

CHAPTER I.

THE AUTHOR DEFINES HIS POSITION.

IT appears to me that the world is returning to its second childhood, and running mad for Stories. Stories! Stories! Stories! everywhere; stories in every paper, in every crevice, crack and corner of the house. Stories fall from the pen faster than leaves of autumn, and of as many shades and colorings. Stories blow over here in whirlwinds from England. Stories are translated from the French, from the Danish, from the Swedish, from the German, from the Russian. There are serial stories for adults in the *Atlantic*, in the *Overland*, in the *Galaxy*, in *Harper's*, in *Scribner's*. There are serial stories for youthful pilgrims in *Our Young Folks*, the *Little Corporal*, "*Oliver Optic*," the *Youth's Companion*, and very soon we anticipate newspapers with serial stories for the nursery. We shall have those charmingly illustrated magazines, the *Cradle*, the *Rocking Chair*, the *First Rattle*, and the *First Tooth*, with successive chapters of "Goosy Goosy Gander," and "Hickory Dickory Dock," and "Old Mother Hubbard," extending through twelve, or twenty-four, or forty-eight numbers.

I have often questioned what Solomon would have said if he had lived in our day. The poor man, it appears, was somewhat *blasé* with the abundance of literature in his times, and remarked that much study was weariness to the flesh. Then, printing was not invented, and "books" were all copied by hand, in those very square Hebrew letters where each letter is about as careful a bit of work as a grave-stone. And yet, even with all these restrictions and circumscriptions, Solomon rather testily remarked, "Of making many books there is no end!" What would he have said if he looked over a modern publisher's catalogue?

It is understood now that no paper is complete without its serial story, and the spinning of these stories keeps thousands of wheels and spindles in motion. It is now understood that whoever wishes to gain the public ear, and to propound a new theory, must do it in a serial story. Hath any one in our day, as in St. Paul's, a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation—forthwith he wraps it up in a serial story, and presents it to the public. We have prison discipline, free trade, labor and capital, woman's rights, the temperance question, in serial stories. We have Romanism and Protestantism, High Church, and Low Church and no Church, contending with each other in serial stories, where each side converts the other, according to the faith of the narrator.

We see that this thing is to go on. Soon it will be necessary that every leading clergyman should embody in his theology a serial story,