

A GIRL IN POOR COMPANY.

Coming down to the office on a train a few mornings since we noticed a girl of our acquaintance eagerly reading a book. Our seat was just behind the one occupied by her, and it was almost impossible not to see the title of the volume she was devouring. It was a well-known sentimental novel of questionable moral teaching. That evening we chanced to meet this young friend just as we reached the station, and upon entering the coach we sat down together. Presently I said:

"I was sorry to see you in questionable company on the train this morning."

The young woman looked startled and said:

"Why, you are certainly mistaken; I was alone."

"No, not alone," we said; "and you seemed to be very much delighted with your company."

"What do you mean?" our young friend

demanded, her eyes flashing with indignation.

Simply this," was the reply; "you were reading a silly book. You were reading it with evident relish. You were so held by its fascination that you noticed nothing that was transpiring about you, and looked up in real surprise when you found yourself at your journey's end. A book is a companion. A silly book is a silly companion. A silly companion is a questionable one. A questionable one is a dangerous one. You judge people by the society they seem to enjoy. Is it not fair to judge them also by the books they choose?"

The question was not pressed, and we passed on to more agreeable themes.

The books and periodicals we read influence us tremendously. Next to the people with whom we mingle, the literature we devour shapes our sentiment, determines our convictions, and makes us what we really are. We cannot afford to spend one day, one hour, one minute, in the company of a questionable book.

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