

## THE EXAMINER.

## IN MEMORIAM—GEORGE HENRY LEWES.

(BORN APRIL, 1817—DIED NOV. 30, 1878.)

Up to within a very short time ago, there might have been seen walking, some sunny afternoon, in the broad circular "drive" surrounding Regent's Park, an elderly gentleman and lady, neither of whom would attract vulgar notice, but either of whom, closely scrutinised, revealed a strikingly intellectual countenance. The gentleman, with a certain eccentricity, but without a spice of vanity, wore his hair rather long, and altogether presented the appearance generally described as "literary;" but his eyes were quick and keen, his step active, his whole look alert and characteristic. The lady was less noticeable, yet no one could observe the finely-lined face, with its strong resemblance to that of Father Newman, without seeing that it belonged to no ordinary woman. For many years, these two figures haunted the Park, near which they had a pleasant residence. Latterly, both stooped with years, and with the weight of weary thought. The gentleman was Mr. George Henry Lewes, the biographer of Goethe and eminent philosopher; the lady was his wife and the companion of all his noblest toils, known to all English-speaking readers of fiction as "George Eliot." When, last Sunday morning, there passed from one literary circle to another the whisper that George Lewes was dead, that he had passed away the previous evening, more than one individual thought with tears of the faithful companion, the noble helper and comforter, the great and gentle friend, whom he had left behind, and who must henceforth wander companionless on earth. For these two were as twin lights set side by side to help the world and comfort each other. Only "George Eliot" herself could tell how much she owes to her wise and kindly fellow-worker; only George Lewes, whose voice is sealed for ever, could have expressed the beneficent influence and inspiration derived daily and hourly from an ideal spouse. This is a note too sacred to be sounded over-much; we merely touch it and pass on. Certainly, no "In Memoriam" notice of Lewes would be complete without some reference to the happiest and most ennobling human influence which beautified his life. And now that all is over, that the busy brain is still and the eager heart is silent in the breast, what final word is to be said of Lewes's life and work? Looking back on the many years of thought and travail, counting step by step the progress from one point of intellectual vantage to another, considering how much was achieved and how little was left undone, we see how noble and how great the life has been. Beginning under conditions of positive hardship, starting in circumstances which, perhaps, ultimately caused his too premature death (for we have often heard him tell how in youth he had had to starve his body to buy mental sustenance in the shape of books), he gradually wrought for himself an exceptional eminence in the world of letters; more than that, he passed boldly from one eminence to another, and, beginning as the successful student of human nature, ended as a recognised master of the problems of human thought. For his work, it may be said to have grown richer and fuller as every year rolled on; and there is no doubt that, had his life been spared, he would have

been classed among the leaders of modern philosophy. As it is, he has left behind him a set of books which hold a distinct place in the literature of mind. While his biographies will always be popular with general readers, his studies in philosophy, though they were in reality only tentative experiments in a field where he would have done princely service, will long be regarded as landmarks of speculative inquiry.

But this is neither the time nor the place to analyse his literary remains. All we seek to do here is to pay a brief tribute to the memory of a remarkable man, one who from the beginning to the end of his career preached sincerity in literature and science, and never once condescended to tout for popularity. Much of his best work was done in stealth, and again and again he saw smaller men crowned, while Fame passed him by. No neglect, no misrepresentation, daunted one who sought for his rewards in Truth itself, and who knew how hollow and how fleeting are all the rewards that this world can give. With him to labour was enough; he asked no *bonus*. The discovery of a new truth, the explanation of a new beauty, was sufficient. In this spirit he discarded all personal affectations. He never *posed* as a philosopher. His nature was simple and unpretending as his heart was fresh. One of the most delightful conversationalists in the world, he "wore his wisdom lightly," and it adorned him so much the more. One word further. His attitude in the region of thought was that of one who might be esteemed a scientific materialist, and, doubtless, he will be claimed eagerly by those who count rapturously the names of the unbelieving. But George Lewes was too good and great a man to imagine that modern Science had exhausted the mystery of Nature. On the occasion of almost his last meeting with the present writer, the talk turned on personal Immortality, and he spoke on that theme in the spirit of one whose doubts were great, but whose hopes were stronger than his doubts. And now, recording death, we who survive him feel that such a spirit was indeed too precious to be lost for ever.

"Other heights in other worlds, God willing!"

sung a poet whom he always delighted to praise and honour. To those heights we leave him, certain that among contemporary thinkers and inquirers there is none more worthy of such an apotheosis.

## THE LEPROSY OF JOURNALISM.

## IV.—BLACKGUARDISM IN THE "WORLD."

We had occasion in some recent numbers to describe and condemn the increasing personality and flippancy of the self-styled society journals. We charged them with encouraging a very low intellectual standard, and debasing public taste by retailing back-stairs slander and wretched family or personal squabbles, many of which were invented and all exaggerated in the telling. In the article referred to all personalities were strictly eschewed, for we dealt with the unpleasant subject on public grounds only, and had no quarrel with any editor, proprietor, or writer connected with any one of these journals. This effort to arouse public attention to a crying and unfortunately growing evil has not been wholly unsuccessful; but it was answered by more than one of the journals in question in a manner which proved how entirely apposite were our criticisms. They did not attempt to rebut the charges brought against them, for, in fact, they were not only perfectly true and just, and couched in moderate