

We would not, like many, rush to the sweeping and unwarrantable conclusion, that all fictitious works are alike abominable, or their writers alike destroyers of human rectitude. The "Tele-machus," of Fenelon, and the "Rasselas" of Johnson, teach us the most exalted and ennobling sentiments of virtue, while they shew that happiness, in its truest sense, is not the result of wealth or power, or fame or pleasure. No: we think no higher or holier principles have ever been inculcated in the world, than those of Walter Scott. We would say to the sceptic; go, contemplate the deep and fervent piety of "Butler," the sisterly devotion and beautiful humility of Jeanie Deans." Go, gaze with "Old Mortality," upon the mouldering tombs of the departed, and with him inscribe anew the tribute to their memory, and if thou art not, for this, a better and a purer being, the solitary places of the earth should hide thee, unworthy as thou art for intercourse with men.

We cannot then conform to the broad opinion we have mentioned, but we say this, that there is far too much idle, affected sentimentality, both in the literary productions of our own country and in those which we obtain from abroad. Here and elsewhere, every dunce who can scribble about the moon and stars, or indite a paltry "sonnet to his mistress' eye-brow," esteems himself at once a Petrarch or a Byron; and in virtue of his dignity as such, must plague the world with his senseless effusions. The modern satirist, Saxe, describes these as

"— Youths who crossing Nature's will,
Harangue the landscape they were born to till."

Truly it redounds but little to the honor of our literary taste, that we most eagerly seek for and devour so much despicable trash. If we desire to enjoy the highest pleasures of romance and poetry, we need not attempt to follow the almost interminable train of writers who have appropriated to themselves this department of letters. In a very few properly selected works, will be found all the beauties and excellencies that fiction in any of its forms is capable of presenting. These are reproduced under various circumstances by others, and almost to the decided detriment of the sentiments themselves. Thus, after we have studied the finely delineated character of "Pauline," in "The Lady of Lyons," we read further, but to find the beauties of that character destroyed by the affectation of presumptuous imitators.

It seems at present, to be a general notion among literary men, that, unlike Pope, who wrote in the morning, only to erase and correct

during the remainder of the day, if they do not yield to the progressive spirit of the age, that is, publish continually without ever stopping to revise what they have written, public attention will be diverted from themselves to their more expeditious rivals. This pernicious haste is remarkable in the English James and the American Ingraham, who have poured forth their works for years with almost incredible rapidity—and though we frequently discover in the compositions of each the impress of a fervid imagination and a keen perception of the many varieties in nature, we are still forced to regret, that neither has, sufficiently for his own lasting reputation, submitted to the hateful necessity of correction, and the wearisomeness of delay. The author of "Ion" has set an example to his literary brethren, which we trust will yet be extensively followed. He has shown that to erase or to alter passages, hurriedly, and of course imperfectly, written, is by no means an injury to the force of the expression or the harmony of the language; and that he who consents to the drudgery of such a task, may in the end far outstrip those others who have laughed to scorn his industry and patience. It is said that Demosthenes transcribed no less than ten times the entire history of Thucydides, that the energetic style of that distinguished historian might contribute to the formation of his own. An example so illustrious is unfortunately but little regarded.

After all, History is the highest and noblest species of literature! and as such, is the one best adapted to our present intellectual necessities. Here we find united entertainment and instruction—the curious and the philosophic. History is defined to be "philosophy teaching by examples." He who delights in the romantic, need not suppose it is alone contained in fiction! nor need he go back to the early traditionary periods in search of the marvellous and wonder-working. The times of England's "Virgin Queen"—the singular incidents connected with the fate of Essex, the adventures and subsequent imprisonment of Raleigh! the journey of Prince Charles and Buckingham to the Court of Madrid; the fall of the Stuart family, and later still, the brief but terribly eventful supremacy of the infernal trio, Robespierre, Marat and Danton; and the rise, glory and fall of Napoleon—these are the more interesting since we are confident of their reality. They bid defiance to the continued efforts of the most imaginative romancist to excel them.

It would be well, indeed, if History contributed more abundantly than it now does towards our stock of knowledge as a nation. It is a sad disgrace to many otherwise well informed, and