovered joy; the leaves, still green, were tossed off the hedgerow trees by the wind; around the farm houses there was a sound of clapping doors; the apples fell in the orchard; and the stray horses on the green sides of the lanes and on the common had their manes blown about their faces and yet the wind seemed only part of the general gladness."(2) Then, step by step, she proceeds to the discovery about Hetty and the gloom and bitterness of spirit that the news brought to Adam. She succeeds admirably in bringing into striking contrast the brisk hopefulness of the opening scene of the chapter and the black despair at its close.

This contrast between the mood of nature and of man seems to have been deeply impressed upon George Eliot's

(1) Ibid., P. 142.
(2) Ibid., P. 301.
mind. She loves the beauty and joyous freshness of nature, but her own mood becomes easily sad and clouded. She recalls that in a European landscape there is a constant reminder of the pain in life. It may be by the side of a sunny cornfield or in the midst of a stretch of fragrant apple-blossoms, but there is something that reminds her she is not in Loamshire: "The image of a great agony - the agony of the Cross."(1)

But even without this reminder she is conscious of the undertone of sadness. "The sound of the gurgling brook, if you come close to one spot behind a small bush, may be mingled for your ear with a despairing human sob."(2) Having thus prepared the mood of the reader, she goes on to tell of Hetty's lonely journey from Hall Farm, tasting the bitterest of life's bitterness for the first time in her short and thoughtless career.

Throughout the novels there is evidence of a fondness for using the same scene under different circumstances as a kind of silent witness of the human tragedy that is being enacted. In *Adam Bede* she chooses the Hermitage as the scene of different phases of the tragedy, in the same way as the river is introduced in the *Mill on the Floss* and the Stone Pits in *Silas Marner*. It is to the Hermitage, this rustic summer lodge at the edge of the woods of the Chase Estate that Arthur first comes to settle the problem

of his affection for Hetty. There also he has many secret meetings with her, and it is to this place that Adam takes him after the duel in the woods. To Arthur, the Hermitage must hold many memories which rush with still keener poignancy into his mind when he is seated there face to face with Adam's grim indignation. The place itself seems to accuse him, and his complacency is shaken by its mute appeal.

In all this portrayal of setting George Eliot is a true realist. She chooses significant detail, analyses it and draws it into her picture with clear precision. But in her choice of setting, she is both romantic and realistic. We have seen what a profusion of scenic descriptions there are in Adam Bede alone, done with the fresh limpid tints of a water-color, and full of romantic suggestion. But she also loves the commonplace scene, with no romantic glamor, and draws it with sincere fidelity.

"Paint us an angel if you can, with a flouting violet robe, and a face paled by the celestial light; but do not banish from the region of art those old women scaping carrots with their work-worn hands, those rounded backs and stupid, weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade - those homes with their tin-pans, their brown pitchers, their rough jars, and their clusters of onions." (1) She is moved by

(1) Ibid., P. 184.
the commonplace things in life, and sees even in their
drabness a certain glamor.

The description of Mrs. Poyser's kitchen with its
rows of bright pewter on the shelf, its shining tables,
its spotless floor, its bustling maids ironing, spinning
and butter-making all to the sound of an occasional scold­
ing, can tell much about the owner even before we have been
introduced to her. She pictures vividly too the barn scene,
where the great doors are thrown open, and the "whittaws"
are all seated busily mending harness and exchanging the
gossip of the neighbourhood. But the most successful in
the blending of character with setting is the description
of the farmyard. "You might have known it was Sunday if
you had only waked up in the farmyard. The very bull-dog
looked less savage, as if he would have been satisfied with
a smaller bite than usual. The sunshine seemed to call all
things to rest and not to labor; it was asleep itself on
the moss-grown cow-shed; on the group of white ducks nest­
ing together with their bills tucked under their wings; on
Alick, the shepherd, in his new smock-frock, taking an un­
easy siesta, half-sitting, half-­standing on the granary
steps."

George Eliot also makes a specific use of the detail
in the setting by showing its effect upon an overwrought
mind. Hetty is trudging along the road to Stoniton, ex-
haunted with weeping and anxiety, and too timid even to ask a ride from the approaching wagoner, when she notices a little spaniel beside the wheel. "It was only a small white-and-liver colored spaniel which sat on the front ledge of the wagon, with large timid eyes and an incessant trembling in the body." Hetty cared little for animals, but at this moment she felt as if the timid creature had some fellowship with her, and without being aware of the reason, she was less doubtful about speaking to the driver."

The powerful effect of environment upon timidity of character is more fully illustrated in Silas Marner. Silas comes to Raveloe just after his bitter experiences in Lantern Yard, and with the wish to withdraw from human society. He confines himself so closely to his cottage and his loom that he seems to have no confidence apart from them. "Strangely Marner's face and figure shrank and bent themselves into a constant mechanical relation to the objects of his life, so that he produced the same sort of impression as a handle or a crooked tube, which has no meaning standing apart."(2) The solitude of his surroundings grows upon him, until he is almost afraid of the sound of his own voice. His mind loses its power; and in the grip of his surroundings, his life narrows and hardens itself into a mere pulsation of desire and satisfaction in hoarding

(1) Adam Bede, P. 384.
(2) Silas Marner, P. 232.
Finally in Romola, there is an entirely different environment governing the characters. George Eliot has left her native scenery, and gone back to the Florence of the Renaissance. One is astonished at the mass of historical detail that has been gathered for it. George Eliot admits that it was an exceedingly laborious task extending over many years. She began it, she says, as a young woman, and finished it an old woman. Oscar Browning, in his criticism of Romola doubts very much if the accurate observation of Florentine life during her visit of six or seven weeks would be useful in getting the real atmosphere, especially that of some three centuries before. At times the historical setting seems too consciously inserted, and becomes detached from the main plot, which after all deals with a modern man and a modern problem. The success fo Tito's delineation is not in any sense due to the medieval setting. However in the case of Romola and Tessa; they gather their richness of character directly from their background.

The half-reclining siesta of Tessa, in the market-place, the rows of marketable fruit freshly displayed, the brightly colored kerchiefs on the heads and necks of dark, bright-eyed contadinos, the scolding of the obese Mona Lisa— all these are part of the easeful, unthinking life of Tessa. Each day brings its troubles and tears, but nothing more than a prayer and a few quattrini will wipe away. All
this background is vitally important in order to explain Tessa's part in the plot.

Romola, on the other hand, belongs to a class of society at the opposite extreme from Tessa. Her setting is described with long and elaborate detail. In order to know her, we must know Florence of the fifteenth century, and the De Bardi home in particular. Florence is presented in a series of pictures from the lively scenes in Nello's shop, and the Carnival moving uproariously through the streets, to the political quarrels of the Duomo and the learned discussions of the literary pedants. Then the author takes us into the De Bardi library. It is filled with row upon row of Greek and Latin texts with their commentaries and annotations for which De Bardi has given up his whole life. "Here and there, on separate stands in front of the shelves, were placed a beautiful feminine torso; a headless statue, with an uplifted muscular arm wielding a bladeless sword; rounded, dimpled, infantine limbs severed from the trunk, inviting the lips to kiss the cold marble; some well preserved Roman busts; and two or three vases from Magna Graecia. A large table in the centre was covered with antique bronze lamps and small vessels in dark pottery. The color of these objects was chiefly pale or sombre; the vellum bindings, with their deep-ridged backs, gave little relief to the marble, livid with long burial; the once splendid patch of carpet"
at the farther end of the room had long been worn to dimness; the dark bronzes wanted sunlight upon them to bring out their tinge of green, and the sun was not yet high enough to send gleams of brightness through the narrow windows that looked on the Via de Bardi. 

(1) Nothing more need be said about her accuracy of description. The whole picture, tells much of the character of De Bardi and his daughter before they are revealed to us. His love of the ancients, of their art and literature, his family pride and severe discipline of mind are all imperceptibly conveyed in the "atmosphere" of the room. The fact, also that there are no signs of a feminine touch in the room shows the complete mastery of his will over that of his daughter.

It is apparent, therefore, in reviewing the early novels from the standpoint of their setting that George Eliot is much more than a psychological novelist. It is true that she is interested in the workings of the mind, but she is also keenly aware of the subtle influence of the setting upon her character. The defects of her historical setting being admitted, she is unsurpassed in the successful weaving of a setting into the texture of her novel so that the characters are explained and enriched by it, gathering from its tone greater significance and reality.

(1) Romola, P. 51.
CHAPTER VI.
Concluding Estimate of George Eliot's
Contribution to Fiction.

In the preceding chapters we have studied George Eliot's method of character-analysis as it is developed by her philosophy, her humor and her use of setting. It now remains to gather up what she has accomplished in the interpretation of human nature and estimate what specific contributions she has made to fiction. The aim of fiction, as she expressed it in her essays, is "to give imaginative expression to actual experience." There are really three processes involved in it. The novelist must first gather his material by the accurate observation of facts in the same manner as the scientist. Having systematized his facts, he then proceeds to study them in the light of his experience, comparing and correlating them until he is able to build up a structure of belief—a philosophic theory. The third step is the true test of the author's genius. It consists in the presentation of his philosophy in such a way that it will illustrate concretely the truths which he has discovered. These scientific, philosophic and artistic elements are to be found to a greater or less degree in every novel, and the author who comes nearest to blending all three gives the finest representation of truth.
How then does George Eliot work out these three processes in her character studies? She gathers her material by a keen observation of the actual facts of experience, as evidenced by the biographical nature of *Adam Bede*, *Mill on the Floss* and *Scenes from Clerical Life*. Her natural curiosity has deepened her interest in the most commonplace things of life, so that nothing is too prosaic for her consideration. She deplores the portrayal of "lofty and fashionable society" with which the author is not always familiar, and encourages the use of what is simple, natural and unaffected for literary material.

"You would gain unspeakably," she says in the beginning of *Amos Barton*, "if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull grey eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones." The finest art must have its basis in experience, she insists, and must be an expression of reality. But how does her work measure up, if judged by her own standard? That the early novels are the result of actual experience, there is no question, but in *Felix Holt* and *Deronda* and to a great extent in *Romola*, the reader looks in vain for this element. She has derived her material for these from an entirely different source, and they are

(2) *Scenes of Clerical Life*, p. 45.
based on her philosophy rather than on actual experience. In the material for her early books, she has kept close to her theory of the novel, and covers only the narrow section of society which she actually knows and understands. Her delineation of peasant and village life is amongst the finest in our literature, because although she has not a wide range actually in view, she is aware of its wider relations. "We are on a petty stage," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "but not in a stifling atmosphere." (1)

In the correlation of these facts of experience with her acquired knowledge, George Eliot develops her philosophy. She has adopted positivism and the scientific belief in evolution as a definite reaction against the excesses of idealism. She brings into prominence those facts of life which idealism had neglected. Idealism had exaggerated the capacity and potentialities of man for individual achievement, it was for positivism to stress the other side of life, and emphasize the inevitable laws of evolution by which man is restrained by the past and responsible for the future. She stresses the moral value of conduct and rightly so, but in the emphasis which she puts upon it, she completely ignores any other values in life. That control of human actions is necessary is unquestioned, but that it is the only consideration of life

is an impossible postulate. There is a suppressed attack upon individualism all through the novels of George Eliot, and unfortunately the development of her characters does not convince one of the soundness of her theory. She individualizes Maggie and Romola only to show in the end how their individuality is warring against their happiness. Their only salvation seems to be in the surrender of their own personality for the sake of the greater good. Romola made it clear to Savonarola that she was leaving Tito's household, not to seek her own pleasure, but to break a meaningless bond, and find some work in which she could give fuller expression to her own personality and leave her best to the world. The ascetic bids her perform her Duty, even if it is an empty form. As a result of this theory of renunciation, she makes life hard, sad and full of constraint.

Arising out of her belief in renunciation is the doctrine of humanitarianism which becomes the ruling passion of George Eliot's life. Her theory is that only by the sacrifice of the individual will humanity rise to its greatest perfection. All history, she points out, is built up on renunciation of the individual. Much of our history is, but it is also built upon the individual achievements of great minds. The greatest ages of progress have been those in which the individual mind asserted itself and gathered vigor and energy for its task. George
Eliot holds, however, that social progress will come, not from the individual who strives for "rights," but from the masses who are learning to submerge their own interest in that of their fellow-men. The fact remains that social progress is not achieved in that way. Consequently the theme upon which Felix Holt is based is entirely impractical, and Felix Holt himself, instead of being a living "radical" with a conviction, is merely a thesis.

Renunciation, then, is capable of shaping character to a certain extent. It teaches courage and stoicism, but it does not develop the individual powers of virility and personal confidence. It is such a biased view of life as this of George Eliot that Matthew Arnold attacks in Culture and Anarchy. He admits that "Hesbroidism" has great moral value in controlling and moulding character, but he also asserts that "Hellenism" is being neglected, whereby the individual learns the possibilities of his own nature, and by culture develops them to their fullest significance. "For it a part of ourselves raises us to abnegation and virtue," says Taine, "another part leads us to enjoyment and pleasure."

Another limiting influence upon her philosophy is her agnosticism which is the direct result of her positivist theory. She stands in contrast to the other radical thinkers of her time. Carlyle, Ruskin and Browning, although

they adopted the scientific theory of the day, believed in a spiritual realm environing man from which he drew inspiration. Arnold believed in a "tendency not our own which makes for righteousness." George Eliot does not believe in such a tendency except in the mind of man. The spiritual force of life is subjective, she says, and is therefore limited by man's capacity. Therefore, although her novels are powerful, they lack the inspiration which a belief in the spiritual would give them. It is merely the human side of religion which interests her, its moral influence, and its power to sympathize and to comfort. In the Mill on the Floss she defines it as "that knowledge of the irreversible laws within and without the mind, which, governing the habits, becomes morality, and developing the feelings of submission and dependence, becomes religion."(1)

So much for her philosophy of life, its strength and its limitations. The ultimate estimate of the author depends on the artistic presentation of it. In fiction we find two methods of revealing the truth of human life as the author has conceived of it. The romanticist looks forward from his conception of life towards an adequate means of presenting it. Taking his philosophy as a basis, he creates characters to fit into it and by their actions illustrate its truth. There is no process of development

(1) Mill on the Floss, Bk. 4, Ch. III., P. 306.
in the mental attitude of his characters to life. He works by deduction from the general truths to particular facts. Stevenson illustrates this method in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as Thackeray does in Vanity Fair. The other method, adopted by the realist, develops by induction from the particular to the general truth. The difference between the two methods is at once apparent. Both realist and romanticist arrive by the same method at their philosophy, but while the romanticist is interested primarily in the artistic presentation of it, the realist centres his interest upon the process by which he arrived at the conception. Consequently in his presentation, he traces his characters through a series of imaginary events, showing their mental developments and reactions. The character is no longer static. The author is proving his theory as he proceeds, so that from a body of particular facts he draws general truths. This is obviously George Eliot's method and has been used by Hardy and Conrad of our day with signal success.

In her first four books, George Eliot shows her artistic qualities in producing a transcript of life which has the impress of reality. She has the faculty of piercing to the truth under the surface of facts, and reconstructing her picture of life so that it will clearly reveal her meaning. The art of the novelist lies not in reproducing facts only, for some facts are contrary to universal truths.
He must create the illusion, so that the situation which he chooses to reveal his theme will have the air of reality. In this George Eliot has admirably succeeded in her early novels, working into their moral texture the fundamental ideas of her philosophy. *Romola* and *Middlemarch* lack this reality to some extent and show a decided change of method. When we come finally to *Felix Holt* and *Deronda* there is evidence of a distinct falling away from artistic expression. She has reproduced the "improbable possible" which does not bear the stamp of truth. She is absorbed and carried away by her theory which she is incapable of blending with the facts of experience and recasting in a form that has the semblance of truth. She frequently leaves *Deronda* and *Felix Holt* helplessly waiting on the stage, while she herself comes forward to state her beliefs empirically. Because of this weakness, her later books are unsuccessful in their appeal and lack any lasting qualities.

In the final analysis, the greatest test of an author's ability is in the independence of his characters. If they are drawn to the life, they will stand out as clear-cut actual people who live and act in accordance with the inherent qualities of their nature. By the force of their personality, they will be able to work out their own plot independently and inevitably. *Adam Bede* is of this type, *Mrs. Poyser*, and *Maggie*, besides
numbers of minor characters in all the novels. But Lydgate
is not so definite. He waits for the author to suggest
his actions. Felix Holt has no warmth of personality,
no independance of action, and is utterly untrue to his
character as a "radical." It is impossible to picture
Deronda as anything more tangible than a "tendancy which
makes for altruism."

Yet with all these later limitations to her art,
George Eliot stands as a landmark in the history of the
novel in the nineteenth century, and the power of her
genius will inevitably be felt by all who read her early
books and study her life. Never before has she been
more adequately or more sympathetically described than
in the words of Swinburne's sonnet:

"One whose eye could smite the might in sunder,
Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
And found in love and loving kindness light.
Duty divine and thought with eyes of fire
Still following Righteousness with deep desire
Shone sole and stern before her and above
Sure stars and sole to steer by; but more sweet
Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,
The light of little children, and their love."
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