

adultery is no crime; * and there De Balzac ridicules marriage in language which it would make us blush to repeat. It is said by Defoe, that the atmospheric poison which produced the great plague, was accompanied throughout its continuance by a clear and beautiful sky. And so it is with these novels; their contents are adorned with a brilliant and attractive garb, they seem at first to be innocent and amusing, but beneath these seductive appearances, there lurk impurities, which are morally destructive, and morally terrible. In another respect they are unlike the plague, for it destroyed without discrimination, but *they* destroy

* We remember to have read with some surprise, an article in Howitt's *Journal*, upon the writings of Georges Sand, (*alias* Madame Dudevant,) in which some of her immoralities are made light of, and others are excused on account of the misery she received from her husband. But we have yet to learn, that because a lady was unfortunate in her marriage, she should urge that the continuance or discontinuance of the marriage tie, should be regulated solely by the caprice of the parties interested. And there is still less excuse in the present case, for she is a woman, a lady, and a *Mother*!

Miss Edgeworth, in a letter dated April 23rd, 1838, thus expresses herself concerning French novels:—"All the fashionable French novelists will soon be reduced to advertising for a *NEW VICE*, instead of, like the Roman Emperor, simply for a new pleasure. It seems to be with the Parisian novelists a first principle now, that there is no pleasure without vice, and no vice without pleasure; but that the old world vices having been exhausted, they must strain their genius to invent new; and so they do, in the most wonderful and approved bad manner, if I may judge from the few specimens I have looked at. M. de Balzac, for example who certainly is a man of genius, and as certainly, a *de l'esprit comme un démon*. I should think that he had not the least idea of the difference between right and wrong, only that he does know the difference by his regularly preferring the wrong, and crying up all the *Ladies of error* as *Anges de tendresse*. His pathos has always, as the anti-Jacobin so well said of certain German sentimentalists, and as the Duchess of Wellington aptly quoted to me, of a poetic genius of latter days—his pathos has always

"A tear for poor guilt."

* *Vide* 'Piero Gorriotti,' who pays the gaming debts of his daughter—provides a luxuriously furnished house of assignation, bath and boudoir, for one of his angel-daughter-sinners; and tells her he wishes he could strangle her husband for her with his own hands, having first married, and sold her to said husband for his own vanity and purpose! If the force of vice and folly can further go, look for it in another of M. de Balzac's most beautifully written immoralities, 'Le Message,' where the husband 'gobbles' up the dinner, to the scandal of the child, while the wife is stifling in the barn, or screaming in despair for the death of her lover, which had been communicated to her by the amiable gentleman-messenger, at the moment he is dining with the husband, who knows all about it, and goes on *gobbling*, while the child exclaims, 'Papa, you would not eat so, if mamma was here'!!! Notes of admiration are the only notes that can follow such pictures of French nature, in man, woman and child!"

only what is good—they foster and engender all that is bad. And yet we see them widely circulated here; and we hear that they are sought after and read by some who profess to be very moral!

We pass over, without comment, another, and a worse class of novels, which, while pretending to warn youth from the dens of vice which exist in all large cities and towns, serve rather as a directory to the vicious, and teach many what, but for these books, they might never have learned.

In conclusion, let us hope, that our remarks have not been misunderstood. We do not object to a good novel, but we do object to many which are read, and which are held by many to be readable. We are not one of those who would abolish all works of fiction, because, many of them are the conveyers of valuable lessons. We would not have others deprived of a source from which we have frequently derived both instruction and amusement. We would not wish to debar the school-boy, after having learnt his lesson from Lindley Murray, and solved a problem in Euclid, from gratifying his curiosity in the pages of "Robinson Crusoe," or in the tales in the "Arabian Nights." We would not wish that a maiden, after an hour's toil over a French verb, should be prevented from heaving a sigh over "Paul and Virginia," or that the poor clerk, after standing twelve hours behind a counter or a desk, should not occasionally amuse himself with a volume of "Sir Walter's," or the "last" of Dickens'. And sure we are that many professional and mercantile men, after the toil and fatigue of the day, have frequently derived much agreeable amusement, in laughing over selected passages from Rabelais, and unobjectionable tales from Boccaccio. And let them continue to do so, whenever they think it necessary, but *not* when it is unnecessary, nor read what is injurious.

And although we admit that novels may be made the instruments of good, and that there are many both amusing and instructive, yet we would remind the reader, that nature is a higher and a purer field, for the exercise and enlightenment of the mind. We are constrained to do this, from a conviction that fiction is a little too much sought after now-a-days. Science, except to a few, is still a closed book; the many still think it to be a comparatively uninteresting accumulation of facts; they shun it as they would an unpleasant task, and run to fiction for amusement. But this is a mistaken idea. There is far more real poetry in science than in fiction. Why then run to poets and novelists only for the ideal, while you have for observation, the inhabitants of