

whites is the darkest chapter of our national history. In the name of humanity and the Christian faith we profess,

let that chapter be closed. Let the Indian be treated hereafter as a fellow-man—a man for whom Christ died.

AROUND THE EDITOR'S TABLE.

Immoral Characters in Fiction.

MR. HAWTHORNE'S able article on another page impinges on matters of vital moment to all pastors. If it be true, as Mr. BESANT recently said in a lecture in New York, that out of every twenty books read in America nineteen are novels, what a force is at work here for good or ill! It is a force that cannot be suppressed, but can and must be regulated. Unfortunately there has been at times more zeal than wisdom displayed in the attempt to regulate it.

Should a novel be tabooed because it has characters that swear and gamble, and in a variety of ways violate the Christian's code of morals? One might as well ask if a picture should have shade as well as light. A picture all light is no picture, and a novel in which the existence of evil in the world is unrecognized, is not only valueless, but injurious. If such is the only fiction not to be discarded, what shall we have left? Nothing from Dickens, or Thackeray, or Scott, or George Eliot, or Victor Hugo. "Pilgrim's Progress," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and *Æsop's Fables* will all have to go. Nine out of ten fairy tales must die a premature death. The parables of Scripture will be few and far between. No; sin is a great omnipresent, tragic fact of human existence, and the novelist should not and cannot ignore it.

How then is he to depict evil—as it is or as it is not? The question answers itself. But at this point the difficulty really begins. Zola is said to depict it as it is in Paris. Certain vile, garbage-gathering sheets are said to present it as it is in America. Here then comes in the vital point in this matter—the attitude of the novelist toward the sin he depicts. What is it? Answer that question and you have the "clew of the maze" in every case. Does he gloat over the sin, roll it as a sweet morsel under his tongue, or is he even a mere impassive

spectator of it? In either case avoid him as you would a leper. It is idle to say the novelist sinks all personality. He cannot do it. But if he could, and dissected evil as stoically as a surgeon dissects a corpse, the moral effect would be disastrous. Indifference to sin is not unmoral: it is flagrantly immoral. The novelist who approaches sin with an inward shudder, genuine, not affected, is the only novelist who has a claim to the world's honor. But this is not all; he must make you shudder. If he does not do that he may be a master, but he is not the novelist for you. All object lessons are not equally adapted to all persons. A novel is an object lesson. It may teach one thing to one, another thing to another. But it is sure to teach something.

Art for art's sake is the cry we hear on all sides. In one sense the cry is justified. It marks a healthful reaction from the too great austerity of Cromwell's earnest followers. As Cousin well says, Art is not the mere handmaid of religion. It has its own distinct, well-defined course, and that course is not simply to tread in the footprints of morality and religion. But forever and ever it walks by their side, as a fellow-worker, not a servant; as a partner, not a hireling.

No one, we think, realizes more clearly than do we the difficulties encountered, when applying these principles to specific cases. In this connection, and as presenting the case from the novelist's own standpoint, we give the following letter, written by a distinguished novelist, who is also on the editorial staff of one of the foremost metropolitan journals of the day:

LETTER FROM JOHN HABBERTON.

MY DEAR DR. FUNK:

Your note, enclosing Rev. Mr. —'s slashing condemnation of my "Bowsham Puzzle," is at hand. I am greatly amused, and also much disgusted at the good man's outbreak, but it shows me distinctly how bad books get a wide circulation; for in the family or flock of such a