

The Age of Novels.

Ancient Greece and Rome had their ages of fabulous literature, ages in which those nations were deeply sunk in vice and gross superstition; so have we our age of romance; and if we are not so deeply sunk in vice as the nations referred to, it is not to be attributed, by any means, to any real worth these productions possess, or to any power that romantic literature inherits, with regard to the elevation of our race. Our facilities for spreading either good, or pernicious works, or both, are infinitely greater than were those of the ancients.

But it may be said that our fiction takes a higher stand-point, morally considered, than did the fabulous writings of those effeminate nations. In other words, we have ascended higher in the scale of moral truth, and have not descended quite so low in the scale of vice as those once powerful nations did. But that we have descended is beyond dispute. At the restoration of letters in the fifteenth century, our forefathers of that age did not indulge in romance, but on the contrary, a solid and bold literature was introduced in company with Christianity; sound knowledge was the native growth of their own minds, fostered and propagated by influences, which superstition was not able to gainsay or destroy.

The restoration of literature accompanied the revival of Christianity. Christianity never was in any age satisfied to go hand in hand with mythical or romantic literature. In no age of the world has the genus *novel* been more plentifully produced and closely strewn throughout the world, than in the present; and few are the vices of this age that have assumed a more prominent foothold on the mind of society than that of novel reading; and were it not for the counteracting influences—the spread of Bible truth, we should be strongly impressed with the fact, that society would return to the days, when all literature was fa-

bulistic, and all knowledge filled with super-stition.

We are told, in the classification of novels, that there are to be found, those that interest, and those that instruct; we have not met with the latter; while the former, from the prevailing taste of the age for the romance is very abundant.

The taste for novel-reading is entirely different from that for standard works; in the former, when, what is called a good moral cannot be procured, those of an inferior grade will do; in other words, a taste for the higher order of novels begets a taste for the lower class; it is quite different with regard to standard works; on reading these remarks, even those of the most common place class, a relish is obtained for those of a higher order; or, in other words, like begets like. The novels which are most generally sought after, are those that possess the greatest amount of dreaming nonsense, and whose real weakness, morally considered, is their highest commendation.

On entering a stationer's shop the first thing that presents itself to the beholder is, a table, to use a modern expression, *groaning* with the most wretched trash; which delineates in the most improper manner, marriages, seductions, burglaries, forgeries, and deaths; in them the most profound mysteries are conjured out of the slenderest materials.

We are told that fiction "consists in the narration of imaginary incidents;" and "the difference between the narrative and the fiction lies in the character of the incidents they respectively relate;" and that "the narrative may be true, while the fiction is created either wholly or in part by the imagination. And the chain of incidents on which a fiction is founded is called its plot."

The advocates of fictitious compositions assert, that such writings "constitute one of the most important de-