

hence, it must follow that the general tendency of our English novel is towards indifference. True, there have been a few good Catholic novels written in English, but there is no doubt that infidelity and Protestantism have a monopoly of English literature in general and of the novel in particular. This must necessarily be so; circumstances have made it so. For nearly three hundred years after the Reformation there were none within the pale of the Church who used the English language excepting the Irish Catholics, and these labored under such disadvantages with regard to education that, far from producing an English Catholic literature, they found it a difficult task to preserve even their faith. It is only since the days of O'Connell in Ireland and Wiseman in England that any Catholic literature or philosophy worthy of note has made its appearance in the English language. Thus, we see that English literature and philosophy are necessarily atheistic and Protestant; and being such, they must be indifferent; and being indifferent they must cause indifference in their readers.

Some Catholics may deny that the novel can have any such effect as this, and may loudly boast that it has never weakened their faith or interfered with their morals. No doubt, religion is not openly attacked, neither is murder or theft advocated; this would be rude. But he who reads must be short-sighted indeed, if he do not discover the poison concealed between the polished lines. As a matter of fact, those who, before receiving a sound education have waded through all the false principles contained in the modern novel, are generally indifferent Catholics; they are those who are too short-sighted to see that a "silent conspiracy" against religion is worse than an open attack. For who will say that the results of German theology and philosophy so cleverly novelized by George Eliot have not left their gloomy impress on thousands of the half-educated? Who will say that "Ouida," writing under the mask of human refinement, has not invested immorality with such a sentimental charm, as to make her works a constant source of danger to the weak and unwary? Who will say that the host of writers of the May Agnes Fleming style, who delight in the multiplication of words and impossibilities

have not turned out more useless, silly, simpering girl-graduates than have all the much-ridiculed lady-academies on the American continent? Or, again, who will deny that Zola and company, by "painting the devil on the wall," have been most successful agents of him whom they paint? These are questions whose answers cannot be otherwise than damaging to the modern novel; and those who honestly answer them cannot but admit the danger of indiscriminate novel-reading.

It may be asked, then, if such a novelist as George Eliot is to be denied to Catholic readers? This is a question somewhat difficult to answer. First, we must remember, that by far the greater number of our novel-readers are comparatively uneducated, and being so, they are unable to appreciate the style and depth of such a writer as George Eliot. They openly declare that they do not read for the style or the idea, but for the "story." Now, although they can get the story without the style, they cannot get it without imbibing at least some of the false principles with which her writings abound; and herein lies the danger, for this is the most undesirable part to be gleaned. Thus we see that for the generality of people, since they do not read for the style, George Eliot is not only not more profitable reading than any other author, but is a source of the greatest danger. Generally speaking, however, those who are able to appreciate the style of such writers as Eliot and Thackeray may read their works with profit. But these are the educated, and it is not for them we speak, for they are not the novel-reading class.

But if it is not advisable to place novels containing false principles, excellent in style though they be, in the hands of young, inexperienced, and uneducated Catholics who are unfit to judge for themselves, and therefore, unable to sift the wheat from the chaff, some substitute must be sought, for novels, like democracy, have come to stay, and this being so, we must give a prominent place to those of sound principles. Are, then, novels to be made distinctively Catholic? Nothing could be a greater mistake. The author of the "goody goody" stories who seems to think he should follow, catechism in hand, to read an open lesson on Catholic doctrine in every third paragraph, and