

NOTES.

Dean Harris' article on trashy novels has called forth a great deal of comment, among other communications received being the one I have much pleasure in re-producing here :

The valuable paper by Dean Harris on "Infectious Novels" which appeared in your magazine for December, is interesting and instructive. The late head master of Rugby, Dr. Thomas Arnold, one of the greatest educators of his day, says :—"As I believe that the English universities are the best places in the world for those who can profit by them, so I think for the idle and self-indulgent, they are about the very worst ; and I would rather prefer to send a boy to Van Dieman's Land, where he must work for his bread, than to send him to Oxford to live in luxury, without any desire in his mind to avail himself of its advantages. Childishness in boys even of good abilities seems to me to be a growing fault, and I do not know to what to ascribe it except to the great numbers of exciting books of amusement, like *Pickwick* and *Nickleby*, *Bentley's Magazine*, etc. These completely satisfy all the intellectual appetite of a boy, which is rarely very voracious, and leave him totally palsied, not only for his regular work, which I could excuse in comparison, but for all good literature of all sorts, even for history and poetry."

Most unhappily the reading referred to by Dr. Arnold is not limited in its application to the colleges of England, nor indeed, to any age or sex. Multitudes make their

reading of such books in the shape of light reading, periodicals without morals and novels without sense. You can hardly abuse the mind more than to make it feed upon such trash. It would starve the most vigorous intellect, and create a morbid appetite for fiction the most impossible, adventures the most marvellous and unnatural, and scenes the most revolting. The increase of and increasing demand for publications of the character referred to is a most important and alarming feature of the day in which we live. When some years ago, the class of publication known as the "Seaside Library" came into notice, cheap literature furnished to the people was a sensation in book-making. The book counters in the large stores, at the railway stations, the railroads, street cars and ferry boats are all supplied with such publications. Of course those who make such publications their chief reading can have no relish for solid or serious reading. No one can take pleasure in dwelling upon characters and scenes wherein religion appears only as the subject of a jest or a sneer. Coleridge says: "Readers may be divided into four classes. The first may be compared to an hour-glass, their reading being as the sand ; it runs in and it runs out, and leaves not a vestige behind. A second class resemble a sponge, which imbibes everything and returns it nearly in the same state, only a little dirtier. A third class is like a jelly-bag, which allows all that is pure to pass away, and retains only the refuse and the dregs. The