

leave love-sick knights and gouty barons, to slumber undisturbed in their cosins; and antique fashions and ideas, as subjects for the antiquarian; and subterraneous passages and romantic legends, as food for nursery maids and old women.

The novelists who, we may say, compose what may be called the Tragic School, may be divided into two classes; one of which aims to make romance of crime, and the other, to palliate sensuality. A few of the first class, like Mr. Ainsworth, are satisfied with making, occasionally, a hero of a pickpocket, a burglar, or a highwayman, but the remainder go a step further, and regularly familiarise the public with the scenes and occupants of the principal *purlicues* of Europe. They bring their readers among gamblers and murderers, forgers and highwaymen, and they instruct them in the secrets of their occupations, the peculiarities of their residences, and a narration of their exploits. The more horrifying the cases, the more disgusting the circumstances, the more prominently do these authors bring them forward. Some parents have actually said, "they could not discover anything criminal in such novels, and consequently they did not consider themselves justified in withholding them from their children." Not immoral? Why, what can be more so, than descriptions of the worst of criminals, and pictures of loathsome dens of vice? Not immoral? Why we would rather see a volume of Paul de Kock's enter a family, because its barefaced obscenity would secure immediate consignment to the fire, while the poison of the other would be rarely discovered, until a portion had been imbibed. Would these parents lead their children through the dens of vice in New York, or St. Giles in London, or the cellars in Paris, and describe to them the habits and the history of the inmates?—"No!" would be the reply of every Christian parent. But they do worse, who allow their children to read the descriptions of such places as are to be found in certain works of fiction. If youth must see vice, let them see it in its nakedness, and unless endowed with uncommonly bad propensities, they will shrink from it with disgust. But in some of the pages of Sue, Dumas, and Ainsworth, and in most of those of Reynolds, Soulie, and De Balzac, *ad hoc genus omne*, crime is represented in a species of heroism, and the hideous features in his character are partially, if not wholly, hid, by the dramatic manner in which they are portrayed. Worst of all, we cannot even console ourselves with a hope, that these works are only read by the licentious, for they are, unfortunately, to be

found on the tables of some who are intelligent, and in other respects, scrupulously moral; and that they are extensively read elsewhere, may be assumed, from the number and variety which are appearing. No one but the "Searcher of all hearts," will be able to tell the evil they have inflicted, and will inflict upon society; for—like that mysterious poison of the Borgias—the premonitory symptoms are various, and years may elapse before the effect presents itself. But though it may be uncertain when the effect may come, it is certain that it *will* come, unless prompt counteracting precautions are employed; for it is as unreasonable to expect, that the hand can meddle with pitch without defilement, as to suppose that immoral novels can be read without injury. It is doubtless necessary that a youth, when approaching manhood, should be, in a certain degree, made acquainted with the depraved character of certain classes in society, but there are far better sources than these novels, through which such information may be conveyed.

We now wish to make a few observations upon the second class, whose chief aim seems to be, to palliate sensuality. We are thankful that few, if any, of such writers, can claim the English language as their vernacular. The most of those with whom we are acquainted are French. They endeavor to strike a blow at the very basis of morality. They indirectly advocate the abolition of all moral restraint. They recommend the adoption of the worst features of socialism, without any of its redeeming characteristics. They would destroy all that we hold to be dear. They would desecrate with impunity, what we esteem to be sacred. Domestic charms, and conjugal faithfulness, filial affection, and parental virtue, are in their eyes matters of little moment. They would establish a new order of things, which would introduce socialism for government, unbounded licentiousness for morality, and a species of infidelity for religion. A system which calls property, "theft," which would recognize no check upon the most debased mind, and inculcates doctrines subversive of all religion. It is no wonder that the spot which gives birth to such productions, and where they are perused with applause, is so much tainted with immorality, and the most licentious city in Europe. It is no wonder that the churches of Paris are rarely frequented by any but aged women and young children: that its citizens are held to be unfit for republican institutions; and that every third inhabitant is supposed to be illegitimate! This is not surprising, when we remember, that there Jules Janin says licentiousness is no vice; there Georges Sand contends that