

GEORGE WILLIS COOKE



GEORGE ELIOT

A CRITICAL STUDY OF HER LIFE,
WRITINGS & PHILOSOPHY

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Writings & Philosophy*

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

The publication of a new edition of this work permits me to say that the essay on "The Lady Novelists," quoted in the seventh chapter, was written by George Henry Lewes. Its opinions, however, are substantially those of George Eliot, and they will be found in harmony with her own words. Confessing to the error, I yet venture to let the quotations, and the comments on them, stand as at first made. The three poems mentioned on page 75, were among the latest of the productions of George Eliot's pen.

It has been suggested to me that I have not done perfect justice to George Henry Lewes, especially in what I say of his books on the Spanish drama and the life of Goethe. I have carefully reconsidered what I wrote of him, and find no occasion for any change of judgment, though two or three words might properly give place to others of a more appreciative meaning.

My book has met with much greater praise than I could have expected. Its errors, I have no doubt, are quite numerous enough; and yet I venture to think the main thought of the book is correct.

I. EARLY LIFE.

The poet and the novelist write largely out of personal experience, and must give expression to the effects of their own history. What they have seen and felt, gives shape and tone to what they write; that which is nearest their own hearts is poured forth in their books. To ignore these influences is to overlook a better part of what they write, and is often to lose the explanation of many features of their work. Shakespeare is one of those who are of no time or place, whose words gain no added meaning in view of what he was and how he lived; but it is not so with a great number of the best and most inspiring writers. The era in which they lived, the intellectual surroundings afforded them by their country and generation, the subtle phases of sentiment and aspiration of their immediate time and place, are all essential to a true appreciation of their books. It is so of Goethe, Byron, Shelley, Hugo, Wordsworth, Emerson, and how many more!

As we must know the eighteenth century in its social spirit, literary tendencies, revolutionary aims, romantic aspirations, philosophy and science, to know Goethe, so must we know the nineteenth century in its scientific attainments, agnostic philosophy, realistic spirit and humanitarian aims, in order to know George Eliot. She is a product of her time, as Lessing, Goethe, Wordsworth and Byron were of theirs; a voice to utter its purpose and meaning, as well as a trumpet-call to lead it on. As Goethe came after Lessing, Herder and Kant, so George Eliot came after Comte, Mill and Spencer. Her books are to be read in the light of their speculations, and she embodied in literary forms what they uttered as science or philosophy.

Not only is a poet's mind affected by the tone of thought about him, but his personal experiences and surroundings are likely to have a large influence on what he writes. Scott was deeply affected by the romantic atmosphere of his native land. Her birthplace and youthful surroundings had a like effect on George Eliot. The Midland home, the plain village life, the humble, toiling country folk, shaped for her the scenes and characters about which she was to write. Some knowledge of her early home and the influences amidst which her mind was formed, help largely to an appreciation of her books and the views of life which she presents in them.

The Midland region of England she has pictured with something of that accuracy with which Scott described the Border. It is a country of historic memories. Nearby her childhood home was the forest of Arden and Astly Castle, the home of Sir John Grey, whose widow, Elizabeth Woodville, became the queen of Edward IV. This was also one of the homes of Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, who was found in a hollow tree nearby after his rebellion; and the home, likewise, of his daughter, Lady Jane Grey. In another direction was Bosworth Field; and within twenty miles was Stratford-upon-Avon. The ancient city of Coventry was not far distant. It was not these historic regions which attracted her, however, so much as the pleasant country, the common people, the quiet villages. With observant eyes she saw the world about her as it was and she entered into the heart of its life, and has painted it for us in a most sympathetic, appreciative spirit. The simple, homely, unromantic life of middle England she has made immortal with her wit, her satire, her fine description, and her keen love of all that is human. She herself recognized the importance of her early surroundings. In one of her letters she used these words:

It is interesting, I think, to know whether a writer was born in a central or border district—a condition which always has a strongly determining influence. I was born in

Warwickshire, but certain family traditions connected with more northerly districts made these districts a region of poetry to me in my early childhood. I was brought up in the Church of England, and have never joined any other religious society, but I have had close acquaintance with many Dissenters of various sects, from Calvinistic Anabaptists to Unitarians.

The influence of the surroundings of childhood upon character she has more than once touched upon in her books. In the second chapter of 'Theophrastus Such', she says,-

I cherish my childish loves-the memory of that warm little nest where my affections were fledged.

In the same essay she says,-

Our Midland plains have never lost their familiar expression and conservative spirit for me.

In 'Daniel Deronda' she most tenderly expresses the same deep conviction concerning the soul's need of anchorage in some familiar and inspiring scene, with which the memories of childhood may be delightfully associated. Her own fond recollections lent force to whatever philosophical significance such a theory may have had for her.

A human life should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labors men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that home a familiar, unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge; a spot where the definiteness of early knowledge may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbors, even to the dogs and monkeys, may spread, not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood.

Mary Ann Evans was born at South Farm, a mile from Griff, in the parish of Colton, Warwickshire, England, November 22, 1819. In after years she adopted the abbreviated form of her name, and was known by her friends as Marian. When she was six months old the family

moved to Griff House, which was situated half-way between Bedworth, a mining village, and the manufacturing town of Nuneaton. In approaching Griff from Nuneaton, a little valley, known as Griff Hollows, is passed, much resembling the "Red Deeps" of 'The Mill on the Floss'. On the right, a little beyond, is Griff House, a comfortable and substantial dwelling surrounded by pleasant gardens and lawns.

Robert Evans, her father, was born at Ellaston, Staffordshire, of a substantial family of mechanics and craftsmen. He was of massive build, tall, wide-shouldered and strong, and his features were of a marked, emphatic cast. He began life as a master carpenter, then became a forester, and finally a land agent. He was induced to settle in Warwickshire by Sir Roger Newdigate, his principal employer, and for the remainder of his life he had charge of five large estates in the neighborhood. In this employment he was successful, being respected and trusted to the fullest extent by his employers, his name becoming a synonym for trustworthiness. Marian many times sketched the main traits of her father's character, as in the love of perfect work in "Stradivarius." He had Adam Bede's stalwart figure and robust manhood. Caleb Garth, in 'Middlemarch', is in many ways a fine portrait of him as to the nature of his employment, his delight in the soil, and his honest, rugged character.

Caleb was wont to say that "it's a fine thing to have the chance of getting a bit of the country into good fettle, and putting men into the right way with their farming, and getting a bit of good contriving and solid building done—that those who are living and those who come after will be the better for. I'd sooner have it than a fortune. I hold it the most honorable work that is." Robert Evans, like Caleb Garth, "while faithfully serving his employers enjoyed great popularity among their tenants. He was gentle but of indomitable firmness; and while stern to the idle and unthrifty, he did not press heavily on those who might be

behindhand with their rent, owing to ill luck or misfortune, on quarter days."

While still living in Staffordshire, Robert Evans lost his first wife, by whom he had a son and a daughter. His second wife, the mother of Marian, was a Miss Pearson, a gentle, loving woman, and a notable housewife. She is described in the Mrs. Hackit of "Amos Barton," whose industry, sharp tongue, epigrammatic speech and marked character were taken from life. Something of Mrs. Poyser also entered into her nature. She had three children, Christiana, Isaac and Mary Ann. The house at Griff was situated in a rich landscape, and was a large, commodious farm-house of red brick, ivy-covered, and of two stories' height. At the back was a large garden, and a farm-yard with barns and sheds.

In the series of sonnets entitled "Brother and Sister," Marian has given some account of her early life. She had the attachment there described for her brother Isaac, and followed him about with the same persistence and affection. The whole of that poem is autobiographical. The account of the mother gives a delightful glimpse into Marian's child-life:

*Our mother bade us keep the trodden ways,
Stroked down my tippet, set my brother's frill,
Then with the benediction of her gaze
Clung to us lessening, and pursued us still
Across the homestead to the rookery elms,
Whose tall old trunks had each a grassy mound,
So rich for us, we counted them as realms
With varied products.*

The early life of Marian Evans has, in many features of it, been very fully described in the story of Maggie Tulliver. How far her own life is that of Maggie may be seen by comparing the earlier chapters in 'The Mill on the Floss' with the "Brother and Sister." The incident described in the poem, of her brother leaving her in charge of the fishing-rod, is repeated in all its main features in the experiences

of Maggie. In the poem she describes an encounter with a gipsy, which again recalls Maggie's encounter with some persons of that race. The whole account of her childhood life with her brother, her trust in him, their delight in the common pleasures of childhood, and the impression made on her by the beauties of nature, reappears in striking similarity in the description of the child-life of Maggie and Tom. These elements of her early experience and observation of life have been well described by one who knew her personally. This person says that "Maggie Tulliver's childhood is clearly full of the most accurate personal recollections."

Marian Evans very early became an enthusiastic reader of the best books. In an almanac she found a portion of one of the essays of Charles Lamb, and remembered reading it with great delight. In her seventh year a copy of 'Waverley' was loaned to her older sister. She became herself intensely fascinated by it, and when it was returned before she had completed it she was thrown into much distress. The story so possessed her that she began to complete it in writing, according to her own conception. When this was discovered, the book was again secured for her perusal. This incident she has described in a sonnet, which appears as the motto to the fifty-seventh chapter of 'Middlemarch'.

*They numbered scarce eight summers when a name
Rose on their souls and stirred such motions there
As thrill the buds and shape their hidden frame
At penetration of the quickening air:
His name who told of loyal Evan Dhu,
Of quaint Bradwardine, and Vich Ian Vor,
Making the little world their childhood knew
Large with a land of mountain, lake and scaur,
And larger yet with wonder, love, belief,
Toward Walter Scott, who living far away
Sent them this wealth of joy and noble grief.
The book and they must part, but day by day,
In lines that thwart like portly spiders ran,*

They wrote the tale, from Tully Veolan.

Not only was she a great reader, but she was also a diligent and even a precocious student, learning easily and rapidly whatever she undertook to acquire in the way of knowledge.

She was first sent, with her brother Isaac, to a free school in the village of Griff. Among her mates was William Jacques, the original of Bob Jakins in 'The Mill on the Floss'. When seven years old she went to a girls' school at Nuneaton. Her schoolmates describe her as being then a "quiet, reserved girl, with strongly lined, almost masculine features, and a profusion of light hair worn in curls round her head." The abundance of her curling hair caused her much trouble, and she once cut it off, as Maggie Tulliver did, because it would not "lie straight." "One of her school-fellows," we are told, "recalls that the first time she sat down to the piano she astonished her companions by the knowledge of music she had already acquired. She mastered her lessons with an ease which excited wonder. She read with avidity. She joined very rarely in the sports of her companions, and her diffidence and shrinking sensibility prevented her from forming any close friendship among her school-fellows. When she stood up in the class, her features, heavy in repose, were lighted by eager excitement, which found further vent in nervous movements of her hands. At this school Marian was well taught in English, with drawing, music, and some little French."

Leaving this school at the age of twelve, she went to that of the Misses Franklin in Coventry, a large town a few miles distant. To the careful training received there she was much indebted, and in after years often spoke of it with the heartiest appreciation. One of her friends, Edith Simcox, has given an account of this school and of Marian's studies there. "Almost on the outskirts of the old town of Coventry, towards the railway station, the house may still be seen, itself an old-fashioned five-windowed, Queen Anne sort of

dwelling, with a shell-shaped cornice over the door, with an old timbered cottage facing it, and near adjoining a quaint brick and timber building, with an oriel window thrown out upon oak pillars. Between forty and fifty years ago, Methodist ladies kept the school, and the name of 'little mamma,' given by her school-fellows, is a proof that already something was to be seen of the maternal air which characterized her in later years, and perhaps more especially in intercourse with her own sex. Prayer meetings were in vogue among the girls, following the example of their elders; and while taking, no doubt, a leading part in them, she used to suffer much self-reproach about her coldness and inability to be carried away with the same enthusiasm as others. At the same time, nothing was farther from her nature than any skeptical inclination, and she used to pounce with avidity upon any approach to argumentative theology within her reach, carrying Paley's 'Evidences' up to her bedroom, and devouring it as she lay upon the floor alone."

During the three years Marian attended this school she held aloof from the other pupils, was grave and womanly in her deportment. She acquired Miss Rebecca Franklin's slow and precise method of speaking, and to her diligent training owed her life-long habit of giving a finished completeness to all her sentences. It seems that her imagination was alive at this time, and being slowly cultivated. She was in the habit of scribbling verses in her books and elsewhere.

A fellow-pupil during the time she was a member of this boarding-school has given these reminiscences of Marian's life there: "She learned everything with ease," says this person, "but was passionately devoted to music, and became thoroughly accomplished as a pianist. Her masters always brought the most difficult solos for her to play in public, and everywhere said she might make a performer equal to any then upon the concert stage. She was keenly susceptible to what she thought her lack of personal

beauty, frequently saying that she was not pleased with a single feature of her face or figure. She was not especially noted as a writer, but so uncommon was her intellectual power that we all thought her capable of any effort; and so great was the charm of her conversation, that there was continual strife among the girls as to which of them should walk with her. The teachers had to settle it by making it depend upon alphabetical succession."

Leaving the school in Coventry at the age of fifteen, Marian continued her studies at home. The year following, her mother died; and this event, as she afterwards said, first made her acquainted with "the unspeakable grief of a last parting." Soon after, her older sister and her brother were married and left home. She alone remained with her father, and was for several years his housekeeper. "He offered to get a housekeeper," says Miss Blind, "as not the house only, but farm matters had to be looked after, and he was always tenderly considerate of 'the little wench,' as he called her. But his daughter preferred taking the whole management of the place into her own hands, and she was as conscientious and diligent in the discharge of her domestic duties as in the prosecution of the studies she carried on at the same time." Her experiences at this period have been made use of in more than one of her characters. The dairy scenes in 'Adam Bede' are so perfectly realistic because she was familiar with all the processes of butter and cheese making.

In 1841 her father gave up his business to his son and moved to Foleshill, one mile from Coventry. A pleasant house and surroundings made the new home, and her habits of thought and life became more exact and fastidious. The frequent absence of her father gave her much time for reading, which she eagerly improved. Books were more accessible, though her own library was a good one.

She zealously began and carried on a systematic course of studies, such as gave her the most thorough results of

culture. She took up Latin and Greek with the head master of the Coventry grammar-school, and became familiar with the classic literatures. French, German and Italian were read in all the master-pieces of those languages. The Old Testament was also studied in the original; at the same time she became a proficient player on the piano, and obtained a thorough knowledge of music. During several years of quiet and continuous study she laid the foundations of that accurate and wide-reaching knowledge which was so notable a feature of her life and work. It was a careful, systematic knowledge she acquired, such as entitled her to rank as an educated person in the fullest sense. Her painstaking thoroughness, and her energetic application, were as remarkable at this time as in later years. Her knowledge was mainly self-acquired, but it was in no sense superficial. It is difficult to see in what way it could have been improved, even if the universities had been open to her.

Her life and her studies at Coventry have been well described by one who knew her. We are told that "in this somewhat more populous neighborhood she soon became known as a person of more than common interest, and, moreover, as a most devoted daughter and the excellent manager of her father's household. There was perhaps little at first sight which betokened genius in that quiet gentlemanly girl, with pale grave face, naturally pensive in expression: and ordinary acquaintances regarded her chiefly for the kindness and sympathy that were never wanting to any. But to those with whom, by some unspoken affinity, her soul could expand, her expressive gray eyes would light up with intense meaning and humor, and the low, sweet voice, with its peculiar mannerism of speaking—which by the way wore off in after years—would give utterance to thoughts so rich and singular that converse with Miss Evans, even in those days, made speech with other people seem flat and common. Miss Evans was an exemplification of the fact that a great genius is not an

exceptional, capricious product of nature, but a thing of slow, laborious growth, the fruit of industry and the general culture of the faculties. At Foleshill, with ample means and leisure, her real education began. She acquired French, German and Italian from Signor Brezzi. An acquaintance with Hebrew was the result of her own unaided efforts. From Mr. Simms, the veteran organist of St. Michaels, Coventry, she received lessons in music, although it was her own fine musical sense which made her in after years an admirable pianoforte player. Nothing once learned escaped her marvelous memory; and her keen sympathy with all human feelings, in which lay the secret of her power of discriminating character, caused a constant fund of knowledge to flow into her treasure-house from the social world about her."

Marian Evans early showed an unusual interest in religious subjects. Her parents belonged to the Established Church, while other members of the family were zealous Methodists. Religion was a subject which occupied much of their attention, and several of them were engaged in one way and another in its inculcation. Marian was an attentive listener to the sermons preached in the parish church, and at the age of twelve was teaching in a Sunday school held in a cottage near her father's house. Up to the age of eighteen she was a most devoted believer in Christianity, and her zeal was so great that Evangelicalism came to represent her mode of thought and feeling. She was a somewhat rigid Calvinist and full of pious enthusiasm. After her removal to Coventry, where her reading was of a wider range and her circle of friends increased, doubts gradually sprang up in her mind. In a letter written to Miss Sara Hennell she gave a brief account of her religious experiences at this period. In it she described an aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Evans, who was a Methodist preacher, and the original of Dinah Morris in 'Adam Bede'.

There was hardly any intercourse between my father's family, resident in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, and our

family-few and far-between visits of (to my childish feeling) strange uncles and aunts and cousins from my father's far-off native country, and once a journey of my own, as a little child, with my father and mother, to see my uncle William (a rich builder) in Staffordshire-but 'not' my uncle and aunt Samuel, so far as I can recall the dim outline of things-are what I remember of northerly relatives in my childhood.

But when I was seventeen or more-after my sister was married and I was mistress of the house-my father took a journey into Derbyshire, in which, visiting my uncle and aunt Samuel, who were very poor, and lived in a humble cottage at Wirksworth, he found my aunt in a very delicate state of health after a serious illness, and, to do her bodily good, he persuaded her to return with him, telling her that 'I' should be very, very happy to have her with me for a few weeks. I was then strongly under the influence of Evangelical belief, and earnestly endeavoring to shape this anomalous English-Christian life of ours into some consistency with the spirit and simple verbal tenor of the New Testament. I 'was' delighted to see my aunt. Although I had only heard her spoken of as a strange person, given to a fanatical vehemence of exhortation in private as well as public, I believed that I should find sympathy between us. She was then an old woman-about sixty-and, I believe, had for a good many years given up preaching. A tiny little woman, with bright, small, dark eyes, and hair that had been black, I imagine, but was now gray-a pretty woman in her youth, but of a totally different physical type from Dinah. The difference-as you will believe-was not 'simply' physical; no difference is. She was a woman of strong natural excitability, which I know, from the description I have heard my father and half-sister give, prevented her from the exercise of discretion under the promptings of her zeal. But this vehemence was now subdued by age and sickness; she was very gentle and quiet in her manners-very loving-and (what she must have been from the very first) a truly religious soul, in whom the love of God and the

love of man were fused together. There was nothing highly distinctive in her religious conversation. I had had much intercourse with pious Dissenters before; the only freshness I found, in our talk, came from the fact that she had been the greater part of her life a Wesleyan, and though 'she left the society when women were no longer allowed to preach', and joined the New Wesleyans, she retained the character of thought that belongs to the genuine old Wesleyan. I had never talked with a Wesleyan before, and we used to have little debates about predestination, for I was then a strong Calvinist. Here her superiority came out, and I remember now, with loving admiration, one thing which at the time I disapproved; it was not strictly a consequence of her Arminian belief, and at first sight might seem opposed to it, yet it came from the spirit of love which clings to the bad logic of Arminianism. When my uncle came to fetch her, after she had been with us a fortnight or three weeks, he was speaking of a deceased minister, once greatly respected, who from the action of trouble upon him had taken to small tippling, though otherwise not culpable. "But I hope the good man's in heaven, for all that," said my uncle. "Oh, yes," said my aunt, with a deep inward groan of joyful conviction, "Mr. A's in heaven—that's sure." This was at the time an offence to my stern, ascetic, hard views—how beautiful it is to me now!

One who has been permitted to read the letters of Marian Evans written to this aunt, has given the following account of them, which throws much light on her religious attitude at this period: "Most of the epistles are addressed to my 'dear uncle and aunt,' and all reveal George Eliot's great talents. The style is elegant and graceful, and the letters abound in beautiful metaphor; but their most striking characteristic is the religious tinge that pervades them all. Nearly every line denotes that George Eliot was an earnest biblical student, and that she was, especially in the years 1839 and 1840, very anxious about her spiritual condition. In one of these letters, written from Griff to Elizabeth

Evans, in 1839, she says she is living in a dry and thirsty land, and that she is looking forward with pleasure to a visit to Wirksworth, and likens her aunt's companionship and counsel to a spring of pure water, acceptable to her as is the well dug for the traveler in the desert. That the most affectionate and loving relationship existed between the eminent author and Mrs. Elizabeth Evans, is apparent from this correspondence. The inmost secrets of George Eliot's heart are laid bare in these letters to the famous Methodist preacher, who was at that time her dearest friend. She is ever asking for advice and spiritual guidance, and confesses her faults with a candor that is rendered additionally attractive by reason of the polished language in which it is clothed. When quite a girl, George Eliot was known as pious and clever; and in the letters she wrote in 1839, when she was twenty years old, the cleverness has grown and expanded, although she is not so sure about her piety. She says that 'unstable as water thou shalt not excel,' seems to be a description of her character, instead of the progress from strength to strength that should be experienced by those who wish to stand in the presence of God. In another letter she admits that she cannot give a good account of her spiritual state, says that she has been surrounded by worldly persons, and that love of human praise is one of her great stumbling-blocks. But in a letter written in 1840 the uncertainty has gone from her mind, and she writes that she has resolved in the strength of the Lord to serve him evermore. In a later communication, however, she does not appear so confident, and admits that she is obliged to strive against the ambition that fills her heart, and that her fondness of worldly praise is a great bar and hindrance to spiritual advancement. Still she thinks it is no use sitting inactive with folded hands; and believing that the love of God is the only thing to give real satisfaction to human beings, she hopes, with his help, to obtain it. One of the letters is chiefly devoted to the concern felt by Marian Evans at Elizabeth Evans' illness;

and another, written at Foleshill, betrays some humor amid the trouble that afflicts her about her own future. Their outward circumstances, she writes, are all she can desire; but she is not so certain about her spiritual state, although she feels that it is the grace of God alone that can give the greatest satisfaction. Then she goes on to speak of the preacher at Foleshill, with whom she is not greatly pleased: 'We get the truth, but it is not recommended by the mode of its delivery,' is how she writes of this divine; yet she is charitable withal, and removes the sting by adding that more good may sometimes be obtained from humble instruments than from the highest privileges, and that she must examine her own heart rather than speak unkindly of the preacher. Up to this period it is evident that Marian Evans' views upon religion were orthodox, and that her life was passed in ceaseless striving for the 'peace that passeth understanding;' but in 1843 a letter was written to Elizabeth Evans by a relative in Griff, in which Marian Evans is spoken of, and the change in her religious opinions indicated. She writes that they are in great pain about Mary Ann; but the last portion of the letter, dealing more fully with the subject, has unfortunately got lost or destroyed. The close association of George Eliot with Derbyshire, as well as her love for the quaint village of Wirksworth, and its upright, honest, God-fearing people, breaks forth in more than one of these communications."

Partly as the result of her studies and partly as the result of contact with other minds, Marian began to grow skeptical about the religious beliefs she had entertained. This took place probably during her twenty-third year, but the growth of the new ideas was slow at first. As one of her friends has suggested, it was her eagerness for positive knowledge which made her an unbeliever. She had no love of mere doubt, no desire to disagree with accepted doctrines, but she was not content unless she could get at the facts and reach what was just and reasonable. "It is seldom," says this person, "that a mind of so much power is

so free from the impulse to dissent, and that not from too ready credulousness, but rather because the consideration of doubtful points was habitually crowded out, one may say, by the more ready and delighted acceptance of whatever accredited facts and doctrines might be received unquestioningly. We can imagine George Eliot in youth, burning to master all the wisdom and learning of the world; we cannot imagine her failing to acquire any kind of knowledge on the pretext that her teacher was in error about something else than the matter in hand; and it is undoubtedly to this natural preference for the positive side of things that we are indebted for the singular breadth and completeness of her knowledge and culture. A mind like hers must have preyed disastrously upon itself during the years of comparative solitude in which she lived at Foleshill, had it not been for that inexhaustible source of delight in every kind of intellectual acquisition. Languages, music, literature, science and philosophy interested her alike; it was early in this period that in the course of a walk with a friend she paused and clasped her hands with a wild aspiration that she might live 'to reconcile the philosophy of Locke and Kant!' Years afterward she remembered the very turn of the road where she had spoken it."

The spiritual struggles of Maggie Tulliver give a good picture of Marian Evans' mental and spiritual experiences at this time. Her friends and relatives were scandalized by her skepticism. Her father could not at all sympathize with her changed religious attitude, and treated her harshly. She refused to attend church, and this made the separation so wide that it was proposed to break up the home. By the advice of friends she at last consented to outwardly conform to her father's wishes, and a partial reconciliation was effected. This alienation, however, had a profound effect upon her mind. She slowly grew away from the intellectual basis of her old beliefs, but, with Maggie, she found peace and strength in self-renunciation, and in the cultivation of that inward trust which makes the chief

anchorage of strong natures. She bore this experience patiently, and without any diminution of her affection; but she also found various friends among the more cultivated people of Coventry, who could sympathize with her in her studies and with her radical views in religion. These persons gave her the encouragement she needed, the contact with other and more matured minds which was so necessary to her mental development, and that social contact with life which was so conducive to her health of mind. In one family especially, that of Mr. Charles Bray, did she find the true, and cordial, and appreciative friendship she desired. These friends softened the growing discord with her own family, and gave her that devoted regard and aid that would be of most service to her. "In Mr. Bray's family," we are told by one who has written of this trying period of her career, "she found sympathy with her ardent love of knowledge and with the more enlightened views that had begun to supplant those under which (as she described it) her spirit had been grievously burdened. Emerson, Froude, George Combe, Robert Mackay, and many other men of mark, were at various times guests at Mr. Bray's house at Rosehill while Miss Evans was there either as inmate or occasional visitor; and many a time might have been seen, pacing up and down the lawn or grouped under an old acacia, men of thought and research, discussing all things in heaven and earth, and listening with marked attention when one gentle woman's voice was heard to utter what they were quite sure had been well matured before the lips opened. Few, if any, could feel themselves her superior in general intelligence; and it was amusing one day to see the amazement of a certain doctor, who, venturing on a quotation from Epictetus to an unassuming young lady, was, with modest politeness, corrected in his Greek by his feminine auditor. One rare characteristic belonged to her which gave a peculiar charm to her conversation. She had no petty egotism, no spirit of contradiction; she never talked for effect. A happy thought

well expressed filled her with delight; in a moment she would seize the thought and improve upon it—so that common people began to feel themselves wise in her presence; and perhaps years after she would remind them, to their pride and surprise, of the good things they had said."

She was an ardent reader of Emerson and other thinkers of his cast of thought, and some traces of this early sympathy are to be seen in her books. On his second visit to England Emerson spent a day or two at the house of Charles Bray, with whose writings he had previously become acquainted. Emerson was much impressed with the personality of Marian Evans, and more than once said to Bray, "That young lady has a calm, serious soul." When Emerson asked her somewhat suddenly, "What one book do you like best?" she at once replied, "Rousseau's 'Confessions'." She cherished this acquaintance with Emerson, and held him in grateful remembrance through life.

The painful experiences of this period are undoubtedly reflected in another of her autobiographic poems, that entitled "Self and Life." She speaks of the profound influence the past had over her mind, and that her hands and feet were still tiny when she began to know the historic thrill of contact with other ages. She also makes Life say to Self, in regard to her pain and sorrow:

*But all thy anguish and thy discontent
Was growth of mine, the elemental strife
Towards feeling manifold with vision blent
To wider thought: I was no vulgar life
That like the water-mirrored ape,
Not discerns the thing it sees,
Nor knows its own in others' shape,
Railing, scorning, at its ease.
Half man's truth must hidden lie
If unlit by sorrow's eye.
I by sorrow wrought in thee*

Willing pain of ministry.

The intellectual surroundings of Marian Evans at this time gave shape to her whole after-life. There were now laid the foundations of her mode of thinking, and her philosophic theories began to be formed. It was in the home of one of her friends she learned to think for herself, and it was there her positivist doctrines first appeared. Charles Bray was affected by the transcendental movement, and was an ardent admirer of Newman, Emerson and others among its leaders. This interest prepared him, as it has so many other minds, for the acceptance of those speculative views which were built up on the foundation of science when the transcendental movement began to wane. The transcendental doctrines of unity, the oneness of mind and matter, the evolution of all forms of life and being from the lowest, the universal dominion of law and necessity, and the profound significance of nature in its influence on man, as they were developed by Goethe, Schelling, Carlyle and Emerson, gave direction to a new order of speculation, which had its foundations in modern science.

Bray was an ardent phrenologist, and in 1832 published a work on 'The Education of the Feelings', based on phrenological principles. In 1841 appeared his main work, 'The Philosophy of Necessity'; this was followed several years later by a somewhat similar work, 'On Force, its Mental and Moral Correlates'. His philosophy was summarized in a volume published in 1871, which was entitled 'A Manual of Anthropology'. He also wrote pamphlets on "Illusion and Delusion," "The Reign of Law," "Toleration," and "Christianity." In his work on necessity he promulgated very many of those ideas which have formed so prominent a part of the philosophy of George Eliot. The dominion of law, the reign of necessity, experience as the foundation of knowledge, humanity as an organism that develops a larger life for man by the aid of experience and tradition,—these are among the doctrines of the book. There

is every reason for believing that in the teachings of Charles Bray, Marian Evans found many of the main elements of her philosophy, and with his aid her opinions were largely shaped.

Mrs. Bray was also a woman of large intelligence, and of a mind freely open to new theories. She wrote a 'Physiology for Schools' and a school-book on 'Duties to Animals', which have been well received by the public and used as text books in the schools of the Midland counties. In 1882 she published a little book on the 'Elements of Morality', consisting of a series of easy lessons for Unitarian Sunday schools and for home teaching. To the Brays, Marian Evans owed much in the way of sympathy, culture and direct influence. Perhaps more than any other persons they gave tone and direction to her mind. One who knew them has said, "Besides being a practical as well as theoretical philanthropist, Mr. Bray was also a courageous impugner of the dogmas which form the basis of the popular theology. Mrs. Bray shared in this general largeness of thought, while perhaps more in sympathy with the fairer aspects of Christianity."

A brother and a sister of Mrs. Bray's, Charles C. Hennell and Sara S. Hennell, also had a large influence on Marian Evans during this period. It was Charles Hennell who induced her to translate Strauss, and it was Sara Hennell to whom she wrote about her aunt after the publication of 'Adam Bede'. Hennell's 'Inquiry concerning the origin of Christianity' was published in 1838, and appeared in a second edition in 1841. In the latter year the book was read by Marian Evans, after a faithful perusal of the Bible as a preparation for it, and quickly re-read, and with great interest and delight. She then pronounced it "the most interesting book she had ever read," dating from it a new birth to her mind. The book was translated into German, Strauss writing a preface for it, and that interpreter of Christianity praised it highly. Hennell rejected all supernaturalism and the miraculous, regarding Christianity

as a slow and natural development out of Judaism, aided by Platonism and other outside influences. He finds the sources of Jesus' teachings in the Jewish tendencies of the time, while the cause of the supremacy of the man Jesus was laid in a long course of events which had swelled to a crisis at the time of his appearance, and bore him aloft to a height whence his personal qualities told with a power derived from the accumulated force of many generations. Jesus was an enthusiast who believed himself the predicted king of the Jews, and he was a revolutionist expecting to establish an earthly kingdom for the supremacy of Judaism. Jesus was largely influenced by the Essenes, but he rejected their austerity. Hennell found a mixture of truth and error in the Gospels, and believed that many mythical elements entered into the accounts given of Jesus. A thorough rationalist, he claimed to accept the spiritual essence of Christianity, and to value highly the moral teachings of Jesus. In a later work on 'Christian Theism' he finds an argument for belief in God mainly in nature. In his conclusions he is not far from F.W. Newman and Theodore Parker; but he does not give the credit to intuition and the religious faculty they do, though he is an earnest believer in God, and inclined to accept Christianity as the highest expression of religion.

Sara S. Hennell early published 'An Essay on the Skeptical Tendency of Butler's Analogy', and a Baillie prize essay on 'Christianity and Infidelity: An Exposition of the Arguments on Both Sides'. A work of much merit and thought appeared from her pen in 1860, under the title of 'Thoughts in Aid of Faith'. In this work she follows her brother, Strauss, Feuerbach and Spencer in an interpretation of religion, which constantly recalls the theories of George Eliot. In a series of more recent books she has continued the same line of thought. The early and intimate friendship of Marian Evans and Miss Hennell may explain this similarity of opinion, and the beliefs they held

in common were doubtless developed to a greater or less extent even when the former lived in Coventry.

Another friend of this period was a German scholar by the name of Brabant, resident in England, a friend of Strauss, Paulus, Coleridge and Grote. Grote described him as "a vigorous self-thinking intellect." A daughter of Dr. Brabant first undertook the translation of Strauss, and she it was who married Charles Hennell. After this marriage Miss Evans offered to take to Dr. Brabant the place of his daughter, and did act as his housekeeper for some months.

Marian Evans was surrounded at the most impressible period of her life by this group of intellectual, free-thinking people, who seem to have fully indoctrinated her with their own opinions. None of them had rejected Christianity or theism, but they were rationalists in spirit, and eager students of philosophy and science. Here were laid the foundations of the doctrines she afterwards held so strongly, and even during this period very many of the theories presented in her books were fully developed. Here her mind was thoroughly prepared for the teachings of Comte, Spencer and Lewes; and her early instructors had gone so far in their lessons that the later teachers had little to do more than to give system to her thoughts.

It was essential to George Eliot's novel-writing that she was educated amidst religious influences, and that she earnestly accepted the religious teaching of her childhood. Not less important was her humble home and her association with the common life of the people. Through all her work these influences appear, coloring her thought, shaping her views of life, and increasing her sympathies and affections. Her tender, enthusiastic love of humble life never lost any of its quickening power. The faith of childhood was lost, but its memory was left in a warm appreciation of all phases of religious life and a heartfelt sympathy with all the sorrows and aspirations of men.

Her father's health becoming very poor, Marian spent the next two or three years in the care of him. She read to him

most of Scott's novels, devoting several hours each day to this task. During this period she made a visit to the Isle of Wight, and there read the novels of Richardson. Her father died in 1849, and she was very much affected by this event. She grieved for him overmuch, and could find no consolation. Her friends, the Brays, to divert and relieve her mind, invited her to take a continental tour with them. They travelled extensively in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Her grief, however, was so excessive as to receive little relief, and her friends began to fear the results. On their return to England they left her at Geneva, where she remained for nearly a year. After some months in a boarding-house near Geneva she became an inmate of the family of M. d'Albert Durade, a Swiss water-color painter of some reputation, who afterwards became the translator of her works into French. She devoted the winter of 1849-50 to the study of French and its literature, to mathematics and to reading. Her teacher in mathematics soon told her that she was able to proceed without his aid. She read Rousseau and studied the French socialists. M. Durade painted her portrait, making a remarkable picture. The softness of the clear blue eyes, in which is expressed a profound depth of thought, is one of its characteristics. M. Durade accompanied her to England in the spring of 1850, and she went to live with her brother, where she remained for a few months. The old family differences about religion had alienated the brother and sister so far intellectually that she accepted an invitation from the Brays to find a home with them. Her sadness and grief continued, and her health was not good. Her fits of nervousness and of tears were frequent, but her studies continued to occupy her mind. She delighted to converse with Mr. Bray, and other persons of earnest thought had their influence on her mind. Among these was George Dawson, the famous preacher who cut himself loose from all denominations.

II. TRANSLATOR AND EDITOR.

It was while living at Foleshill, and amidst the intellectual influences of awakening radicalism, that Marian Evans undertook her first literary labor. This was the translation of the 'Leben Jesu' of David Strauss. A book so daring in its interpretations of the origin of Christianity excited much attention, and especially among those who had broken away from the old religious beliefs. The work of translation was at first undertaken by Miss Brabant, who soon married Charles Hennell. Then the task was taken up by Marian Evans, who gave three years to it, renewing her Hebrew studies for the purpose, and the book was published in 1846. The work was thoroughly done, so much so that Strauss complimented the translator on its accuracy and correctness of spirit. Concerning the translation the 'Westminster Review' had this word of praise to offer: "We can testify that the translator has achieved a very tough work with remarkable spirit and fidelity. The author, though indeed a good writer, could hardly have spoken better had his country and language been English. The work has evidently fallen into the hands of one who has not only effective command of both languages, but a familiarity with the subject-matter of theological criticism, and an initiation into its technical phraseology." Another critic said that "whoever reads these volumes without any reference to the German, must be pleased with the easy, perspicuous, idiomatic force of the English style. But he will be still more satisfied when, on turning to the original, he finds that the rendering is word for word, thought for thought and sentence for sentence. In preparing so beautiful a rendering as the present, the difficulties can have been

neither few nor small in the way of preserving, in various parts of the work, the exactness of the translation, combined with that uniform harmony and clearness of style which impart to the volumes before us the air and the spirit of an original. A modest and kindly care for his reader's convenience has induced the translator often to supply the rendering into English of a Greek quotation when there was no corresponding rendering into German in the original. Indeed, Strauss may well say, as he does in the notice which he writes for this English edition, that, as far as he has examined it, the translation is 'et accurata et perspicua'."

The book had a successful sale, but Marian Evans received only twenty pounds, and twenty-five copies of the book, for her share of the translation. A little later she translated Feuerbach's 'Essence of Christianity', receiving fifty pounds for this labor. It was published in 1854, but the sale was small, and it proved a heavy loss to the publisher. While translating Strauss she aided a friend interested in philosophical studies (probably Charles Bray) by the translation, for his reading, of the 'De Deo' of Spinoza. Some years later she completed a translation of the more famous 'Ethica' of the same thinker. It was not published, probably because there was at that time so little interest in Spinoza.

The execution of such work as this, and all of it done in the most creditable and accurate manner, indicates the thoroughness of Marian Evans' scholarship. Though she doubtless was somewhat inclined to accept the opinions she thus helped to diffuse, yet Miss Simcox tells us that "the translation of Strauss and the translation of Spinoza were undertaken, not by her own choice but at the call of friendship; in the first place to complete what someone else was unable to continue, and in the second to make the philosopher she admired accessible to a friendly phrenologist who did not read Latin. At all times she regarded translation as a work that should be undertaken