

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

GEORGE ELIOT AND MRS. HUMPHRY WARD.

"MODERATE your transports, Marchioness," said Mr. Richard Swiveller to his titled friend upon a celebrated occasion, and the advice might be opportunely repeated to more than one critic and reader of the present day. Our danger is the opposite to that of the time in which Scotch reviewers were not only hard on English bards, but chary of praise to any newcomer. Every newspaper, every weekly review—with a few stern exceptions of both kinds—is a watch-tower for the discovery of genius.

One of the latest planets to swim into the ken of those who keep weather eyes on the literary sky, is the author of "Robert Elsmere" and "David Grieve." Not merely the professional discoverers have hailed the lady with acclamation, but in private life scores of the apparently judicious deem her a great novelist. A frequent means of praising Mrs. Humphry Ward, especially since the appearance of "David Grieve," is to compare her—for modern criticism is nothing if not comparative—to the author of "Adam Bede" and "Silas Marner." And there is undoubtedly a superficial likeness. Both women are learned to the verge of pedantry, both have a far-reaching interest in life and the problems of human conduct, both get their novels under way and keep them under way by elaborate and often cumbrous means.

But resemblance, partial even in these particulars, ceases altogether with these; and what seems to me the radical difference between George Eliot and Mrs. Ward—apart from the striking difference in native ability—is to be found in their respective manifestations of that moral purpose which appears to be their chief bond of union. In short, George Eliot began writing fiction as a novelist, and ended as a moralist: Mrs. Ward began as a moralist, and has she yet become a novelist? "Miss Bretherton," her first creative work, is an apparent exception to this crudely stated formula; but "Miss Bretherton," charming as it is, leaves the reader suspecting that the author may have undertaken it not from an impulse to represent character, but with a determination, highly laudable in itself, to talk about art and the theatre. The human spectacle, for its own sake, may fairly be called the inspiration of the "Scenes from Clerical Life," of "Adam Bede," of "Silas Marner," even of "The Mill on the Floss." But Mrs. Ward wishes in one case to defend natural religion as against revealed religion, in the other to prove the superiority of the most unsatisfactory marriage—thus David describes to Lucy their condition, without betraying any consciousness of a lack of gallantry either on his part or on that of his author—to an ideal *union libre*. In both instances she

dresses her puppets suitably and moves them about in an ample and tastefully colored scene. These dolls walk and talk; in contrast with the handiwork of inferior artists they seem to live and breathe—for never, it must be admitted, has the novel of sheer purpose been so deftly managed as by Mrs. Ward; but put them over against Dorothea, Rosamond, Gwendolen, or even against Grandcourt, Tito, and Lydgate, and they are only marionettes, skilfully twitched through the moral show which Mrs. Ward is bent on exhibiting to a public that suffereth long and is kind.

The mention of these three men of "Middlemarch," "Romola," and "Deronda," is a reminder of Mr. Stevenson's assertion that women's men are never real men, and that Tito himself carries with him the suggestion of a comb at the back of his head. Mr. Henley is a degree less violent, and allows the "male principle" to Lydgate. These gentlemen are, after all, Scotch reviewers, and most men are disposed to welcome as brothers Lydgate, Tito, and the exquisitely brutal Grandcourt. But what man and brother would extend the right hand of fellowship in sex to David Grieve and the Reverend Mr. Elsmere? When they are mentioned, Tito yields the comb.

If George Eliot be superior to Mrs. Humphry Ward in holding to the novelist's true vocation and in the far deeper realization of her characters, her superiority is no less marked in drama, in passion, and above all in humor. *Marnet*—to take but a single illustration—*Marnet* finding the golden-haired child where the golden coin had been before, is not approached, at however great a distance, by any scene in Mrs. Ward's volumes; those certain few pages of "The Mill on the Floss" have more passion in them than the whole of Mrs. Ward's painstaking description of the two weeks of unwedded bliss experienced by David and Elise; and, as for humor, Mrs. Poyser alone would be almost enough to rank George Eliot among the English humorists of the nineteenth century. Mrs. Ward, on the other hand, does not number this most saving grace among her many gifts. Or, rather, such sense of humor as she may have is limited and obscure. Her Derbyshire peasants wrestle grimly with a dialect that excludes thought of anything else on the reader's part, but the author of "Silas Marner" contrives so to surround her country folk with the atmosphere of Warwickshire taverns that they have had no rivals in rustic breadth and humor except Joseph Poorgrass and the other Shakespearian peasants of Thomas Hardy. In truth, the apparently judicious have scarce a leg to stand on when they liken Mrs. Ward to George Eliot. For if in substance she is no analogue, in manner the analogy holds still less, as anyone may see who will look at the English of "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" and then at that of "Miss Bretherton," or make a similar examination of the diction of "The Mill on the Floss" and the diction of "David Grieve." Mrs. Humphry Ward writes ably and well, but she has no style, and at her best George Eliot is a master of style.

These few remarks protract themselves unduly. They were meant merely to point the moral of Mr. Swiveller's more important remarks to the Marchioness, but the briefest word about Mrs. Ward and her great predecessor would be incomplete without a reference to religion, in the treatment of which they are also conspicuously unlike. George Eliot sedulously keeps her religion out of her novels. With Mrs. Ward it is ever creeping monotonously into the view, although the result of her application of improved heating apparatus to what Emerson calls somewhere "the Unitarian cold greenhouse"—memory, I own, is sole voucher for the quotation—is hardly more

comforting than George Eliot's distant and invisible choir, "whose music is the sadness [it should read] of the world." But, religion apart, there is no good excuse for confounding ethics with genius, conscience with art, or—Mrs. Ward with George Eliot.

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TYPHUS FEVER.

ON FEBRUARY 11th of this year there came to my office in the morning mail four postal cards; each reported a separate case of typhoid fever in the house No. 42 East Twelfth Street, New York City. My attention was at once aroused by the exceedingly unusual fact of typhoid appearing in four persons in the same house on the same day. I asked Dr. F. H. Dillingham and Dr. Charles F. Roberts to go with me, and we together drove to the house indicated. Before we left it we had found not four, but fifteen well-developed cases of typhus fever, and in other houses, before the day had passed, forty-four additional cases were discovered. It was comparatively easy to trace these cases. The steamship "Massilia" had arrived in this port a few days before from Marseilles, France, having on board a number of Russian Hebrews, who, fleeing alike from the famine and the police of the Tsar, had sought refuge and liberty in this country. They had been helped on their way by the Hirsch Fund, and they were, for the most part, in charge, at the time we found the disease, of the officers of that charity.

The subsequent action of the Board of Health was that which experience has shown to be the best. Through the energy of President Charles G. Wilson of the Board ample accommodation for the patients we expected was secured at once on North Brother Island. Then came the work of fighting the disease. Additional inspectors were sworn in, and everything was made ready for a heavy siege. We did not dare to hope that the outbreak would stop there.

There are only two ways of fighting typhus fever. These are: 1st, Isolation of the sick and those exposed to the contagion; and, 2d, The destruction, or thorough disinfection, of all articles which may have come in contact with the sufferers.

It is not always necessary, however, to isolate those who have been merely exposed, but it is necessary to keep them under the strictest sanitary surveillance and to examine them daily. Persons who have a fixed habitation may be permitted to carry on their business provided the examination goes on. At the first symptom of the disease these people are of course isolated. Persons who live in lodging houses, taking their rooms by the night, here to-day and there to-morrow, should always be quarantined over the period of incubation. The importance to the Health Department of these periods of incubation in diseases may be understood by explaining them. The period of incubation is that time necessary after a person has contracted a disease before it shows itself actively. It is the time which the disease takes to hatch out, if I may so express myself. As it is believed that during the period of incubation a person suffering is not dangerous to others, and as towards the close of this period symptoms begin to show themselves, it enables the Department to isolate the sufferers before they become centres of infection.