

GEORGE ELIOT'S HOME.

Wakeman's Description of the Novelist's Girlhood Surroundings.

GRIFF, THE PRETTY FARM HOME.

Shakespeare's Country Also That of the Modern Female Writer.

MANY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS LIVING

(CORRESPONDENCE OF THE DISPATCH.)

Bedworth, Eng., April 30.—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 immaturity 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 Crutcher, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charlotte Bronte 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 shrank from the exercise of her own personality and impudence. Another as impressive truth would have logical revelation. Where any woman charges upon the world for attention and homage, in the same degree of her insatiable clamor will it, in time, be withheld and prove her doom to merited oblivion."

A Pleasant Region to Visit. However this may be, remembering George Eliot's work which, in its hold upon the intellect and heart of all English speaking people, is a more powerful than that of Scott and Shakespeare, and her grand, strong plain face which you instinctively group with those of Dante, Bronte, Savonarola and Livy, you find in the pleasant region where she grew up her full stature of person and genius with something akin to the same indelible feeling of dreamlike unreality, touched with reverence and almost hushed with awe, as when you tread the quaint 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, crowded for more than half its length, connects these all. Eliot's Warwickshire was the Avon of Shakespeare. The same Avon smiled back from its murmuring waters upon them both. The same billowy hills, granite slopes and sunny valleys gave both their inspirations and their hearts warmed to the same pansy. 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 but 30 miles distant from George Eliot's girlhood home.

Situation of the Homestead. It lies on the olden highway between Coventry and Nuneaton are but nine miles apart. Bedworth, a sleepy old 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 stabling, belonging to the great Arbury estates now as when George Eliot's (Mary Ann Evans) lady eyes first looked upon the great firs, cedars, elms and limes which shade this old and ample stone-structure. In this home of many gables and tiny-paned windows, George Eliot lived from March, 1820, when she was a babe but 4 months old, until March, 1841, when her family removed from Griff to Foleshill, Coventry, a period of 21 years, in which she 21 years in which were nurtured and nurtured 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 Kirch Halton, Warwickshire. 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 1808. Their father married Christiana Pearson in 1813.

Birth of the Famous Woman. 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. Cross, in his biography of George Eliot, transcribes from an old diary of the father where it had been handed in his own handwriting:

Nov. 22, 1819.—Mary Ann Evans was born at Arbury Farm (this was "South Farm," Arbury) at five o'clock this morning. It was St. Cecilia's day. It is also recorded that the child was baptized in the ancient church of Chilvers Coton, which rears its crumbling Norman tower over a landscape that will strongly remind you of the moors about the district, where the Brontes struggled nearly all their lives in pathetic silence. This quaint old pile mid-way between the Griff farmhouses and Nuneaton, and the half dozen houses of its eaves, is the Shepperton of "Amos Barton."

The three Evans children, then, most and longest associated with Griff were the three born upon the Arbury estates. Christiana married a surgeon, the Rev. Charles Clark, of Meriden, Warwickshire, and died in 1829. George Eliot died in 1880. Isaac, as I learned after a long search, 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, 1830.

Uncle's and Cousin's. 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 reverence on account of a relationship without which their own small affairs would never have reached the confines of their little parish, they are universally and justly despised for quality and the thousands of lowly around them. They are stern, cold, miserly money-grubbers, all offensively conscious of their tainted 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.

For Bedworth is a pit village, with a few insignificant and straggling manufactories. Wages are at as low a point as at any place in England. There is not half enough for the laborer for his wife and children. The clutch at any life-sustaining labor with positive ferocity; and I could take the Rev. Frederic Evans into not a dozen but a hundred Pittsboro homes in Bedworth where

attention, sympathy, consolation, and even more than a few copper pence, would make the name and 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 Colonel Newdigate, the present owner of Arbury estate. In all England I have not known 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 current 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 relate how he watched in the hedges lest his laborers might take a moment to a hungry coter or tramp in the high-way; how a poor old servant named Crabcock was chased away from Griff because he let a miner's lad keep a lighted pipe in the house; how another old servant named Jackson hung himself in the farm office behind Griff from sheer desperation at the niggardliness and brutality of miser Isaac Evans.

My own discoveries of those who had lived about Griff when the members of George Eliot's family were all together here, which so smelly still stands near the school: "Bill" Jaques, 77 years of age, a headmaster of Isaac Evans and a playmate of the novelist; the old man, Crabcock, whose place with a single turnip led him his place at Griff; Richard Emmons, living at Stockingford, now a very old man and reputed by the peasantry to have "hats of silver," 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 73 years of age, who lives at Collyer, a little miners' hamlet between Bedworth and Griff.

Scripture Teacher to the Poor. The latter is the son of the veritable Dame Moore who kept the Dame's School opposite Griff's gate. It was in his mother's cottage that George Eliot, then a maid of 15, gathered together the children of the miners and cotters about Griff and taught them, for several years, for an hour or two each Sunday morning, and then took her regular charges to Chilvers Coton Church. In the afternoon they all came together again when she taught them in 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 was a plain sort of hangel, sir, but she shined afore my eyes. Mary Ann taught 'er class fur nigh onto five year. She wor a great scholar, sir, an' a 'ooman true."

You will turn away from Griff with a blessing for the father who made that 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 fireside circle, circling and widening until it had zoned with the fruit of one woman's genius all our good old globe.

EMGAR L. WAKEMAN.

Table with 2 columns: Name, Residence. Lists names of those who received marriage licenses in 1892.

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DIED.

ANDERSON—On Friday morning, May 6, at 6:30, J. WARE ANDERSON, youngest son of William and Sallina Anderson, aged 3 years and 1 month.

BRACKEN—At her residence, 2519 Mulberry alley, on Friday, May 6, 1892, at 12:45 a. m., Mrs. MARGARET BRACKEN, aged 59 years.

CREHAN—On May 5, 1892, at midnight, MARY ENNA, daughter of James and Mary Ellen Crehan, aged 5 years, 11 months and 4 days.

DOHLAND—At Atlantic City, N. J., on May 5, J. M. DOHLAND, in the 86th year of his age.

ENGEL—On Thursday, May 5, 1892, at 8:30 a. m., J. M. ENGEL, 17-year-old daughter of George and Mary Engel (nee Fisher), aged 7 years.

FAST—At West Penn Hospital, Friday, May 5, 1892, at 12 o'clock, F. FAST, father-in-law of W. A. Cowan, in the 64th year of his age.

FELLOWS—Suddenly, on Thursday, May 5, 1892, at 10 o'clock, M. JAMES FELLOWS, aged 50 years.

MATTERN—At his residence, 128 Washington avenue, Allegheny, Thursday, May 5, at 4:30 a. m., JACOB MATTERN, father of Robert G. and Frank H. Mattern, aged 86 years.

ROSS—On Thursday, May 5, 1892, at 4:40 a. m., Mr. W. M. ROSS, eldest son of Hugh and Harriet Ross.

SCHEIDT—On Friday, May 6, at 8:45 p. m., Mrs. MARY ELIZABETH SCHEIDT, widow of Frank Anthony Scheidt, in the 83rd year of her age.

SHENK—On Thursday, May 5, 1892, at 9 o'clock a. m., W. W. SHENK, aged 68 years.

SPEER—Thursday, May 5, at 10:30 a. m., HENRY SPEER, in his 34th year.

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