

GEORGE ELIOT'S HOME.

WHERE THE EARLY DAYS OF HER LIFE WERE SPENT.

People Who Remember Her, and All Have "A Good Word"—The Evans Family of the Present, Misses Whose Names are Known Throughout the Country.

It is not long ago that one of the noblest of American women said to me:

"If there is any earthly influence that might repress the presumption, impudence and immodesty of that rapidly-increasing class of my countrywomen who seem possessed of a mad craze to unsex themselves for the pitiable reward of temporary public recognition or notoriety, it would be a genuine study of the genius of George Eliot, coupled with a pilgrimage to the localities upon which her everyday life as a maid and a woman left the grand impress of their personal worth."

"This much of an object-lesson would be learned—if such women are capable of receiving grave and serious instruction—as would also result from a like study of the genius of Harriet Martineau, the Cary sisters, Rosa Bonheur, Dinah Mulock Craik, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charlotte Brontë, and all other women who are to remain among the immortals: That where genius has been the original gift of woman, in the precise degree that has been eventually achieved and accorded, has that woman shrunk from offensive exhibitions of her own personality and importance. Another as impressive truth would have logical revelation. Where any woman charges upon the public with demands for its attention and homage, in the same degree of her insistence and clamor will it, in time, be withheld and prove her doom to merited oblivion."

However this may be, remembering George Eliot's work which, in its hold upon the intellect and heart of all English-speaking people, is instinctively grouped with that of Scott and Shakespeare, and her grand, strong, plain face which you instinctively group with that of Dante, Brontë, Savonarola and Liszt, you come to the pleasant region where she grew to her full stature of person and genius with something akin to the same indefinable feeling of dreamlike unreality, touched with reverence and almost hushed with awe, as when you tread the quiet streets of old Stratford, close to the shrine of the immortal bard of Avon."

Indeed the Shakespeare country is truly George Eliot's land. Stratford, Warwick, Leamington, Coventry and Nuneaton all lie in a direct line from the southwest to the northeast boundaries of Warwickshire. One of the finest highways in England, elm-shaded for more than half its length, connects them all. Eliot's Warwickshire was the Arden of Shakespeare. The same Arden smiled back from its murmuring waters upon them both. The same billowy hills, gentle slopes and sunny valleys gave both their inspiration and imagery. Their hearts warmed to the same peasantry. In the subtle delineation of these, Eliot was to the early Victorian age, at least in a degree, what Shakespeare was to the early Elizabethan. And Shakespeare's birthplace and grave at Stratford, are not thirty miles distant from George Eliot's girlhood home.

It lies on the olden highway between Coventry and Nuneaton. These towns are but nine miles apart. Bedworth, a sleepy old pit village, is midway between; and about half way from Bedworth to Nuneaton, near Arbury hall, the seat of the Newdigates, is Griff, a fine old English farm home and steady, belonging to the great Arbury estates now as when George Eliot's (Mary Ann Evans') baby eyes first looked upon the great firs, cedars, elms and limes which shade this old and ample stone structure. In this house of many gables and tiny-paned bow windows George Eliot lived from March, 1820, when she was a babe but four months old, until March, 1841, when her family removed from Griff to Foleshill, Coventry, a period of twenty-one years. These were the twenty-one years in which were nurtured and matured all those bodily, heart and mental forces which gave her the highest place in literature of any woman that ever lived.

Her father, Robert Evans, was a tenant of Mr. Francis Newdigate, at Kirk Hallum, Derbyshire. On the death of old Sir Roger Newdigate the Arbury estate in Warwickshire came to Francis Newdigate for life, and Robert Evans accompanied him to Arbury as his tenant and agent. By a first wife there had been two children. Their mother died in 1809. Their father married Christiana Pearson in 1813. Three children were born of this union—Christiana in 1814, Isaac in 1816; and Mary Ann (George Eliot) in 1819, at the "South Farm," Arbury, which had been given the father temporarily.

The three Evans children, then, most and longest associated with Griff were the three born upon the Arbury estates. Christiana married a surgeon named Clark, of Meriden, Warwickshire, and died in 1859. George Eliot died in 1880. Isaac, as I learned after arrival here, who had remained at Griff and succeeded the novelist's father as its tenant and the Newdigates' agent, suddenly died in his chair on returning from service at Chilvers Coton church, in October, 1890.

His children, nephews and nieces of George Eliot, are four in number. It is an unpleasant but truthful statement that while they command a certain deference on account of a relationship without which their own small affairs would never have reached the confines of their little parish, they are unlovable and unloved by the few of quality and the thousands of lowly around them. They are stern, cold, miserly money-grabbers, all, offensively conscious of their radiated importance and snappishly churlish and repellent to all who bring a whole-hearted reverence to a spot made luminous by the presence of a mighty soul.

One daughter, a maiden lady of severe and awful aspect, was Isaac's housekeeper for many years at Griff. She now resides at Bedworth, and the lowly of the place dread her austere visage and her cruel platitudes, they freely confessed to me, when her purse, hand and gentle words might relieve great suffering. A brother, the Rev. Frederic Evans, is the present rector of Bedworth. He performs his canonical offices with mechanical accuracy and metallic suddenness; enjoys his fat

"living" as though the Almighty had arranged the parishes and population of England with especial reference to the vicarious relations of the Evans family to His affairs; and he has no heart or eyes for the poverty and suffering about him.

For Bedworth is a pit village, with a few insignificant and struggling manufactories. Wages are at as low a point as at any place in England. There is not half enough for half the year for half the folk to do. These clutch at any life-sustaining labor with positive ferocity; and I could take the Rev. Frederic Evans into not only a dozen but a hundred pitiful homes in Bedworth where attention, sympathy, consolation and even now and then a few copper pence, would make the name and the religion of a Bedworth rector stand for much that is seemly in any minister of Christ.

Another sister is the wife of a clergyman named Griffith. The other brother is Walter Evans, Esq., the present tenant of Griff and agent for Col. Newdigate, the present owner of Arbury estate. In all England I have not found any man who has seemed so capable of justly incurring the resentment of English pilgrims to an English shrine; and during five years largely passed in wandering up and down the face of this historic land, I have never before come upon any human being who so thoroughly illustrated the fact that in nearly every family of good repute there somewhere runs the curish strain of blood.

All this family who remain are rich through miserliness. The hard, stern nature was not in Robert Evans. It began with Isaac, the novelist's brother, who dropped dead in his chair after all his niggardly gaining. The peasant folk revere how he was watched in the hedges lest his laborers might toss a potato to a hungry cottier or tramp in the highway; how a poor old servant named Crabstock was chased away from Griff because he let a miner's lad keep a turnip that had fallen from his cart; and how another old servant named Jackson hung himself in the farm office behind Griff from sheer desperation at the niggardiness and brutality of miser Isaac Evans. If you even come to Griff and Walter Evans, Esq., is still its tenant—unless this picture of himself may change his nature—you will be turned away, as have been myself and hundreds of others, with the brutal and soulless sneer that Griff is no place for sentiment; people must keep away; they bother the occupants and lessen the value of the rentals.

Al, it was another sort of soul whose eyes once looked from those pleasant windows upon all who passed or came; whose heart bled for the poverty and suffering around her; whose tender spirit sought out all who were in ignorance and dolor; who ministered to the sick, relieved the needy and taught poor miners' children; until all the greed and injustice that have blighted the spot for the last forty years cannot efface the brightness that one gentle presence left upon it; and in the memories of gray old men and women near, for her sake alone, it is all but forgiven, and Griff is still Griff with sad and tender charm. It will not be long until these few hungry human crabs who bear another's deathless name will have passed away and have left for a day, as time is reckoned, a little shadow here. Then all may come, with a reverent blessing for George Eliot's girlhood home.

To the literary pilgrim there are many charming surprises in the neighborhood of Griff during a quest of identification of places and persons with individuality of the novelist. It is a little more than fifty years since George Eliot left Griff forever; quite forty years since she bade farewell to the lovely home at "Bird Grove," Foleshill, Coventry.

Yet there are scores of folk remaining, high and lowly, who knew her intimately as maid and woman. Some who were her playmates still survive. A few of those whom she gathered into the cottage of old Dame Moore, just opposite the gates of Griff, and taught the way of Hope, are still here to bless her with quivering voice and tear-dimmed eyes.

One of the most genial of English gentlemen and helpers of those who come, is Mr. Montagu Wilks, solicitor, of Coventry. Through his hearty, kindly aid much searching for these folks by a stranger in a strange land is lightened and made a gladness. Through him I learned of many about Coventry who had loving reminiscences of one whom all who knew had loved. Her dearest friend of early womanhood was Mrs. Charles Bray, who now lives with a sister, a Mrs. Hamell, on the Radford Road, in the suburbs of Coventry.

Probably no other person now living could throw so much real light on the novelist's early life as could Mrs. Bray. Another old friend is a Mrs. Cash, a near neighbor of Mrs. Bray; while Mr. Joseph Cash, a wealthy Coventry manufacturer, owns and resides in "Birds Grove," the house in which George Eliot wrote "Scenes of Clerical Life." By far the most interesting and uncommunicative of the novelist's contemporaries here is an ancient professor of music, ninety-three years old, named Simms, who resides on the Radford Road. He was for upwards of fifty-three years organist of Coventry's famous St. Michael's church, and it was he who taught George Eliot the mastery of the organ and piano forte.

My own discoveries of those who had lived about Griff when the members of George Eliot's family were altogether here, include John Marston, an old wheelwright whose smithy still stands near the steading; "Bill" Jaques, seventy-seven years of age, a schoolmaster of Isaac Evans and a playmate of the novelist; the old man, Crabstock, whose generosity with a single turnip lost him his place at Griff; Richard Emmons, living at Stockingford, now a pauper to have "hatfuls of sovereigns," who was, in turn, field laborer, house servant and footman at Griff, footman at "Birds Lodge," and finally house servant back at Griff for Isaac Evans, until his death in 1890; and William Moore, now seventy-three years of age, who lives at Collycroft, a little miners' hamlet between Bedworth and Griff.

The latter is the son of the veritable Dame Moore who kept the Dame's school opposite Griff's gates. It was in his mother's cottage that George Eliot, then a maiden of fifteen, gathered together the children of the miners and cottiers about Griff and taught them, for several years, for an hour or two each Sunday morning, and then took her ragged charges to Chilvers Coton church. In the afternoon

they all came together again when she taught them from the scriptures and some simple melodies of the time.

"God bless ee, sir!" said old William Moore, the tears trickling down his wrinkled face, "I can see 'er hangel face—she wor a plain sort o' hangel, sir—this minute afore my eyes. Mary Ann taught 'er class for nigh onto five year. She wor a great scholar, sir, an' a 'woman true'!"

To me that old cottage where that kindly work was done is almost the sweetest place about Griff. If the present occupants will let you who come get as far as the door of the old mansion, the two huge, tiny-paned windows at its left will bring another picture clear and true on which the mind loves to dwell: "An old fashioned child, already living in a world of her own imagination, impossible to her finger-tips" is the center of the simple home side evening scene. There are the energetic mother, knitting ever, the brother busy at his books or keepsakes, an "elder girl prim and tidy with her work before her," and a grave, stern, but kindly father who is turning the pages of some picture-book with prescient anxiety and boundless love in his gray eyes, as he looks now upon the book and now upon the rebellious hair that tumbles over that wise young daughter's head.

And you will turn away from Griff with a blessing for the father who made this girl his inseparable companion until her years of womanhood had come, and almost with a blessing on Griff itself, despite the hateful atmosphere of today, for what came out of this olden fortress circle; circling and widening until it had zoned with the fruit of one woman's genius all our good old globe.

EDGAR L. WAREMAN.

AN UNEXPECTED CLAIM.

How the Bell Family Were Compelled to Work on Shares with the Crown.

Queer things are continually happening in out-of-the-way places, of which the world at large knows nothing. A planter in Samoa, who was fond of plenty of elbow room, decided to emigrate. He had heard that years before two Englishmen married Samoan girls and took them to live over fifteen hundred miles away on Sunday Island, one of the smallest specks in the Pacific. It is a lovely spot, fertile, temperate, and healthful, and the two little families dwelt there for ten years, until they began to pine for society. Then Sunday island lost its human residents.

The planter decided that this must be the paradise he was seeking, and in 1878 a trading vessel landed the Bell family and all their worldly belongings on the little island. There they have lived ever since, raising European vegetables and other crops. Every year or two a vessel has dropped into Denham Bay to see Bell, sell him some clothing and hardware, and take away his marketable products. Bell called the island his farm. No human beings lived nearer the Bell family than New Zealand. It must have been a great surprise to Bell when finally a British gunboat honored him with a visit. The assistant-surveyor general of New Zealand went briskly ashore, and with a force of chainmen set about surveying the premises.

A few days later he informed the lover of solitude that his farm contained seven thousand two hundred acres, and, moreover, that he might work it on shares with Queen Victoria, as that part of the world had suddenly been annexed to the British Empire. The annexation also included the other islands of the Teradec group, four in number, the largest of which is only one-tenth the size of Bell's farm. Then the gunboat sailed away, leaving the new-fledged British subject behind to meditate upon the remarkable change that had just occurred in the political status of his farm.

A Famous Ship's Old Age.

It is not generally known that the Chesapeake, famous for her historic encounter with the British ship, the Shannon, in 1813, is in existence today, as sound and staunch as the day she was launched, but is used in the inglorious capacity of a flour mill, and is making money for a hearty Hampshire miller in the little parish of Wickham.

After her capture by Sir Philip B. V. Brooke, she was taken to England in 1814, and in 1820 her timbers were sold to John Prior, miller, of Wickham, Hants. Mr. Prior pulled down his old mill at Wickham and erected a new one from the Chesapeake timbers, which he found admirably adapted for the purpose.

The deck beams were thirty-two feet long and eighteen inches square, and were placed unaltered horizontally in the mill. The purlins of the deck were about twelve feet long, and served without alteration for joists.

Many of these timbers yet have the marks of the Shannon's grapeshot, and in some places the shots are still to be seen deeply embedded in the pitch pine. The metamorphosis of a sanguinary man-of-war into a peaceful, life-sustaining flour mill is another evidence of the progress of civilization and the general amnesty and increasing good-will between the two nations.

It is, perhaps, as near an approach to the scriptural prophecy that spears and swords shall be beaten into plows and pruning hooks as the conditions of modern civilization will allow.—Boston Globe.

A Hard Profession.

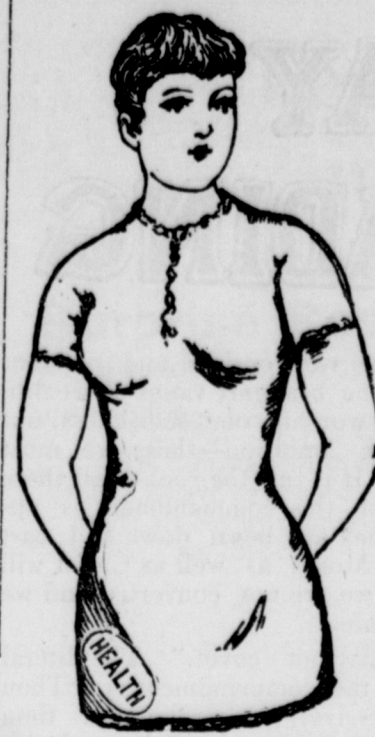
Old Dr. Johnson once said addressing a class of medical students, that the study of medicine was a most arduous undertaking; that the most comprehensive mind and the most industrious student could scarcely do more than explore the portals to medical knowledge during the brief time allotted to study before commencing practice, but that throughout his whole life the responsibilities of his profession should rest upon him like a night mare.

He should explore every avenue of natural knowledge, must become familiar with chemistry, natural philosophy and natural history, but, above all, he must learn the construction of his own frame, the means by which he lives, moves and has his being. He must understand the nature of all those influences by which health is broken down and restored and by what means disease, suffering and death may be averted. Dr. Johnson further says that nothing contributes so much to the support of quackery as the present insufficiency of medical knowledge. Men do not, he says, easily abandon hope, but as readily put a moment's notice night or day and ingenuously catch at straws.

"The good that men do in this life lives after them." During the life of old Dr. Johnson he invented what is now known as Johnson's Anodyne Liniment, a standard family remedy of surpassing merit. This liniment is so safe that no single remedy ever discovered has done so much good as has this one. It is inexpensive, ready at a moment's notice night or day and may be used with absolute confidence in the thousand and one ailments that afflict humanity. In the case of severe cramps or pains in the stomach or bowels, dysentery, diarrhoea, acute or chronic, this liniment is a sovereign remedy. In the case of chronic diarrhoea it is certainly worth its weight in gold. It has been known to cure cases of ten to fifteen years standing after the sufferers had been given up.

A Sure Sign of Death.

From time to time we are horrified by learning that some person has been buried alive, after assurances have been given of death. Under these circumstances the opinion of a rising French physician upon the subject becomes of world-wide interest; for since the tests which have been in use for years have been found unreliable, no means should be left untried to prove beyond a doubt that life is actually extinct before conveying our loved ones to the grave. Dr. Martinot asserts that an unfailing test may be made by producing a blister on the hand or foot of the body by holding the flame of a candle to the same for a few seconds, or until the blister is formed, which will always occur. If the blister contains any fluid it is evidence of life, and the blister only that produced by an ordinary burn; if, on the contrary, the blister contains only steam, it may be asserted that life is extinct. The explanation is as follows: A corpse is nothing more than inert matter, under the immediate control of physical laws, which causes all liquid heated to a certain temperature to become steam; the epidemics is raised, the blister produced, it breaks with a little noise, and the steam escapes. But, in spite of appearances, there is any remnant of life, the organic mechanism continues to be governed by physiological laws, and the blister will contain serious matter, as in the case of any ordinary burns. The test is as simple as the proof is conclusive. Dry blister, death; liquid blister, life. Anyone may try it; there is no error possible.—Opinion Nacional de Caracas.



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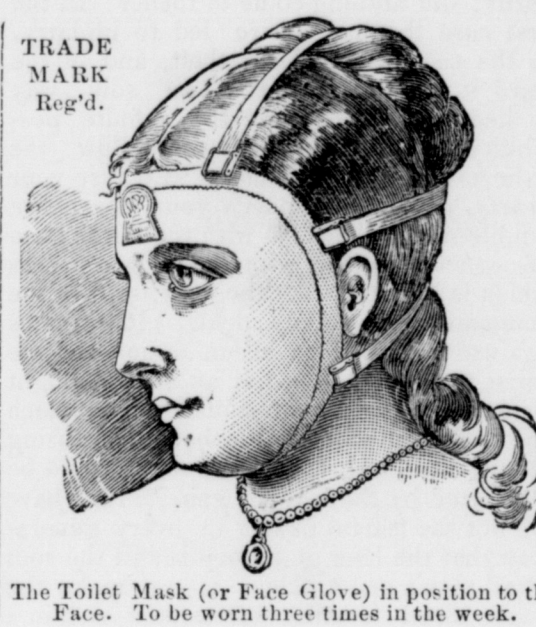
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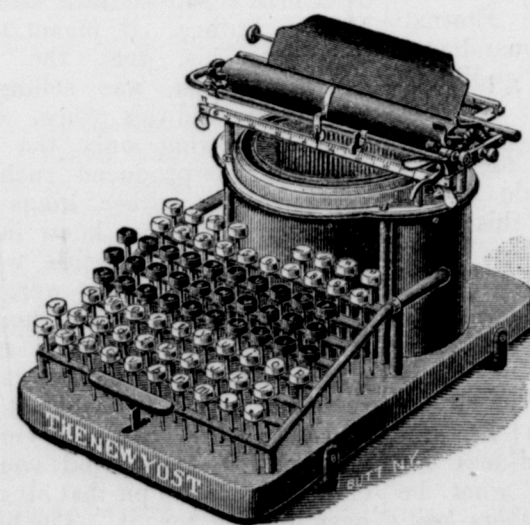
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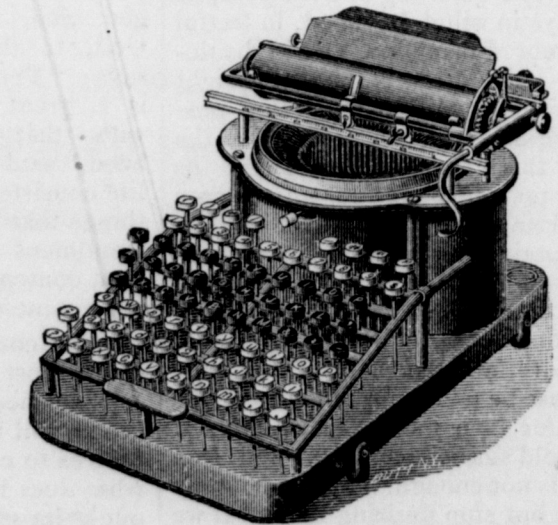


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