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WOMEN NOVELISTS OF QUEEN VICTORIA'S REIGN

A BOOK OF APPRECIATIONS

MARGARET OLIPHANT

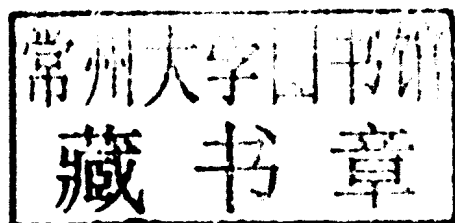


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Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign

Women novelists dominated the market in Victorian times, covering all genres from the mainstream to the Gothic, religious and sensational. Some are now classic household names whilst others, popular in their time, lie neglected on the shelves. This collection of appraisals of female writers by female writers was published in 1897 as a contribution to the celebrations of Queen Victoria as the longest reigning British monarch. The brief is exact: only those whose work was done after the Queen's accession and who were dead would be included. Nonetheless, the range is wide and includes essays on the Brontës, George Eliot and Mrs Gaskell, by Margaret Oliphant, Eliza Lynn Linton and Ada Ellen Bayly respectively, as well as appraisals of Catherine Crowe, Mrs Archer Clive and Mrs Henry Wood (author of *East Lynne*), by Adeline Sergeant, and the children's authors Charlotte Tucker and Juliana Ewing by Emma Marshall.

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WOMEN NOVELISTS
Of
QUEEN VICTORIA'S REIGN

Women Novelists *Of* Queen Victoria's Reign

A Book of Appreciations

By

Mrs. Oliphant, Mrs. Lynn Linton
Mrs. Alexander, Mrs. Macquoid, Mrs. Parr
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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

HAVING been concerned for many years in the publication of works of fiction by feminine writers, it has occurred to us to offer, as our contribution to the celebration of "the longest Reign," a volume having for its subject leading Women Novelists of the Victorian Era.

In the case of living lady fictionists, it is too early to assess the merit or forecast the future of their works. The present book, therefore, is restricted to Women Novelists deceased.

It was further necessary to confine the volume within reasonable limits, and it was decided, consequently, that it should deal only with Women who did all their work in Fiction after the accession of the Queen. This decision excludes not only such writers as Lady Morgan, Mrs. Opie, Miss Ferrier, Miss Mitford, Mrs. Shelley, and Miss Jane Porter, who, although

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

they died after 1837, published all their most notable stories early in the century ; but also such writers as Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Bray, Mrs. S. C. Hall, Mrs. Trollope, Lady Blessington, and Mrs. Marsh, who made their débuts as novelists between 1823 and 1834.

As regards some of the last-named, it might be urged that the works they produced have now no interest other than historical, and can be said to live only so far as they embody more or less accurate descriptions of Society early in the Reign. The "Deerbrook" and "The Hour and the Man" of Miss Martineau are still remembered, and, perhaps, still read ; but it is as a political economist and miscellaneous writer, rather than as a Novelist, that their author ranks in literature ; while of the tales by Miss Pardoe, Miss Geraldine Jewsbury, and others once equally popular, scarcely the titles are now recollected.

On the other hand, the eminence and permanence of the Brontës, George Eliot, and Mrs. Gaskell are universally recognised ; the popularity of Mrs. Craik and Mrs. Henry Wood is still admittedly great ; the personality of Mrs. Norton will always send students to her works ; Mrs. Crowe and Mrs. Clive were

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pioneers in domestic and "sensational" fiction; Lady Georgiana Fullerton produced a typical religious novel; Miss Manning made pleasing and acceptable the autobiographico-historical narrative; the authors of "The Valley of a Hundred Fires," of "Barbara's History," and of "Adèle," have even now their readers and admirers; while "A. L. O. E." and Mrs. Ewing were among the most successful caterers for the young.

It has seemed to us that value as well as interest would attach to critical estimates of, and biographical notes upon, these representative Novelists, supplied by living mistresses of the craft; and we are glad to have been able to secure for the purpose, the services of the contributors to this volume, all of whom may claim to discourse with some authority upon the art they cultivate. It is perhaps scarcely necessary to say that each contributor is responsible only for the essay to which her name is appended.

CONTENTS

THE SISTERS BRONTË

By MRS. OLIPHANT *Page* 1

GEORGE ELIOT

By MRS. LYNN LINTON *Page* 61

MRS. GASKELL

By EDNA LYALL *Page* 117

MRS. CROWE

MRS. ARCHER CLIVE

MRS. HENRY WOOD

By ADELINE SERGEANT *Page* 149

LADY GEORGIANA FULLERTON

MRS. STRETTON

ANNE MANNING

By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE *Page* 193

CONTENTS

DINAH MULOCK (MRS. CRAIK)

By MRS. PARR

Page 217

JULIA KAVANAGH

AMELIA BLANDFORD EDWARDS

By MRS. MACQUOID

Page 249

MRS. NORTON

By MRS. ALEXANDER

Page 275

"A. L. O. E." (MISS TUCKER)

MRS. EWING

By MRS. MARSHALL

Page 291

THE SISTERS BRONTË

By MRS. OLIPHANT

THE SISTERS BRONTË



THE effect produced upon the general mind by the appearance of Charlotte Brontë in literature, and afterwards by the record of her life when that was over, is one which it is nowadays somewhat difficult to understand. Had the age been deficient in the art of fiction, or had it followed any long level of mediocrity in that art, we could have comprehended this more easily. But Charlotte Brontë appeared in the full flush of a period more richly endowed than any other we know of in that special branch of literature, so richly endowed, indeed, that the novel had taken quite fictitious importance, and the names of Dickens and Thackeray ranked almost higher than those of any living writers except perhaps Tennyson, then young and on his promotion too. Anthony Trollope and Charles Reade who, though in their day extremely popular, have never had justice from