In view of the deluge of criticism which is certain to be poured out upon George Eliot’s new novel when the publication is completed, it might seem the part of discretion not to open fire upon the first installment. But this writer’s admirers can reconcile themselves to no argument which forbids them to offer the work a welcome, and—putting criticism aside—we must express our pleasure in the prospect of the intellectual luxury of taking up, month after month, the little clear-paged volumes of ‘Daniel Deronda.’ We know of none other at the present time that is at all comparable to it. The quality of George Eliot’s work makes acceptable, in this particular case, a manner of publication to which in general we strongly object. It is but just that so fine and rare a pleasure should have a retarding element in it. George Eliot’s writing is so full, so charged with reflection and intellectual experience, that there is surely no arrogance in her giving us a month to think over and digest any given portion of it. For almost a year to come the lives of appreciative readers will have a sort of lateral extension into another multitudinous world—a world ideal only in the soft, clear light under which it lies, and most real in its close appeal to our curiosity. It is too early to take the measure of the elements which the author has in hand, but the imagination has a confident sense of large and complex unfolding. The opening chapters are of course but the narrow end of the wedge. The wedge—as embodied in the person of Gwendolen Harleth—seems perhaps unexpectedly narrow, but we make no doubt that before many weeks have gone by we shall be hanging upon this young lady’s entangled destiny with the utmost tension of our highest faculties. Already we are conscious of much acuteness of conjecture as to the balance of her potentialities—as to whether she is to exemplify the harsh or the tender side of tragic interest, whether, as we may say in speaking of a companion work to ‘Middlemarch,’ the Dorothea element or the Rosamond element is to prevail. A striking figure in these opening chapters is that of Herr Klesmer, a German music-master, who has occasion to denounce an aria of Bellini as expressing “a puerile state of culture—no sense of the universal.” There could not be a better phrase than this latter one to express the secret of that deep interest with which the reader settles down to George Eliot’s widening narrative. The “sense of the universal” is constant, omnipresent. It strikes us sometimes perhaps as rather conscious and over-cultivated; but it gives us the feeling that the threads of the narrative, as we gather them into our hands, are not of the usual commercial measurement, but long electric wires capable of transmitting messages from mysterious regions.

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Daniel Deronda: A Conversation

Theodora, one day early in the autumn, sat on her verandah with a piece of embroidery, the design of which she made up as she proceeded, being careful, however, to have a Japanese screen before her, to keep her inspiration at the proper altitude. Pulcheria, who was paying her a visit, sat near her with a closed book, in a paper cover, in her lap. Pulcheria was playing with the pug-dog, rather idly, but Theodora was stitching, steadily and meditatively. “Well,” said Theodora, at last, “I wonder what he accomplished in the East.” Pulcheria took the little dog into her lap and made him sit on the book. “Oh,” she replied, “they had tea-parties at Jerusalem—exclusively of ladies—and he sat in the midst and stirred his tea and made high-toned remarks. And then Mirah sang a little, just a little, on account of her voice being so weak. Sit still, Fido,” she continued, addressing the little dog, “and keep your nose out of my face. But it’s a nice little nose, all the same,” she pursued, “a nice little short snub nose and not a horrid big Jewish nose. Oh, my dear, when I think what a collection of noses there must have been at that wed-