

escape a premature death from the onslaught of this inexorable critic. To praise is certainly more agreeable than to blame: but the newspaper which is supposed to safeguard the interests of the public upon which it lives, should rather warn against bad books than be a party to this gigantic swindle. The criticism of literature is as important as that of architecture, painting, the drama and music; and when we consider the results, we do not hesitate to affirm that it is of vastly greater importance than any of the latter separately, or than all of them combined.

The following counsel of Seneca deserves the deepest attention of every reader: "Dost thou desire that literature should leave on thy mind lasting impressions? Limit thyself to the perusal of some authors full of true genius, sustain thy mind with their treasures. Being everywhere is like being in no particular place. A life spent in travelling makes us acquainted with many strangers, and but few friends. And such is the case with those hurried readers who devour an infinite number of books, without a decided preference for any."

We should, indeed, be most careful in the choice of a novel. If ever a person may be fastidious this is surely one of the occasions. "All the wrong that I have ever done or sung" wrote Byron to Moore, "has come from that confounded book of yours." What an intellectual and moral wreck was Moore's book responsible for! What might we not have expected of Byron had he not been thus influenced to evil?

Novels cast a spell over us so strong as to make us accept their philosophy and even their prejudices; hence the great necessity for a careful choice of the authors whom

we read, as great in reality as the companions with whom we associate. Fielding wrote: "We are as liable to be corrupted by books as by companions." How inconsistent in us to refuse to associate with vulgar companions, and at the same time have the most intimate relations with, be the constant pupil of, an unknown and perhaps worthless person who possesses the power to express his thoughts, and spread his principles broadcast through the instrumentality of the novel! This individual charms us: we lose our sleep, neglect our duties to lock ourselves up with him. We quote him; we obtrude him on our companions. Should he be attacked we defend him. We imitate him, and are more apt to copy his defects than his good qualities.

The choice of a novel therefore, is of no small importance. We cannot read all those that are printed, and, if we could, there is a great class that cannot be read by a person with a moral standing worthy of the name, with any taste, literary or artistic. Moreover the novel that will delight the youth may have no interest for the young man, and that which will charm the latter may be regarded by a man of mature age as unworthy of perusal. The reader who searches for the exciting details of the novel of incident will find no interest in the novel of character. But since the latter is vastly the more beneficial he should form a taste for it, and courageously pursue that line of reading, though by this proceeding he may not be able to discourse so freely on the latest production as the variety-theatre artist is to warble the latest *fin de siècle* song of the day. A person may nearly always be excused for not having read the latest sensational novel, but