

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

The George Eliot Review

English, Department of

---

1986

## Book Review: The Clarendon Edition of Scenes of Clerical Life

Kathleen Porter

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ger>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

Porter, Kathleen, "Book Review: The Clarendon Edition of Scenes of Clerical Life" (1986). *The George Eliot Review*. 55.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ger/55>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in The George Eliot Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

By Kathleen Porter

The Clarendon Edition of Scenes of Clerical Life

by George Eliot. Edited by Thomas A. Noble.

Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1985.

The editor's Introduction to an author's first work of fiction published in a new edition is of very special interest, since it is concerned with the foundations of a writer's art. The story of the transformation of Marian Lewes, née Mary Ann Evans, into George Eliot is well known, and she has never appeared more charming than in her own account of how she came to write fiction. Thomas A. Noble's Introduction quotes freely from George Eliot's Autograph Journal and from letters, bringing vividly to life the new author of fiction and her generous publisher, John Blackwood. She was already an established writer and thinker, and her defence of her art as 'real and concrete', in response to Blackwood's comments, foretells the stature she was to achieve later. The editor gives full recognition to the part played by George Henry Lewes in launching George Eliot on her career as a novelist.

After serial publication of the stories in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (Maga) in 1857, the first edition in book form came out in January 1858, and this text has been chosen for the Clarendon Edition. The editor considers the text of the first edition to be superior since it includes corrections made by George Eliot to the manuscript, and it retains speech in dialect. The editor makes a number of emendations to the copy-text, most of which were made by George Eliot in later editions.

In the manuscript and in Maga, Dr. Pilgrim is spelt with two 'l's; a touch of old-style humour which George Eliot seems to have thought better of when she re-read the proof for the first edition. The editor includes a list of spelling variants, which mainly substitute z for s, as in 'organize', a spelling

used by George Eliot and now sanctioned by the Oxford English Dictionary. All other variants in the manuscript, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (Maga), and the five editions published during the author's lifetime, are recorded.

As Gordon Haight remarks in his preface, George Eliot was deeply concerned with the accuracy of her text, and Thomas A. Noble has served her well in presenting the reader with so much detailed information.

---oOo---