

example, as the Reverend Charles Kingsley and the Reverend George Robert Gleig, whose stories are now nearly forgotten, though some of them, I think, deserve a better fate. Ere long fiction became a mighty force. It is pleasant to be able to recall that Catholic clergymen, a class noted for its strict conservatism and dignified reserve, were not overslow in employing the old, but then newly-revived power of prose fiction. I do not suppose it would be far wrong to name the Jesuit, the Reverend Francis Mahoney, (Father Prout) as the pioneer of the new clerical departure; because while the productions on which his fame will rest were not stories, perhaps, he wrote a number of these latter and they were all quite popular in their day. Two Cardinals may be said to have followed where Francis Mahoney led; Cardinal Wiseman with "Fabiola," and Cardinal Newman with "Callista." The path pursued by the Cardinals, has been followed in their turn by priests like the Reverend William Barry and the Reverend John Talbot Smith, with credit to themselves and profit for their people. Nowadays the fiction-writing priest is a common enough spectacle. Why should it not? Of weak and trashy novels I shall not waste time to speak in condemnation, as, if let alone, they generally condemn themselves more effectively than words could do. Fortunately our literature, unlike that of France, is comparatively very free of grossly immoral works of fiction, and the few that deserve to be so designated are no longer prime favorites with the masses. Let me take the novel at its best. The English novel at its best is undoubtedly a great influence that touches every point of the circle of society. It is sought after as eagerly and enjoyed as keenly by the wise and learned as by the simple and unthinking. All our best novels are not only almost altogether free of immorality in its grosser manifestations, but they make a show of moral purpose of some kind or other; their objects are to combat prejudice, alleviate class oppression, sweep down obstacles in the way of social regeneration, or lead men calmly to commune with their own hearts and be still. Monopolizing the dramatic talent of the century, novels "hold the mirror up to nature" before audiences to whose bulk the British theatre, even in its meridian glory could make no boast. The novel answers the call of a strong and perfectly legitimate craving of our nature, the desire for recreation.