

F.W. Burton.
sc^t



P. Rajon aq. sc^t

GEORGE ELIOT.

THE PORTRAIT OF GEORGE ELIOT.

WE have the pleasure of presenting to our readers an authentic portrait of George Eliot, the only one by which it is likely that she will be known to posterity. We are indebted for this privilege, as we shall presently explain, to the kindness and courtesy of her husband, Mr. J. W. Cross, who has allowed us to be the first to usher this beautiful work of art to the world. In doing so, we believe it will interest readers of *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE* to learn, for the first time, the exact truth regarding the portraits of George Eliot, and we have therefore obtained from the three artists to whom, at different times in her life, she sat, some particulars of those occasions.

Miss Evans passed the winter of 1849-50 at Geneva, in the house of M. F. D'Albert Durade, the well-known Swiss water-color painter, who is also the translator of the authorized French version of her works. At that time she had, however, written nothing original, and had attracted no general interest. While she staid with M. Durade and his wife, the Swiss painter amused himself by making a small portrait of her in oils—a head and shoulders. This painting remains in the possession of M. Durade, who has not merely refused to sell it, but will not allow it to be photographed or reproduced in any form. He has, however, we understand, consented to make a replica of it for Mr. Cross. We have not seen this interesting work, but we hear that it is considered, by those who still remember the great writer as she looked in her thirtieth year, to be remarkably faithful. M. Durade recently exhibited this little picture for a few days at the *Athénée* in Geneva, but has refused to allow it to be brought to London.

Ten years after this, in 1859, as the distinguished portrait-painter, Mr. Samuel Laurence, was returning from America, he happened to meet with "Adam Bede," then just published. He was so delighted with the book that he was determined to know the author, and it was revealed to him that to do so he had but to renew his old acquaintance with Mr. George Henry Lewes, whom he had met years before at Leigh Hunt's. He made George Eliot's acquaintance, and was charmed with her, and before long he asked leave to make a study of her head. She assented without any affectation and, in the early months of 1861, Mr. Lewes commissioned the painter to make a drawing of her. She gave him repeated sittings in his studio at 6 Wells street, London, and Mr. Laurence looks back with great pleasure on the long

conversations that those occasions gave him with his vivacious sitter. The drawing was taken front face, with the hair uncovered, worn in the fashion then prevalent, and it was made in chalks. While it was proceeding, Mr. Laurence asked her if he might exhibit it, when finished, at the Royal Academy, and she at once consented. But when the time for sending in drew near, the artist received a letter from Mr. Lewes absolutely withholding this consent, and a certain strain, of which this was the first symptom, began to embarrass the relations of the two gentlemen, until Mr. Lewes finally refused to take the drawing at all. But before the summer was out, Mr. Langford, the reader of Messrs. Blackwood of Edinburgh, who published George Eliot's works, called on Mr. Laurence, and asked if he would consent to make a copy of the drawing for the firm. The artist replied that he should be happy to sell them the original, and accordingly it passed from his studio, in June, 1861, into the back parlor of Mr. Blackwood's shop, where it now hangs. Like that of M. Durade, Mr. Laurence's portrait of George Eliot is not to be in any way reproduced.

The remaining portrait is that which we reproduce with this number. It is an elaborate chalk drawing, in black and white, with a slight touch of color in the eyes, and was executed, in the latter part of 1866 and the early part of 1867, by Mr. Frederick W. Burton, at that time member of the Society of Painters in Water-colors, and now director of the National Gallery in London. George Eliot gave Mr. Burton many sittings in his studio at Kensington, and the picture was eventually exhibited in the Royal Academy, in 1867, as No. 735, "The Author of 'Adam Bede.'" It passed into Mr. Lewes's possession, was retained at his death by George Eliot, and is now the property of Mr. J. W. Cross. In the spring of this year, Mr. Cross came to the conclusion that—as the shop-windows were likely to become filled with spurious and hideous "portraits" of George Eliot—it was necessary to overcome the dislike felt by the family of the great novelist to any publication of her features, to which in life she had been averse, and he thereupon determined to record in a monumental way what he felt to be the best existing likeness. Mr. Cross took the drawing over to M. Paul Rajon, who is acknowledged to be the prince of modern etchers, and in his retirement at Auvers-sur-Oise, the great French artist has produced the beautiful etching which we

have been permitted to reproduce in engraving. For this permission, and for great courtesy and kindness under circumstances the peculiar nature of which it is not necessary here to specify, we have to tender our most sincere thanks to Mr. J. W. Cross and to Mr. Burton.

These are regarded by her friends to be the only important portraits of George Eliot which exist, but Mr. Cross possesses a very interesting black silhouette, cut with scissors, when she was sixteen. In this profile, the characteristics of the mature face are seen in the

course of development. There is also a photograph, the only one ever taken, dating from about 1850, the eyes of which are said to be exceedingly fine. As an impression of later life, there should be mentioned a profile drawn in pencil by Mrs. Alma Tadema, in March, 1877. Of all the portraits here alluded to, the one we engrave is the only one at present destined for publication. It may be added that there exist one or two other profile sketches, which, however, are not approved by the friends of George Eliot.

TO A MISSAL OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

MISSAL of the Gothic age,
Missal with the blazoned page,
Whence, O Missal, hither come,
From what dim *scriptorium*?

Whose the name that wrought thee thus,
Ambrose or *Theophilus*,
Bending, through the waning light,
O'er thy vellum scraped and white;

Weaving 'twixt thy rubric lines
Sprays and leaves and quaint designs;
Setting round thy border scrolled
Buds of purple and of gold?

Ah!—a wondering brotherhood,
Doubtless, round that artist stood,
Strewing o'er his careful ways
Little choruses of praise;

Glad when his deft hand would paint
Strife of *Sathanas* and Saint,
Or in secret coign entwist
Jest of cloister humorist.

Well the worker earned his wage,
Bending o'er the blazoned page!
Tired the hand and tired the wit
Ere the final *Explicit*!

Not as ours the books of old—
Things that steam can stamp and fold;
Not as ours the books of yore—
Rows of type, and nothing more.

Then a book was still a Book,
Where a wistful man might look,
Finding something through the whole,
Beating—like a human soul.

In that growth of day by day,
When to labor was to pray,
Surely something vital passed
To the patient page at last;

Something that one still perceives
Vaguely present in the leaves;
Something from the worker lent;
Something mute—but eloquent!