The Genius of George Eliot

Time so much has been written about George Eliot of late, it would be useless to think of saying anything new that is true or true that is most of her lofty genius. But as it is a great pleasure to say candidly "I thank you" when one has received a kindness even if it does not stamp us with genuine and originality, so everyone who has been benefited or elevated by a great author may claim the privilege of gratitude to tell his little world how and how much he has been helped.

Who that has enjoyed even one of her books, has not had occasion to add one stone (however small and rough that stone may be) to the monument of fame raised by a thankful world to George Eliot's memory? Every writer is in some degree the mirror of his times; the age in
which he live /hanging over him like the moon above the earth, compelling an image from the tiniest pebble as well as from the greatest mountain. While no author is wholly a creator in wholly a creator of his age, she certainly was more the creator than she was the creator of hers. Some authors live their allotted time long little or in impression upon their age, while others permeate it so entirely that the age becomes almost identified with them. Some that look far beyond hers because she more fully felt and realized its tendencies. Criticism looks a shining mark. She has been spoken of as possessing certain faculties in a supreme degree while their are sadly wanting. But to me she seems the richly crowned woman of the modern world.
split in all forms and accomplishment as her son Dante. Every faculty of her mind was well developed and finely harmonized, and her broad grasp of a subject was as comprehensive as her subtle discrimination of small things was perfect. She had in a large degree understanding, the power which comprehends; memory, the power which retains; imagination, the power which produces and combines, and eloquence the power which communicates. Besides she possessed in no small degree the talents of wit, sarcasm, and rhetoric. Even the character of the orator was hers at will, one always suitability best upon the subject with which she is most familiar, and her orator stands supreme as a sculptor of human nature; from the first page of her book one see her models, delineate and grow...
beneath her practical hand.

It has been said she confined herself principally to country life because she was unequal to cope with Dickens and Engene in their descriptions city scenes and characters. Was it not in the country she found and tried away the learning which was commensurate with her genius? And upon that genius fed, full, free, and unbounded, as a fire upon a mighty fuel. Was the time lost which spent in the contemplation of rural character, gave to the world many Death and Adam Bede? Her character breathe the rural spirit of English land, scenes. She fills on the spire grinds slowly, but it grinds exceeding true. Having known it once we will not allow the acquaintance to drop; but renew it oft, and again if Time ages begin to fade. The dancing river, the old home stead, the Red Ships, are seen me
can known and loved and are not easily forgotten; country life and character are never as true or pure, or as ideal as when the poet paints the picture. Let us imagine Tintoretto developing in Tintoretto's field, or on the Boulevard, without thinking of the incongruity of a pure violet blossoming on an ash heap. We can compare the big affable tip of the sky seen from a corner of a London street, with the dread magnificence of heaven bending over Penzance. We can find beauty or inspiration in the trickling puddles of a city street after a day of rain, when he thinks of the red-roaring torrents from the hills which meet at Comrie. The fact that she paints from nature and is true to her model, turn her the most fruitful source of criticism. In the drowning of the hills on the flood she shows
his greatest poem as a character builder and it is this same creation that has received strong criticism. The chief situation in the book's flight with Stephen Guest is termed "needlessly weak and ignoble." We could only estimate all actions and tendencies that do not accord with our highest ideas of ethics, by deeming them "needlessly weak and ignoble." What a grand inauguration of the millennium we would soon hear. But we find in human nature that weakness predominates, whether it is needlessly weak and ignoble or not. If we had only the strength of will to carry out our sense of duty, if our judgment were never overcome by our sentiments, in what respect would we differ from gods born such a nature?
as Maggie Sullivan's (and the possibility of such a character may be granted without libel on the race) with the environment in which she was placed, and the flight with Stephen Jones becomes not a thing of beauty but a necessity. The true portrait painter may be put to the task of skilfully rendering the contrast of violet eyes and the perfection of milky turned ruby lips with a furtive look, but if that furtive look does not hide itself behind those eyes and lips down on thecanvas it must go. One might entertain a feeling of injury to our idea of this if Maggie had never awaken to the fact of her mistake and had been allowed with an easy conscience to live a successful life with Stephen Jones, but the great genius who gave Maggie a name and a place.
among mortals, while she painted
human nature with all its faults
never painted them more to man
and to rebuke and she as fully real-
ized the fact as does the reader that
the age must be drowned in devotion
to the art. The same critic Abba Jules
Liole observes it is an outrage that
a woman of such brilliant parts
as Rosita should have fallen in
love with the first handsome young
man she saw and have had her
life blighted by the false Yito. As we
suppose the world thinks every time
a wealthy Eastern girl of blood and
whores should have been eloped of all
the monies over of sentiment by
a long course at Smith College or
the Harvard Annex, elopes with her
father's coachman. It may as
well take warning from all the
mistakes in the lives of such characters and fortify ourselves against similar occurrences in our lives or the lives which we may influence.

It will not do to condemn Eve for allowing such weaknesses to show itself in the lives of Magguy Tubbs and Romola and to say such would have been impossible among people as respectable as we. You know blood will tell, and our grandparents were weak enough to be betrayed into partaking of “that forbidden fruit” whose mortal touch brought death into our world, and all our kin with loss of Eden” and that it’s often having been warned of its consequences by Lord Himself.

George Eliot has also suffered the charge of inadequacy of action. Teri’s tells us that she makes women of the utmost
type, endow them with the highest honors, fill them with burning ambitions and then fail to place them in situations where their great strength and capabilities may be proved, just as with the women in true life they are called to play the part of high tragedy, and as after all the qualified list of heroines it is to be able to go through the tread mill of a common place life and answer promptly and cheerfully to every call of duty. Still more she is complained of because these same women when baffled do not precipitate themselves from some lofty sacrifice or strive tragically put a quiver on their disappointed lives. It is still the way of nature that gifted women aspire, are disappointed and patiently accept the decree of Fate and live the life she assigns.
We can not in the space allotted us enter into a discussion of all the merits of this gifted woman. Her life was a self-denied life. It was one of labor and toil, care for the secret sunshine of her own breast. She loved her the voice of fame — the nation raising her "off." But there were gifts upon her life, and she possessed peculiarities of opinion which favored her very human. May we not like that Stein sort of uncle Toby may be one of her that the according Angel as he patted down the fault dropped a tear upon the page and blotted them out forever." Her work was the gathering of material by the imagination and arranging it so as to have in it, the helplessness of life, as well as the harmony
and emotion of life. The succeeding
and if the unwritten record of
our own heart was checkered with
shadows of hope defied. In many
years the written lines she gave
to men and women have taught
many lessons of truth, candor,
and excellence.