

**ESSAYS AND REVIEWS OF
GEORGE ELIOT NOT HITHERTO
REPRINTED; TOGETHER WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON THE
GENIUS OF GEORGE ELIOT**

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Essays and reviews of George Eliot not hitherto reprinted; together with an introductory essay on the genius of George Eliot by Mrs. S. B. Herrick

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MRS. S. B. HERRICK

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ON

THE GENIUS OF GEORGE ELIOT

BY

MRS. S. B. HERRICK

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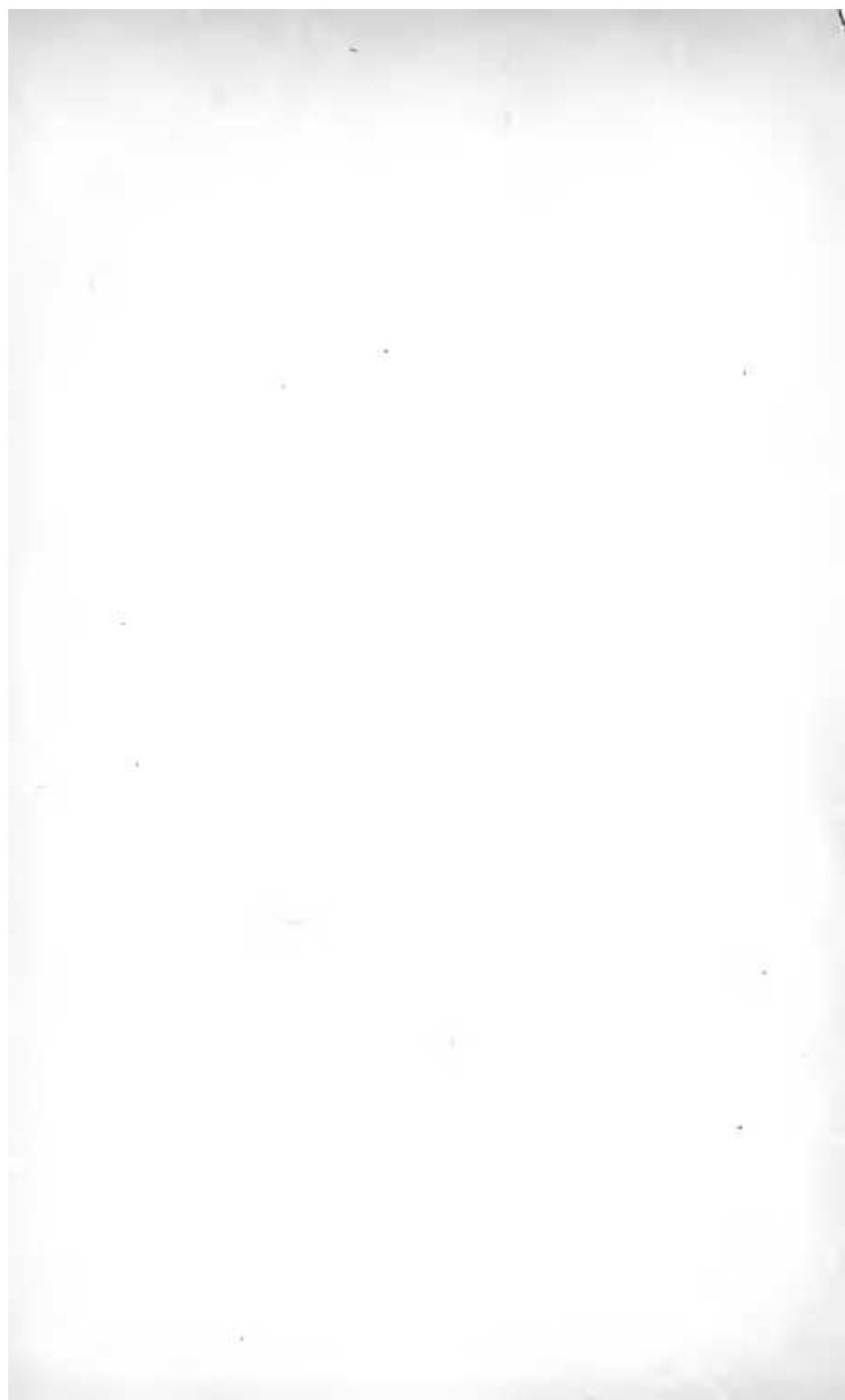
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GENIUS OF GEORGE ELIOT.

By Mrs. S. B. HERRICK.



IT is said that George Eliot spent years of her literary life in translating, and in writing review articles, before she ventured upon a creation of her own. Her first appearance as an author was made in "Blackwood's Magazine." She there published three stories of English rural life, called "Scenes in Clerical Life." Their literary merit was at once acknowledged; but they did not attract the attention which they merited until she had made herself famous in her second work, "Adam Bede."

Perhaps no book of fiction, since the days of the Great Unknown, has attracted so much attention, and been the subject of such universal discussion, as this first novel by George Eliot. Before the *nom de plume* had vanished in the light of eager inquiry, she was claimed as a man by men, and as a woman by women. She seems to us to be the only woman, in all the wide range of fictitious literature, who has drawn a genuine, manly man—one who is manly in his faults as well as in his virtues.

It seems given to the noblest and most gifted of each sex to possess so large and inclusive a humanity, as to be a representative of both man and woman. Where do we find a more exquisite tenderness, tact, and refinement, than in the highest type of man; and where a more noble courage, a deeper sense of truth and honor, than in the noblest of women? George Eliot truly possesses an intellect which is

so far above ordinary womanhood as to include the strength and grasp, the critical acumen and large outlook of a man, with the tenderness and purity of a woman.

We are told that God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." The divine nature, then, must include within itself both the masculine and feminine attributes. The higher nature is, and the more fully it is developed, if the moral growth be co-ordinate with the intellectual, the more godlike will it be, and the more certainly will it escape from the limitations of ignorance, of conventionality and finally of sex itself.

Naturalists tell us that every organ and every member which is fully developed in the higher animal is possessed in a rudimentary condition by the lower. The organism of man shows the same members, in a high state of development, which we find in the lower vertebrates. The hand of man, with its wonderful capabilities and exquisite adaptability to an infinite variety of labor and uses, is but a full expression of the idea suggested in the fin of the fish, the hoof of the horse, the wing of the bat, and the paddle of the mole. Every bone which gives the power of grasp and flexibility, so necessary in supplying the needs of his higher existence, is found in the lower in a modified form. The whole natural world is pointing, by successive and increasingly perfect organisms, to man, the crowning glory of the animal kingdom. He possesses powers which, in their just proportion and harmonious co-ordination, are far beyond the physical powers of the brute. Though he is less strong than the lion, less agile than the monkey; though his hearing is less acute, and his vision less sensitive than those of the insect and the bird, yet he is far beyond them all in his powers of self-protection, self-development, and progress. This is because his powers are so adjusted to each other, and so co-ordinated with that higher spiritual being which constitutes him man, as to produce the most perfect result. The soul and mind of man are

made in the image of God. In the more wretched and degraded members of the human family, we see the germs folded, the power and faculties latent; but who will say, in the light of missionary enterprise, that the soul is wanting in any race of men? It only lies dormant, waiting the awakening touch of divine truth. As we go from the lower to the higher forms of human life, we see, as we do in the analogous forms of animal existence, a life which approaches nearer and nearer to the divine type. The spiritual world points no less unerringly to the perfect and divine prototype.

In the true artist, whether his creations be by the aid of pen or pencil, by the chisel of the sculptor, or the fingers of the musician, the work is creative, the attitude is godlike. The divine power of imagination is at work; and the world is receiving beauty, wrought from the very life of the artist. There are a few, a very few, who deserve the title of artist in this high sense. The man who may rightfully lay claim to such a title must possess the gift, not only of seeing the truth and rendering it, but he must also have that all-comprehensive glance, and that vitalizing power, which is rather a spiritual than an intellectual faculty. He must lay under contribution all the physical beauty of earth and sea and sky, besides all the subtler moral beauty of tenderness and heroism and devotion. When such men do bless the earth, they are cosmopolitan, and can be claimed exclusively by no age and no country. They are heaven-born souls, who have only made some unworthy spot of earth their abiding-place for a little time. The birthplace of a genius like this may well be proud that it was chosen for such a manifestation; but it cannot claim him as its own. The world is his home, and mankind his compatriots.

Into this noble army, how many women have ever been admitted, or how few! It is strange that the world has seen almost no creative mind among women. The apology which is always offered for the inferiority of women, in every branch of severe intellectual labor, cannot be offered here. The cultivation of art has always been considered eminently proper