

don't; and detectives if possible, and motors and aeroplanes anyhow. The exact definition of this point is difficult, but it lies somewhere about the region in which the General Reader gets bored to death, and can't stand this dam rot any longer. It does not matter to him that he may be the loser by his abrupt decisions; if anything, he takes an unnatural pleasure in straining the capacity of his Circulating Library to the full extent of its contract. He has paid his subscription, and may change whomever he likes. That's the bargain, and no humbugging!

So he goes on sighing about, shrugging his shoulders, and rocking back every new delivery, saying "I don't like it," or "Tush!" about that; writing short comments on the new edition of "Vieux jeu" or "No Woman would"; only occasionally going carefully through a book to find the chapter that interests him. How said was quite unfit for the girls to read, because one really must keep an eye on what comes into the house nowadays. His decisions can, however, scarcely be accepted as unfailing guides to a just discrimination of literary merit, as those who know him are never tired of insisting on his inattentive habits, his paroxysms of electric suddenness in action, and, above all, his insatiable thirst for something new. As for me, I am like Charles Lamb, when he was told there was a gentleman in the room who admired "Paradise Regained." I should like to feel his bumps.

Nevertheless, he is a personage for whom Authors have a great and natural respect. He is so numerous! And just think what fun it would be if each of him bought a copy of each of one's immortal works! Consequently, I wish to consult his liking, and am prepared—within reason—to defer to his opinion of what length a book ought to be. It is no doubt quite otherwise with those Authors who may be said to belong to the school of Inspirationalism—really one feels quite Modern, writing such a word—who claim for each of their stories the position or character of a sneeze—an automatic action which its victim, perpetrator, executant, interpreter, proprietor, promoter, parent, mover, seconder—or whatever we choose to call him—has absolutely no control over.

But I am wandering away from the point of this apology, which is really to say "peccavi," and, please, I won't do so any more. So far, that is, as is practicable. If I drop into a prehistoric problem-novel, by way of a change, or have a try at an autobiography of Queen Nitocris—just possibilities at random—I will do