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## George Eliot, One Hundred Years After

Marian Evans, Pseudonym George Eliot Was Born At Arbury Farm, Warwickshire, England, November 22, 1819 and Died At Chelsea, London, December 22, 1880.

By GEORGE SEIBEL

THE most remarkable thing about the approaching centenary of George Eliot's birth is the change that has come in the status of woman all over the world since the author of "Adam Bede" was considered advanced and radical. In nearly every country woman has been enfranchised and wields the ballot like her brothers. Ellen Key and Emma Goldman would no doubt consider Marian Evans a poor, timid little conservative, if not a downright reactionary. What a difference is made by a hundred years!

When Marian Evans was born, the daughter of a Welsh carpenter, in Shakespeare's shire of Warwick, Napoleon was still the master of Europe and the redly reflected memories of the French Revolution had made respectable men into hidebound Tories. Her father used to utter the word "Government" in a tone of reverence that made it a part of the daughter's religion. It must have been a strong mind that could in time dissolve this spell sufficiently to cultivate the friendship of Herbert Spencer, to translate Strauss' terrible "Life of Jesus," to glorify as a fiction hero, "Felix Holt the Radical," and to disregard the marriage bond even with a substantial philosopher like George Henry Lewes.

Most Popular English Woman Novelist

George Eliot—the name was assumed in 1857, when the "Scenes of Clerical Life" were appearing in "Blackwoods" Magazine—may have been inspired by the pen-name of the equally unconventional French-woman known as George Sand, or may have chosen her pseudonym as a tribute to Lewes. At any rate, she has made the name immortal, and though it is more fashionable now to praise Jane Austen, and though Charlotte Brontë may have a more select circle of admirers, and though Mary Robetta Rinehart may have more readers than all three of them, George Eliot is the most popular and the most securely established among English women novelists.

It is generally known that Maggie Tulliver, in "The Mill on the Floss,"



George Eliot Born November 22, 1819 After Rajon's Etching



Griff House, George Eliot's First Home

if her life did not exactly square with Mrs. Grundy's most inexorable rule. It was because her own reason deliberately chose a different standard. But that was all so long ago—the rule has been bent and curved and lost to sight so often since—that biographers now hardly bother to apologize.

What we are chiefly interested in is the fact that George Henry Lewes, author of the "Biographical History of Philosophy," led her into attempting fiction. As the assistant editor of the "Westminster Review," she had shown very little partiality toward this pursuit for her sex. In an article on "Silly Novels," by Lady Novelists, she had even satirized the feminine scribblers.

"These," she wrote, "consist of the frothy, the proxy, the pious, or the pedantic. But it is a mixture of all these—a composite order of feminine fatuity—that produces the largest class of such novels, which we shall distinguish as the 'mind and millinery' species. We had imagined that destitute women turned novelists, as they turned governesses, because they had the other 'ladjike' means of getting their bread. Empty writing was excused by an empty stomach, and twaddle was consecrated by tears. . . . It is clear that they write in elegant bouillottes, with violet-colored ink and a ruby pen; that they must be entirely indifferent to publishers' accounts and inexperienced in every form of poverty except poverty of brains."



Savonarola's Cell in Florence, Visited by all Admirers of "Romola"

Her First Novel

Lewes himself had tried every form of literature, besides acting Shylock. One day, after returning from the continent with George Eliot, an idea struck him. "My dear," he said, "I think you could write a capital story." Some time after that, he was going out to a dinner-party, when she said: "I won't go out this evening, and when you come in don't disturb me. I shall be very busy." That was the beginning of "Scenes of Clerical Life."

"Adam Bede" was written in 1847. She began "The Mill on the Floss" in 1852. "Silas Marner" was written in 1840 and 1841. Late in that year she started "Romola," finished in 1862. "Felix Holt" followed in 1865 and 1866. "Middlemarch" filled up the years from 1869 to 1872. In 1875 she was at work on "Daniel Deronda," the last of her great novels. George Henry Lewes died in 1878. She wrote no more.

Perhaps George Eliot seems a bit old-fashioned nowadays. But the great French critic Ferdinand Brunetiere called her the founder of naturalism in English literature. And Henry James thought "Romola" on the whole the finest thing she wrote. Now it is precisely the people who pretend to admire Henry James, who pretend

to despise "Romola." It is a literary snobbishness on a par with that which turns up its nose at Dickens, accuses Thackeray of preaching, and considers Sir Walter Scott as a landscape gardener.

A phrenologist—Lewes believed in phrenology, and even introduced it into his history of philosophy—once pointed out the striking similarity of shape between George Eliot's head and that of Savonarola, the real hero of her "Romola." The similarity was not merely external nor accidental. She had something of the great friar's ethical fervor. But she also had his plainness of visage. One could almost have applied to her what she once said of a very plain acquaintance: "He has the most dreadful kind of ugliness one can be afflicted with, because it takes on the semblance of beauty."

Her Marriage

Even so her serious intellectual bent took on an aspect of ethical idealism. She is the novelist of the conscience. Her nearest relative in the literary world is Nathaniel Hawthorne. As he was essentially Catholic, so she was essentially as Methodist as Dinah Morris. It was one of the ironies of her life that she should produce the

most moral of books while offering open defiance to the most rigorous of social laws. And this irony was crowned by another, in the last year of her life; when she married John Walter Cross, with due rite and ceremony, after the death of Lewes, she was criticised more for this than for her previous action.

She was married to Cross in May of 1880, and she died in December of the same year. During the years that have passed since, nearly forty, her fame has not grown higher, but it has undoubtedly rooted deeper.

A Good Housewife

With all her learning and all her philosophy, she was a very human person and an admirable housewife. Laurence Hutton used to possess a letter from the historian John Fiske, telling of a visit to the home of the Lewesses, in St. John's Wood, London, where he found the famous novelist sitting on the floor, with hammer in hand and a mouthful of tacks, putting down the dining-room carpet. Fiske had a long talk with her, and afterward wrote that he "could see no reason in the world why she shouldn't have her photograph circulated about. She isn't a blooming beauty, but she is not particularly homely." Since, according to Douglas Jerrold, Lewes was the ugliest man in London, she may have seemed beautiful by contrast.

Perhaps her greatest handicap as a novelist was her profound knowledge of many abstruse things. She could dispute about molecules with Thomson, but a friend of many years once declared that she had never been heard to make a humorous remark. How she could have created Mrs. Poyser, in her way as amusing as Pickwick himself, is a profound mystery. But equally unfathomable was her capacity to understand and unravel such superficial souls as Holly Sorrel and Rosamond Vincy. Perhaps it was done by inversion of her own personality. That personality was a composite of many precious qualities—and in this centennial year her own lines of poetry, inscribed on her gravestone in Highgate Cemetery, fit few other writers so well:

"O may I join the choir invisible Of those immortal dead who live again In minds made better by their presence: live In pulses stirred to generosity, In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn For miserable aims that end with self, In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars, And with their mild persistence urge man's search To vaster issues."

Jones' Falls Jottings.

Jones' Falls, Nov. 17.—Born to Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Baxter, a son, on November 15th. George Wheeler is spending a few days helping ducks in this locality. Gus Jardine and daughter, Thelma, of Battersea, at C. Hutchings'; Miss Florence Graham, of Newboro, at B. Burtch's.

Millard Simpson spent Monday with his brother, Herbert Simpson, at Newboro. Lloyd Baxter, Ellen Baxter and Rattie Gamble spent one day last week with friends in Kingston. Mr. and Mrs. Percy Kennedy and daughter at A. Gamble's; Miss Madeline Wiaz, of Lyndhurst, at J. Glover's; Mrs. Charles Peet, of Phillips-

ville, at Albert Gamble's; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Glover and daughter, Mary, at A. Brown's, Leeds; Mr. and Mrs. William Hutchings at Edward Nicholson's, Seely's Bay, on Sunday last. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Baxter are spending a few days with their son, Jason Baxter, Glen Buel. Mrs. Lotan Burtch has returned

home after spending the past week with her mother, Mrs. R. Simpson. Mr. and Mrs. James White visited at Edwin White's, Superior, on Sunday last. L. Booth, Brockville, at L. Burtch's. Mr. and Mrs. Edward Andrews, of Keelerville, at J. White's. Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Dier and Mrs. Charles Hutchings motored to Gas-

anoque one day last week. Mrs. R. Simpson at Seymour Baxter's, Robert McGuire and sister Maggie, spent Sunday with friends at Keelerville. Joseph Kenney is unloading a carload of apples and grain at Elgin station. Who lost a cap on Dwyre's Hill, Elgin, on Sunday evening, November the ninth?

At Chaffey's Locks.

Chaffey's Lock, Nov. 19.—The duck hunters are having good shooting and bagging a number of ducks. The farmers are taking advantage of mild weather by finishing ploughing. A number from here attended the social at Elgin. Mr. Matthews left for Winnipeg on Tuesday last

to spend the winter. Mrs. Fleming is visiting friends in Kingston. The C.N.O. are having a large staff of men employed on the track between Perth Road and this station, improving the roads.

Absence of dough is apt to make bakers crusty.