

edged tools in the hands of the babes of knowledge, but with which they may do damage both to themselves and their neighbours.

The theological novel has not erred on the side of orthodoxy, it has been the champion of a "God without religion," or a "religion without God," or else it has caricatured where it should have expounded. It has awakened doubt in the minds of those who, while they may question, have not the means or time for the research necessary to a full and proper answer. It asserts without proving, it gives forth as an ascertained result what is tentative only. It brings forward the doubts of one school without suggesting how these have been met by another. The novelist is not an equipped theologian, therefore his work will necessarily be rather criticism than construction. The facility with which he raises doubts is equalled only by his inability to lay them. The doubts that are laid by any amount of novels are necessarily small, but it by no means follows that the faith of many in the eternal verities is strengthened by a reading of such works. There is thus created a cheap scepticism in some, and a real and sorrowful incertitude in others, both alike without the foundation of real study and research, and none the less dangerous for that. Such books are generally short-lived. On the other side, as Mr. Selby points out, "The books which with due care and comprehensiveness portray human character and its issues will live, and in proportion to their truth to fact must surely illustrate some of those great principles of religious faith which are bound up with the constitution of man and the history to which he contributes.

Our lecturer's aim is not to in-

vest modern fiction writers with cap and gown and give them a chair of systematic theology; but rather to put them in the witness box, and receive their testimony to the existence of those truths which are fundamental in the Christian religion. George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and the Scottish school, are examined, and their conclusions on human depravity, the distinction between vice and virtue, and the reward for good and the punishment for evil are noted. The key-note of Mr. Selby's work is in the following paragraph:

"A writer may chance to be without fixed religious belief, and the theology which pervades his chapters will be identical with an inevitable theology in his own sub-consciousness, which he cannot cast off or ignore. In some respects, especially, when days of questioning and controversy are upon us, literature of this type may be of a higher religious value than that which is conceived with the direct object of pointing a pious moral or advocating some formulated scheme of belief and church government. This theology in solution, which is diffused through all the higher literature of fiction, has evidential force about it of no mean order, inasmuch as it shows that man is religious in spite of himself, and that even in the writer who has repudiated dogma there is an irreducible minimum of theology out of which some of the cardinal articles of the faith may be built up in new forms."

With this aim of finding "theology in solution," Mr. Selby takes a number of representative writers, goes through their work carefully, and gives us results. There is searching, trenchant criticism, and just, candid appreciation of those under review.

George Eliot is introduced to us as "one whom Nature meant for a great theologian as well as a superb interpreter of human life" and character; but the Coventry Socinians, the task of translating Strauss, and the sinister influence