INTRODUCTION

It goes to the credit of unconventional and modern novelists like George Eliot, (i) that novel became top most genre of this age. (ii) A survey of English Literature refers to the great deficiency of the Victorian age......... the lack of any poet of the highest order, (iii) As the Victorian age is the age of novel and poetry, the two genres are seen wrestling for primacy till novel comes out victorious. Thomas Hardy began his career as a poet and ended it as a novelist, Tennyson’s ‘Maud’ can be called “a novel in verse”. The age is outstanding for its imaginative prose, (iv) It is in prose that we have great Literature of Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold. If the perfection of prose for applied literature is attested to by glorious works on Theology, Philosophy and History, its greatness is to be seen in the medium of pure literature in the fiction of the period. Of the English novelists of the Victorian age, the one to make a landmark is George Eliot, who having imbibed the thought of her day, gave new dimensions not only to English but also to European novel by dint of her genius.

Where the whole England was humming with the sound of weaving machines and creating a proper financial economy, a great social unrest was also growing along with it like the weeds with a crop. A great social unrest from the side of thousands of factory hands opened the eyes of the writers and social reformers towards their miserable life. And then a stage was prepared to reform and improve the deplorable conditions of
the downtrodden, slums, miners and prisoners. A large measure was taken by the zealous social reformers to uplift this human condition. And thus also in literature writers like Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell gave a complete view in their works about the dirty condition of an affluent society. The outlook on these miserable conditions and a spirit to ameliorate them provide a complete humanitarian attitude to the age.

This increasing importance of people tends to change the whole skeleton of administration. They then compelled the clearance of Reform Bills; gradually the divine right of the emperors and rulers became faint. The kings and peers were stripped of their powers; they were no more the hands of the nation. And then England evolved with a new glow with the dominancy of the House of Commons. England was blooming with the progress that was taking place at the time. Even the passing of Education Reform Act gave a green signal to the complete consciousness. People were now welcoming the advent of awakening pens of the writers. The establishment and freedom of press was now creating and lighting the minds.

When science had its advent on the threshold of the age, all the interiors of the age were coloured with its spirit. Social, economical and intellectual disorders were becoming arranged. A new outlook in every look was appearing. The commencement was from the discoveries by Sir Charles Lyell, who determined the different eras with the formation of earth’s crust. On the basis appeared Charles Darwin’s ‘Origin of Species (1859)’, which was a complete observation of his twenty years’ research.
This concept of Darwin that the evolution of this life was from a single cell organism and the complete fauna and flora that exist are just because of the law of survival of the fittest, was a revolutionary thought. These views diverted the minds towards rationalism and realism. Some were there who didn’t feel obvious with the fact while there were also who hugged these principles of life. The social atmosphere was overloaded with the upheavals. The religiosity was in conflict with scientific attitude. The whole England was now seeing the miracles of science, which were making their life luxurious and religious miracles were at their slow speed.

Rational minds were becoming worthy. Who-so-ever were in opposition of this new outlook had their futile crying because the fact is fact and no one can change it. All this scientific awareness does not mean that there was no existence of God, but science is a gift for human being to shape their lives in a tender and glowing manner.

Now people have their new dimensions towards life. They have rationality for humanitarian attitude and this increasing glow gave an opportunity to the object also, to prove themselves. All these upstairs provide women a large window to have a glance on the world, till now the women were in their veil but now they were evolving with a new confidence and a bold face. Democracy provided freedom to all, Science provided knowledgable awareness hence every caste, and creed and genders were enjoying a new zeal for life. Now woman has the right to vote, to choose their own representative and to improve their miserable plight.
As the age was advancing towards industrialization and materialism, the outskirts were strengthening themselves but the skeleton was suffering as this materialism was also preparing a structure of poverty-ridden gloomy society of slums and factory hands.

To ameliorate these conditions, a group of humanitarian novelists was growing who selected the medium of novel-writing to draw the attention towards these miserable lives, because a large number of reading public was getting their taste in novels, and when a whole generation will perceive these conditions automatically, it will have some fine effects.

For the sake of convenience, the long period has been generally divided by literary historians in three parts, the Early Victorian age, the Mid Victorian age and the Later Victorian age (v) Social, Economic, Political and Literary changes always work silently and though political periods are easily demarcated by exact dates, Literary periods run into each other. Therefore no specific year can be given for the three different parts of the Victorian age. And yet the division is useful as in the early Victorian age, English society is agrarian, feudalistic, rural, individualistic and still religious. In the later Victorian age, it has become considerable industrial, mixed, socialistic, democratic, materialistic and bureaucratic. That is to say, in the Early Victorian age, English social and political set-up were largely medieval, in the Early Victorian age, we stand on the threshold of the modern era. The period between the two that brings this change is transitional and termed correctly “Mid-Victorian period”.
Although the series of Reform Bills and Actz, Viz............. The Reform Acts 1832, 1837, 1860 and 1884 and the literary and religious movements viz.......... The Tractarian Movement” popularly known as “Oxford Movement,” ‘The Chartists Movement “ show that all was not well on any front, social, economic or political, yet the period as a whole is the most affluent, prosperous and glorious era of British history. The two Jubilees in 1887 and 1897 when peasants from all over the world came to pay homage to Queen Victoria attest to the fact that England “was the heart of an Empire on which the sun never sets”, (vi) Mud cottages were replaced by good brick cottages. England had become the industrial workshop of the world. Her naval power still held its claim as the queen of the sea. Europe was the Englishman’s playground. (vii) No wonder, the Victorians cherished the peculiar belief in progress as a law of history, and were self-complacent. It is this period that saw the gradual dwindling of Laissez faire, free agrarian and rural England, and the coming up of local self-government, civil services, educational institutions, colleges for woman, adult franchise, salvation in army, nursing as profession, police arrangement, interest in social reforms, Archaeology, History, Dictionary of National Biography, Trade Unions, Cooperative System, Humanism, Board Church, and Liberalism.

But as the period gave so many good things, It also gave the other things as well-materialistic pursuits, slum areas, reign of ugliness, deserted villages as a result of exodus to towns and colonies abroad, the class war,
the gap between the poor workers and the rich industrialists and above all priggishness and prudery brewing the imminent danger pointed out, in the words of G.M. Trevelyan,

"We were Islanders with an overseas Empire, Continentals, we were sailors not soldiers."\(^{(8)}\)

John Burgess Wilson has neatly x-rayed the period as follows:

"The Victorian age thus had a large number of problems to face. In many, it was an age of progress of railway, buildings, steamships, reforms of all kinds but was also an age of doubt. There was too much poverty, too much injustice, too much ugliness and too little certainty about faith or morals, thus it became also an age of crusaders and reformers and theorists."\(^{(9)}\)

This broad survey of the age will remain incomplete without a consideration of the religious conditions, women's conditions, familial relationship of the subject, the raw material of George Eliot's deep thinking and study. Queen Victoria's moral and holy family life exercised considerable exemplary influence over literature and social life. It was mostly an age of conventional morality and large families. The father wielded full power of the god like head and mother was as submissive as Milton's Eve. "Bowdlerize"\(^{(10)}\) A word which found a place in English - anticipated the spirit of conventional morality of the age. Sex subjects were taboo. A lady could prove her ladyhood by the beauty of idleness and dependence upon her male protectors. She was meant "for the hearth
as man for the field”.(11) Deism, Agnosticism, Benthamism, Utilitarianism - all speak of very broad religious and liberal humanitarian outlook - an inclination towards humanism - giving man primary place and God secondary one. In the words of G.M. Trevelyan,

“In Literature and thought, it was a period of quasi-religious movement away from religion,”(12)

These was a peculiar controversial balance between intellectual adventure and moral conservatism. When judged between science and religion, although the swing is towards science, to borrow Trevelyan’s words;

“Both sides wistfully acknowledge that the whole truth about the universe can not be discovered in the laboratory or divined by the Church”.(13)

Sunday reading included Milton’s Paradise Lost, Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress and other serious works and not exclusively the Bible and and the Gospel. Thus the two streams of the Victorian thought and literature - one positive, scientific, utilitarian and rationalistic and the other-idealistic, humanitarian, religious and aesthetic run almost concurrently as corrective of each other, with over balance towards the first. Search for balance and compromise are the most general and distinguishing features of the age.

This period of material affluence, growing materialism, upsurging intellectual concern, political awakening, democratic reforms, scientific advancement and social and religious unrest saw the emergence of the
great woman novelist, Mary Ann Evans who is popularly known by her
per name George Eliot. She was born at Nuneaton in 1819. She was third
daughter of Robert Evans from his second wife, she had early education
first at a neighbouring Dame’s school and then in a boarding- school in the
suburbs of Noneaton.

Her serious nature was marked at school. Often; she sat down in the
corner and watched her seniors. She was, therefore, thought an awkward
girl. “Miss Lewis, the principal of the school aroused in her an intellectual
curiosity and an ever increasing desire to learn.”(14) She was religious
minded, an influence that she had absorbed from her Evangelical father
and religious atmosphere in the family. The foundations were laid quite
early of a religious temper and “a creed dominating the whole life and
compelling self-repression and self-devotion.”(15) Her life with Miss Lewis
infused in her moral earnestness and intellectual fervour. She read Essay
of Lamb and Johnson’s Rasselas. Later she once wrote to Miss Lewis
how she could only sigh seeing persons bound in marriage ties that detached
them from heaven and were so brittle as to be liable to be snapped under
by every breeze. Those who took life as “Pilgrimage” and could both may
be projects for earthly bliss and commune with God were certainly better
and she :

“Imposed that in my short experience and narrow sphere of action. I
have never been able to attain to this. I find as Dr. Johnson said; respecting
his wine; total abstinence much easier than moderation.”(16)
Two everlasting influences of her stay with her teacher Miss Lewis form an indelible impression in the mind of young George Eliot. She was so much influenced by the religious yet progressive ideas of Miss Lewis as they determine the psychic norms of this great novelist. She develops in her company a rational outlook which flourishes stubbornly in almost all her novels. John Bennett has beautifully summed up these two formative influences in George Eliot through the company of her teacher in the following lines:

“When George Eliot’s heart and mind matured, she came to believe that repression was not the surest road to virtue. Throughout the formative years we can observe two characteristics of the personality which was to develop into the genius of the novelist; the passionate force of her affections and the intellectual energy with which she pursues the enquiries those affections suggested to her.”

Novelists like Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, Kingsley, Elizabeth, Gaskell, Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, Anne Bronte, George Meredith and George Eliot had accepted the changes, the progress and development as well as the filthy conditions of the age and picturised each and every human feeling with much warmth along with much expostulations for the adversaries.

In all these writers each has his own style and manner. All have their own ranks according to their works and also gained the retribution. In this concern the opinion of Chesternton is noteworthy:
“Victorian novel was a thing entirely Victorian; quite unique and suited to a sort of cosiness in that country and that age, But the novel itself, though not merely Victorian is mainly Modern.... I merely say, therefore that when I say ‘novel’. I mean a fictitious narrative of which the essential is that the story is not for the sake of its naked pointedness as an anecdote, or for the sake of the irrelevant landscapes and visions that can be caught up in it, but for the sake of some study of the difference between human beings.”\(^{(18)}\)

So it is clear and obvious that the age was full of vigour for human sensibility. Great giants of the period like Dickens, George Eliot and others gave the central concern to the values and rights of humanity. As the atmosphere was growing highly intellectual, stimulating and moral issues of the age, a great personality with versatility in her moral heart was taking her appearance. Born as Mary Ann Evans, George Eliot took her place. She was not a mere novelist, as wrongly judged by Anthony Trollope reviewing his colleagues, in his autobiography in 1876;

“Her imagination is no doubt strong, but it acts in analyzing rather than in creating. This searching analysis is carried so far that, in studying her writings, one feels oneself to be in company with some philosopher rather than with a novelist, I doubt whether any young person can read with pleasure Felix Holt, Middle March, or Daniel Deronda. I know that they are very difficult to many that are not young.”\(^{(19)}\)

But in the words of G.K. Chesterton;
"I begin with this great woman of letter for both reasons. She represents that rationalism of the old Victorian Age at its highest... But I begin with this name also because it emphasizes the idea of modern fiction as a fresh and largely a female thing; as fully as the novel of the 18th century was male. The strength and subtlety of woman had certainly sunk deep into English letters when George Eliot began to write".\(^{(20)}\)

George Eliot - a name that suddenly strikes us and when we open our eyes we find the criteria of intellectual light and from there we can have a mere perception of the shadow of truth, since the life has begun, no one can demonstrate truth. Many made their appearance and faded away and provided us only a possible conception of truth, through which a human soul could accept altruism and give the gleam of it to illuminate the world. This very aspiration can be seen in George Eliot. She had been in her life in groans and suffering but she did not make herself poison to others. She issued from her sorrows a comfort to others. The upheavels in her life gave her a somber, sullen appearance. Being a pious soul, all her qualities made her strong, frank, pioneer philosopher but she lacks the charm of face:

"Her critics, mostly of the opposite sex, resented, half consciously perhaps, her deficiency in a quality which is held to be supremely desirable in woman. George Eliot was not charming; she was not strongly feminine; she had none of those eccentricities and inequalities of temper, which give to so many artists the endearing simplicity of children,"\(^{(21)}\)
The above lines of Virginia Woolf merely show George Eliot from one side, but the vast side, which is obscure to immature, is much shining. Yes, it is true that she was not charming and beautiful but the protest lies in the statement that she was not strongly feminine. It is just a nonsense of talking so, whosoever knows Maggie Tulliver, Dinah Morris, Dorothea Brooke, Romola or her other heroines, can tell what she was. No corner of a female heart is left untouched from her, whatever the caste or creed, whatever the age, she represented a female soul in complete.

And besides all her ugliness or equineness or whatever one can say, her distasteful appearance, she left a very inerasable impressionistic print on the minds and hearts of the people with whom she met in all her life. For instance Mr. F. W. H. Myres, the poet, philosopher and pioneer in psychial research, invited her to visit Cambridge in 1873, recalled the parting moments as:

“And when we stood at length and parted amid that columnar circuit of forest trees, beneath the last twilight of starless skies, I seemed to be gazing, like Titus at Jerusalem, on vacant seats and empty hall-on a sancturay with no presence to hollow it, and heaven left empty of God”.\(^{(22)}\)

But even though whatever she gained was only of hers, the more she tried to arise herself, the more she felt some obligations. Instead of being of a woman, she jumped highest peaks where the monopoly of men was, and got certain rewards along with criticism. She was the pride and paragon of all her sex and monument of an inspiring outlook to women,
she had nothing unachievable, which a male could get, she had the vigour, caliber through which she could excel the world but she remained stable because of a little but most powerful sensibility - the female sensibility, she was courageous enough to face any juncture but from her very childhood to her grave old age, she needed a man’s shoulder to lie upon, and satisfy all her emotions, which bubbled always in her. Being a woman she had the tendency of requiring a mental support to her mental and unmanageable life and performances. This fact is also mentioned by her husband J. W. Cross that:

“The trait was most marked in her all through life namely the absolute need of some one person who should be all in all to her and to whom she should be all in all”.(23)

Mr. Robert Evans, a Welsh origin, was Strafordshire man, who began his career following his father’s business, as a carpenter. He was a man of massive figure, remarkably handsome appearance, with shrewd penetrating glance, rare energy and endurance. He was a man of high knowledge of his profession. He rose from trivialities to majorities. Like Adam Bede, he rose from carpenter to forester, from forester to a land agent. His great vigour of mind and body, his religion of good work was not only astonishing to others but also gainful. He had large knowledge of mines, of plantations, of various branches of valuations and measurement.

Robert Evans was twice married. As his career line was provided by Newdigates, It seems that his first wife, Harriet Poynton was a local
girl and apparently employed at the Hall. Robert married her on 27th May 1801 in Ellaston Church. With her, he had two children, Robert in 1802 and Francis Lucy known as Fanny in 1805. Harriet died in 1809. In 1813 Robert Evans did his second marriage with Christiana Pearson, a sharp tongued lady, of somewhat superior position to him. It created submissiveness in him as George Eliot has shown in her character of Mr. Tulliver. Of Marry Ann’s mother very less is known as the history of best ruled states. Besides it, Marry’s own tastes didn’t match with her mother, so that she had no role in making George Eliot from Marry Ann Evans. She was a lady with sharp tongue but diligent. She was deft in all her house holds and this was the only quality, which had a remarkable influence on Mary, which was gainful a little later. Hence she was a lady as a lady should be.

Robert Evans had three children from Christiana Pearson. Chrissey born in 1814, Issac in 1816, and the youngest child Mary took her existence in 1819. Mary had loved her father best. The traces of Robert Evans can be noticed in the full character of Adam Bede, Mr. Tulliver and Caleb Garth:

“Our right to use those three characters to help us derives in the first case from her own admission that Adam Bede was ‘suggested by my father’s early life’; in the second from the fact that Maggie Tulliver is in a measure a self portrait; and in the third from the fact that Caleb was, like Robert Evans, an estates manager of peculiar intelligence, integrity and devotion to his calling”.(24)
The least resemblance was with Mr. Tulliver in his submissiveness from his sister-in-laws. The similar traces of her mother can be found in sharp-tongued Mrs. Poyser.

Besides her affection with her father, she had an immense attachment with her brother Isaac. The portrait of their childhood can be seen in her poem ‘Brother and Sister’, and the little but precious remembrances in the relationship of Tom and Maggie in “The Mill on the Floss”.

Since 1734, the family had been the blessing by the benevolent hand of Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury Hall Warwickshire—the fifth and last baronet along with his establishment of prize poem at oxford. After his death Sir. Francis Newdigate inherited the property of Griff House on the Conventry Nuneaton road. Robert Evans accompanied him there with his described qualities and dexterity.

Griff House— a red brick ivory house, which remained the sweet foundation of Mary to her next 21 years, from March 1820, when she was only four months old. The attic of this beautiful verdant house was much loved by Goerge Eliot, as this was her only resting and soothing place from her distresses and dolefulness in her childhood. She herself had written;

“I seem to feel the air through the window of the attic above the drawing room, from which, when a little girl, I often looked towards the distance view of the Coton college”(25)

The same we can perceive in her autobiographical novel ‘The Mill
on the Floss’ where Maggie Tulliver just like her finds comfort in that marooned place.

The first influence in making her was her father’s who led her to his office, he generally accustomed her between his legs and led her with him to his entire professional places amidst the views of Countryside. Because of her this acquaintance with each and every detail of country life, she became a remarkable writer to reveal the beauty of these landsides. In all her words there is a trace of her wide eye on natural beauties.

Good Mr. ans Mrs. Evans much pulled down by the death of their twins William and Thomas in 1821, who lived only ten days, gave special attention to nourish these three. They gave them better education, Chrissie was sent to boarding school earlier, Isaac and Mary Ann were admitted to Mrs. Moore’s Dame school, just outside of the Griff House. The two children, rolling and jumping, aware of each other’s presences were regular in the school happily.

This paradise was lost in 1824, When Isaac was sent to Foles hill; a couple of miles distant from Nuneaton at Conventry side and Mary had to join her sister at Mrs. Lathom’s school at Attle Borough. She was happy there except one thing-the night terrors, which beset her throughout her life. She herself admits that “liability to have all her soul become a quivering fear”\(^{(26)}\) was one of the supremely important influences on her future life. But her high spirits, her dexterous versatility compels her seniors and mates to become aware of her as a superior being. They Convey their
regards by calling her ‘Little mamma’.

Mary Ann was a simple girl, with no promise of beauty in future, irritated her mother in disappointment. Despite all her talents, she was not a favourite to her mother and the cause of disparagement to her Dodson’s like aunts. They pay their gifts of admiration to clean, tidy Chrissie and Isaac. But Mr. Evans as a man of virtue, recognized the shining intelligence in his youngest child and payed his full attributes to her.

In all her life Mary Ann craved for love, and devoted to few from whom she got it. As a child, she filled all her senses with affectionate satisfaction by her father and brother, consequently much devoted to their wills. In Attle Borough, she lived for the holidays when she can see her dear brother, play with him, love him but she felt deep crisis when Isaac was gifted a pony to whom he was passionately attached and excluded his sister for his pony.

This was the time when a groove was drawn between their charming relationship. Mary who had preferred to play with Isaac now darted towards reading. J.W. Cross told in his Volume that she had read a few books but repeatedly until she got them by heart. Her first book “Linnet’s life”, a gift from her father, remained with her till her death.

She was fond of ‘Pilgrims Progress’ ‘The Vicar of Wackfield’ and ‘Aesope’s Fables; which created constant bursts of laughter, still in her later life, Then ‘The Bible’ and the words of Shakespeare influenced her to a level, that they became part of her language in her own works, she also read ‘Rasselas and Defoe’s History of the Devil.’ Till this time Mary Ann was acquainted with
Literature—Literature of life. The summit was founded when Chrissie lent a book ‘Waver Lay’ by Sir Walter Scott, and unfortunately the book was returned before Mary Ann could finish it, this made the little girl so much distressed, that her elders were compelled to get a copy of the same book to her and this was the author who became seminal to her temper of mind and fiction.

In 1828, her next school was Nuneaton, which was run by Mrs. John Walligton with the head governess Miss Maria Lewes. Miss Lewes became Mary Ann’s first mature friend and remained so to the last. Miss Lewes was an Irish woman who molded Mary Ann towards Evangelicalism. She diverted her mind to tend towards introspection, self-delusion and much curious attitude towards everything. She aroused her intellect and then at the age of thirteen she became deft in all prospects which Mrs. Wallington’s school could give her.

Mr. Evans being aware of her daughter’s intelligence, was much concerned about her deserving higher education. In view of this she was sent to Nantglyn, in the best part of the Coventry, run by Mrs Mary and Rebecca Franklin. They were the daughters of a Baptist minister. Both Mrs Franklin and Mrs Mary were highly religious and so the trend, which Mary Ann got from Miss Maria Lewes was added with much more flavours in its tone. Though Mary Ann left Miss Maria Lewes’s school, she kept the friendship as a spiritual gift and revealed all her tendencies, her merits along with her demerits to that evangelical soul.
Besides the normal schooling which comprised of English, Arithmetic, French, History, Drawing and Music, Mary Ann gained her proper delicate voice from Miss Rebecca Franklin, which remained remarkable throughout her life. Isaac was sent to a private tutor who moulded his mind towards the conventional faiths and high church views and later on towards Tractarianism.

"This turn widened the groove between the brother and the sister. When in August 1838, she went with Isaac on her first visit to London, she wrote to Miss Lewes - "I was not at all delighted with the stir of the great Babel."(27)

Any how, Mary Ann left the school at Christmas of 1835. There was a little rejoicing for the family. But the coming year was painful as it brought gloom with it. Mr. Evans was severely attacked by kidney stone but after some leeching and bleeding, he was recovered but Mrs. Evans couldn’t bear the acute pain and got her legs paralysed. With much suffering, she died on 3rd February 1836.

Consequently, the whole responsibility of the chores fell on the shoulders of two sisters, Chrissie and Mary Ann. Mary Ann tried to fill the place of her mother in advocating her father and in taking care of him. He was used to listen aloud the Bible and Scott’s novels by Mary Ann. Chrissie took charge of domestic works. But when Chrissie married in 1837, with Edward Clarke, all burdens fell on Mary Ann. This was the time when she was suffering from poverty and also disturbed by her inner
plenty. To diminish her loneliness, she was used to organize clothing clubs, visiting poor and sick and in the evening play piano for her father. This was the juncture when she inclined towards agony, introspection and self-scrutiny. Being aware of her hopelessness, she was not completely immolated. Signor Brezzi had been coming from Coventry to teach her German, French and Italian and she read Greek and Latin from Mr. Thomas Sheepshank.

This was the critical time period when her intellectual and instinctual growth was founded. The two contrasting things haunted her incessantly, on the one side there was her spiritual inclination, which was strongly influenced by Miss Maria Lewes, the dangers of which she recognized later on in her novel ‘The Mill on the Floss’, where we see Philip rebukes Maggie for self stupefying;

“Stupefaction is not resignation’ and it is stupefaction to remain in ignorance-to shut up all the avenues by which the life of your fellowmen might become known to you. I am not resigned; I am not sure that life is long enough to learn that lesson. You are not resigned. You are only trying to stupefy yourself’; (28)

Mary Ann perhaps unrealized her dissatisfaction towards her already founded Evangelical principles, when she met Charles Bray second time, both developed an intimate friendship. This time Mary Ann already brought with her Hennel’s ‘Inquiry; This shows her inner conflict with her own views. And then she was sent to Bray’s, in hope that her strong views and
spirituality might change the sceptism wore by Bray’s. But as she was of a receptive, inarrogant and unclear conception of mind, she inhesitatingly received their views.

On 13th November 1841, approximately eleven days after her valuable visit to Bray’s, she wrote to Miss Lewes;

“My whole soul has been engrossed in the most interesting of all enquiries for the last few days, and to what results my thoughts may lead, I know not—possibly to one that will startle you: But my only desire is to know the truth, my only fear to cling to error. I venture to say our love will not decompose under the influence of separation, unless you excommunicate me for differing from you in opinion. Think—Is there any conceivable alteration in me that would prevent your coming to me at Christmas?”

These present lines clearly reveal the way in which her mind was going—a right way to a human being, beyond all dogmatic superstitions. Now she was a free soul, soaring in the vast horizon of spirituality. She was the soul, who suffered from human sufferings. She was the soul who became undeniable for even the critics.

The credit of her changed views only goes to Charles Bray, who laid the foundation of George Eliot’s mansion, with the persons whom she met later, have only shaped and gave finishing. After passing these months in Coventry, she was now frank in the acceptance of the new principles and ideals. Whatever are the consequences, she didn’t care for those. And
instead of every ill feeling and criticism, she firmly clinged to her views throughout her life. As a testimony of her maturity, we can take her own words in a letter to Mrs. Pears:-

"I fully participate in the belief that the only heaven here, or here after, is to be found in conformity with the will of the Supreme; a continuous aiming at the attainment of the perfect ideal, the true ‘Logos’ that dwell in the bosom of the One Father."²³⁰

For the next six years, till her father’s death in May, 1849, She gave her company to her father to the church. In these six years, she expanded her friend circle. In conventry she had intimacy with Mrs. Pears, Charles Bray, Mr. Henell, Sara Henell (Sister of Charles Bray). Sara was the only closest woman friend of Mary Ann for the next nine years.

Before her coming to conventry, Mary Ann’s mind was already inclined towards phrenology. In conventry Charles Bray’s mentor Mr. George Combe observed the ‘bumpi’ of her head and gave a complete outline of her nature, in which besides all her nervousness and great intellectual developement, there was one fact, which can be observed by any one, who is interested in her;

"She was of a most affectionate disposition, always requiring some one to lean upon, preferring what has hitherto been called the strongest Sex; to the other and more impossible, she was not fitted to stand alone."²³¹

This was quite right in concern of her life, from the very commencement of her life to the very end. As a child, she had a firm grasp
of emotions with her father and brother, and whenever it lacked, she felt marooned. Just like when she came to Coventry, her friendship with Charles Bray was at once. They developed such relationship within their minds and souls which seemed unhealthy even to Miss Lewes, when she watched them walking arm in arm just like lovers, Sara Henell also disapproved her as ‘depending so much on the arm of man’ then in 1842 came Charles Henell, who perhaps was fully considered for taking Mary Ann as his wife, but married with Elizabeth Rebecca Brabant, daughter of Dr. Henery Brabant. Dr. Brabant who had lost her one daughter recognized second in the name of Deutera and in the form of Mary Ann. From here also she was humiliated by the blind wife and sister-in-law of Dr. Brabant. Her visit, which was on an invitation, intended for six weeks stay, ended only in four weeks. But Dr. Brabant remained in her contact for many years.

After this desperation she busied herself in Charles Bray’s Coventry Herald; where we have some of her pen writings. Then she translated Dr. David Friedrich Strauss’ “Das Leben Jesu” as ‘the Life of Jesus Critically Examined by Dr. David Friedrich Strauss’. She diligently devoted her three years for this work, which was published on 15 June 1946.

She then moved towards family bonds. She took visit to Chrissie, when she lost her son, gave company to her father, but the time was hard and for consolation she read Thomas & Kempis’ ‘De Imitations Christi’ a book which was bedded with her along with the Bible, when she dies.
She tried and cared much for her father, but Robert Evans died in 30 May 1849. A strong pillar of her life collapsed and she was desolate:

"What shall I be without my father wrote Mary Ann as he lay dying? It will seem as if a part of my moral nature were gone. I had a horrid vision of myself last night becoming earthly, sensual and devilish for want of that purifying restraining influence".\(^{(32)}\)

Within five days Bray took away Mary Ann on a tour to Paris, Lyon, Anignon, Marseilles, along the coast road to Geneva. She rested in these days from July end to October. There she made friendship with the housekeeper D’Alberts. They were a cultivated musical family. Mary Ann found them congenial and soothing. D’Alberts painted a portrait of her, later he translated all George Eliot’s novels in French except ‘Felix Holt’.

John Chapman was a handsome figure of twenty-nine. He lived on the ground floor with his wife Susanna, his two children, and governess Elizabeth Tilley. Marian again felt an intimacy - this time with Chapman. The vacant corner for affection in her heart tried to fill itself with his love but it could not happen. Susanna and Elizabeth both got jealous with his attachment for her and it became undeniable to both of them to bear her any more. Chapman was forced to sent back her to conventry with a heavy heart. He knew that she loved him, but when he admitted that he also loves his wife and Elizabeth, both on their different places, Marian burst out in tears.

But Chapman paid his frequent visits to conventry, as he was about to buy ‘Westminster Review’ and found his own power lacking in the
management and editorship of the paper. He then darted to offer the Assistant
to Marian Evans, He reconciled his wife and editorship of the ‘Review’ to Marian Evans. He reconciled his wife and Elizabeth for this affair, Marian accepted the offer and once again went to 142, Strand, London. Her job was to comprise four quarterly articles on 142, Strand, London. Her job was to comprise four quarterly articles on the English, German, French and United States’ literature in review section. the English, German, French and United States’ literature in review section.

For her this editorial work she was paid nothing but free lodging and boarding. Though Bray and Chapman decided salary for her but she had to count pennies.

There were always Friday evening parties, which were an enjoyment for all Chapman’s Literary lodgers. Here Marian got the chance to be in the circle of great giants. Here she came to meet Elizabeth Linton, W.R. Gregg, David Brewster, the psychologist, James Anthony Froude, Harriet Martineau and Robert Owen. But the most remarkable figure to her was Herbert Spencer. He was a philosopher and one of the contributors of ‘Westminster Review’.

One other unsuccessful affair started. She found Herbert Spencer of the same taste, which she herself had. Their friendship grew at once to a larger degree. She had different amusements at different places with him. After Chapman’s affair, people raised their eyes to this affair. Again there was a conflict, which was cleared by her in a letter to Bray; “We have agreed that we are not in love with each other.”

But still there was love, as she was finding her desolate heart in happiness with him. He was a delightful person to her; he was one of the
close ones, who suggested her to write novels. She had the marvelous power to observe other’s nature, her vivid imagination, her knowledge of languages, sympathy with other, which all were recognized by Spencer. He found her the most admirable woman mentally, but not physically. When the entire world was supposing them engaged, her ugliness deterred him to marry her. But he loved her and remained a bachelor throughout his life; he also possessed her photograph till his death in 1903.

Marian’s thirst for love and affection was quenched by the advent of George Henry Lewes in her life. She met him through Herbert Spencer, who was Lewes’s close friend. George Henry Lewes was born in 1817. He was a versatile genius. George Eliot had already known him as a man of letters when a number of his articles appeared in ‘The Edinburgh Review’, ‘The Westminster Review’ and ‘The Fortnightly Review’. He left his two unreadable novels and a blank verse tragedy as an evidence of his lack of creative power. He has a histrionic talent of acting. He was an exuberant mimic and had also played the role of Shylock at Manchester in 1849. He had a complete knowledge of stage and therefore he remained a professional dramatic critic for four years (1850-54). Before this profession he had already get published his ‘Biographical History of Philosophy’, a most valuable work in which he gave a phantasmagoria of the philosophies from very earliest to August Comte. He was fully acquainted with Greek, Roman, French, German, Italian and Spanish languages and Literature. So, it was also considered that he was the jack of all trades but master of none.
After the publication of The Life of Goethe, his level repudiated. Then he was absorbed in marine studies, so precious knowledge was given by him as a result of his marine studies that it was quoted by Darwin in ‘Origin of Species’. In his last years, he devoted himself in problems of life and mind.

All this was a summary of his intellectual and literary achievements, but what he was in his inner life was painful. He was married to Agnes and had three children with her, but after five years of his marriage, he had to condone his wife for her adultery with his own friend Thornton Leigh Hunt. She had two children by him. Lewes showed no resentment and not only forgave them but also gave his name to her and Hunt’s children. He separated himself from their life silently and made no other claim and throughout his life provided allowance for Agnes and her children. So, when he first met with Spencer, internally he was marooned, but externally he was taken as a flippant. Even Spencer was ignorant of this inner conflict but when he came to know, he could not help to express:

“But alike then and afterwards I was impressed by his forgiving temper and generosity. Whatever else may be thought, it is undeniable that he discharged the responsibilities which developed upon him with great conscientiousness, and at much cost in self-sacrifice, notwithstanding which many men would have made a plea for repudiating them.”

At this stage of mind Spencer gave a mental support to Lewes and consolidated him. When Marian met him in 1851, he was also considered
as an ugly man. Carlyle called him ‘ape’. And though Marian herself had
not a beautiful appearance, so, one step was automatically forwarded
towards each other. On the intellectual point of view they were highly
common in taste. Marian found the summit of her emotional attachment in
him, though gradually.

After knowing him well, she was much impressed with him on
account of his rare qualities. We can have her own soul for this fellow. In
one of her explanatory letters to Bray; “If there is any one relation of my
life which is and always has been profoundly serious, it is my relation to
Mr. Lewes.”\(^{(35)}\)

In the same letter she writes;

“Light and easily broken ties are what I neither desire theoretically
nor could live for practically. Women who are satisfied with such ties do
not act as I have done............ We are working hard to provide for other’s
better than we provide for ourselves and to fulfill every responsibility
that lies upon us. Levity and pride would not be a sufficient basis for
that.”\(^{(36)}\)

Though Marian was already much impressed by George Henry
Lewes, in real the affair started from that afternoon when after leaving
Spencer, Lewes remained alone with Marian and that was the day when
Lewes poured out all his feelings to Marian. In October 1853, Marian left
142, Strand and settled in 21, Cambridge Street, to be more independent
for her and Lewes relationship. A friend and neighbour, Oscar Browning
believed that the sexual relationship began between them, while later he wrote her biography.

She was already under the influence of Feuterbach of whom ‘Essence of Christianity’ was translated by her. In 1853 she started this work and it published under her own name ‘Marian Evans’ in 1854. The Essence of Feuterbach’s philosophy was that “in the absence of God, the dominating motive of human relationships must be love.”\(^{(37)}\) And this imbued in her that love is justified where marriage is impossible.

All these facts about her and Lewes relationship were unknown to her family. But she determind to let them know. She wrote a letter to Isaac in 1857 that she has changed her name and “have someone to take care of me in the world....... My husband has been known to me for seven years, and I am well acquainted with his mind and character. He is occupied entirely with scientific and learned persuits”.\(^{(38)}\)

On their tour to France, Lewes’ friend Arthur Helps, suggested Marian that she should call herself as Mrs. Lewes. The year passed together were full of love, trust in eachother and also devoted for eachother’s happiness. Marian got in Lewes all her emotional satisfaction and Lewes also proved himself as a trustful lover. In the words of Elizabeth Linn Linton in her article in Temple Bar (1885):

“She had the devotion of a man whose love had in it that element of adoration and self suppression which is dearest of all to a woman like George Eliot, at once jealous and dependent, demanding exclusive devotion
and needing incessant care but ready to give all in return.”

Since her living at Foles Hill, she was frequently inspired by others to write novels. Even Herbert Spencer tried a lot to imbue her, and she than apparently wrote a scene about a Stratfordshire village. This very scene she read to Lewes one evening in Berlin. Lewes admired her and asked to write, at least she should have an experiment because he trusted her power except the dramatic and pathetic. She thought of a little and decided as ‘The Sad Fortunes of the reverend Amos Barton’. She mentioned it to Lewes and he applauded. On one of her evening walks with Lewes in Richmond, she told him that she would write a series of ‘Scenes of Clerical Life’ commencing with Amos Barton. A week later when she read the first part of Amos Barton to Lewes, he had no more doubts about her dramatic power and in Milly’s death and on the scene where shepherd bring the news to Mrs. Hackit to the scene where Amos Barton was dragged from the bedside, Lewes came to realize that her pathos is more striking than her humour.

Lewes gave this work to Blackwood for publication. In 1858 ‘The Scenes of Clerical life’ published under the penname of George Eliot, ‘George’ because it was Lewis’ Christian name and ‘Eliot’ because it was an easily pronounced and mouth - filling word.

From here starts George Eliot’s fictional journey. Lewes was always with her in all ups and downs. After the success of ‘The Scenes of Clerical life’, he tried much to keep the identity of the author secret, but when the
credit began going to Mr. Liggins of Nuneaton, the author’s name was made public.

Until his death on 28 November 1878, Lewes gave his full emotional, economic and social support to George Eliot. He was the person, who was able to bring forth all her obscure talents and only because of him George Eliot could give us such a precious work, which is a landmark in English Literature, and for female sensibilities she blow a fresh air at the right time when it was needed. The period was advancing from multiple sides and it was necessary to draw the attention towards the inner sensibilities and suffering of women.

After Lewes’ death, she kept herself aloof from the active world for many a weeks, she felt Lewes’s children as her own and also realized her responsibility for them. The children were also in favour of her and treated her as their mother. The only person except Lewes’s children, whom she allowed took place in 1869 in Rome, when Cross, who was fond of her novels, met her. After four months they again met at Webgridge, from then they were life long friends. Cross’ mother died, a week after Lewes. The loss of someone near and dear, was realized by both of them, wound was fresh and thus there was a growing mutual understanding. She was involved in Dante with him for next four months. This togetherness brought them in a new stage, where George Eliot felt a revival of life. This companionship brought her once again amidst social gatherings, National gallery and other places. There was a new
interest for them. The only conflicting thing was a twenty years gap between their ages. J. W. Cross was twenty years younger to her, but love and friendship both didn’t wait for age. They decided to marry on 5th May. She wrote to her friend Barbara Bodichon:

“I am going to do what not very long ago, I should myself have pronounced impossible for me. And, therefore, I should not wonder at anyone else who found my action incomprehensible. But the time you recieve this letter I shall (So far as the future can be a matter of assertion) have been married to Mr. J.W. Cross, who, you know is a friend of years, a friend much loved and trusted by Mr. Lewes and who, Now that I am alone, sees his happiness in the dedication of his life to me.”

On 6th May 1880 they married and immediately left for France, Switzerland and Italy for honeymoon.

After analysing birth, parents and influences on the works of George Eliot it seems necessary to analyse her work in nutshell. When we refer to the work, we mean the work of her novel writing. Here is the chronological list of her novels.

George Eliot is known as a novelist, which she was first and foremost. However, she was a versatile genius, who wrote essays, short stories and poems as well.

**Essays:**

The Impression Theophrastus such (1879), Mr. Gilfil’s Love story (1857), Lifted Veil (1859), Brother’s Jacob (1864).
Poems:

The Spanish Gipsy (1868), The Legend of Jubal and other poems (1874).

Novels:

Adam Bede (1859), The Mill on Floss (1860), Silas Marner (1861), Romola (1863), Felix Holt: The Radical (1866), Middle March (1871-72) and Denial Deronda (1876).

Her correspondence some of which has considerable literary significance has been used by her husband J.W. Cross for her biography ‘Life and Letters’ (1885) and by Prof. G.S. Haight: The George Eliot’s letters in seven volumes in 1954-55. Two of her translations are also extant: Leben Jesu of Strauss (1846) and The Essence of Christianity of L. Feuterbach (1846). Though she tried to give “The Scenes of Clerical Life” in a form of the novel, yet it remained mere collection of three stories: The Sad Fortunes of Rev. Amos Borton, Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story, and Janet’s repentance (1857).
References


(2) Cf. the mid nineteenth century was the epoch when prose fiction had reached full parity with other types of Literature in critical esteem....... Lionel Stevenson. the Victorians and After 1830-1914. edited C. Batho and Bonamy Debree (London 1962) P. 58.


(4) Idem.


(7) Ibid. P. 548.


(9) Cf. Tennyson “Ring out the want, the sare, the sin / the faithless coldness of the times.” ‘In Memorium.’


(11) Cf. Tennyson, “Man is the hunter woman is his game / The sleek and shining creatures of the chase.” ‘The Princess.’


(13) Trevelyal op. cit. P. 566.


(16) J.W. Cross, George Eliot’s Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals (London 1887) P. 40 Hereafter referred to as Life.


(20) G.K. Chesternton, The Victorian Age in Literature, op. cit. p-65.


(32) Ibid, P. 32.

(33) Ibid, P. 40.

(34) Joan Bennett, George Eliot: Her Mind And Her Art. op. cit. P. 65.

(35) Ibid, P. 68.

(36) Ibidem, P. 68.

(37) Marghanita Laski, George Eliot and Her World, op. cit. P. 52.

(38) Ibid. P. 46.
