

possesses characteristics sufficiently well-marked to be distinguished. It is the novel of "local colour." In it the author uses a thin thread of plot to connect what are practically a series of descriptions in which the natural scenery of a given locality, or the salient features of a particular community, are faithfully drawn. Such novels have a value of their own, although they stand to the higher fiction somewhat in the relationship of the photograph to the painting.

The novel has undergone a remarkable development in the nineteenth century. The general result of this development is expressed by saying that fiction has become philosophic. That is to say, writers of the higher fiction have learnt to base both the development of their plot and the evolution of each separate character, upon principles revealed by the scientific study of the processes of the human mind and the ascertained phenomena of racial and individual evolution. In this way the writer of prose fiction unites the results of the generalized experience of the race with those of his own individual observation of the men and women of his own generation. In thus approaching the study of society from an internal, as well as an external, point of view, he is enabled to present studies of life and analyses of character and motive that are intelligible, and therefore interesting, to the men and women of more than one generation and of more than one country.

Fiction, as thus developed, has become a literary vehicle of extreme importance. To some extent it has usurped the function of the stage as the medium for the exhibition of pictures of life by the display of imagined characters in action. This aspect of fiction is well indicated by the picturesque phrase which has been used to describe the novel—a "pocket theatre." At the same time novels are so widely read that it is impossible not to recognize in them one of the greatest—perhaps the greatest—educational force in literature. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that some of the greatest minds of the century should have adopted this form of literature as the vehicle of their thought. Count Tolstoy