

And what is the average Novel? Let Robert Pollock, Author of the Course of Time, reply:—

"A novel is a book—
Three volumed, and once read and oft crammed full
Of poisonous error blackening every page;
And oftener still of trifling second hand
Remark and old diseased, putrid thought,
And miserable incident, at war
With Nature, with itself and Truth at war,
Yet charming still the greedy reader, on
Till done, he tried to recollect his thoughts
And nothing found but dreaming emptiness."

Much of our modern reading is confined to novels—a large proportion of which are of a trashy, trifling kind. In the shape of sensational stories, the enemy cometh in like a flood, threatening to sap the foundations of morality and virtue, and to bear away multitudes from within the sacred fences of Home and Church and Sabbath School to the fathomless abyss.

Deem me not a needless alarmist, when I ring out the wise man's warning—"Cease, my son, from the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Take such thoughts as these into serious consideration which we can but indicate without any fulness of illustration.

EVILS OF NOVEL READING.

The great bulk of our modern novels encourage deception and discontent; excite a distaste for solid and serious reading; waste precious time; enervate the mind, and undermine the morals.

1. *They encourage deception and discontent.*—Generally speaking, books of fiction furnish distorted views of man's character and condition. They resemble the *mirage* rather than the *mirror*. The reality gives the lie to the reflexion, and the hope excited is doomed to disappointment. In entering on such a course of reading, there is the greatest possible danger of running into excess. The mere sipping at such "streams of false delight" will imperceptibly induce mental intoxication. The novel-reader becomes an empty sciolist or dreamy sentimentalist, bent on fighting with shadows and building castles in the air. Emerging from the temple of romance into the world of reality he finds that he has been all the while looking at nature and life through stained glass. The rosy-tinted past—the living present—are not at all as the exciting pages presented them. He is soured and saddened by the discovery, and feels an utter destitution of taste and talent for coping with the prosaic details—with the plain actualities of real life.

2. *Novels excite a distaste for solid and serious reading.*—They who find in fiction a feast, will not generally be found to hunger and thirst after the Bread which cometh down from Heaven or the water from the well of Bethlehem by the King's Gate. He who gathers

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