

is competent to the novel. At least the English novelists who have undertaken this rôle are numerous and powerful enough to give the weight of success to the arguments for the affirmative. Not that any writer needs to bring his doctrine or his formulas into the forefront, or is even justified in doing so; for to be continually drawing an obvious moral is fatal to the success of any dramatic representation. Moralizing there may be in abundance, and George Eliot, one of the greatest dramatists of this age, is probably only excelled in this direction by the greatest dramatist in all English literature. But the moral reflections must come spontaneously and with unstudied art, flowing naturally from the situations described. And these situations must be samples of, or parallels to genuine human experience. They must describe events, actions, and consequences such as everyone may feel that he himself is liable to pass through, commit, or suffer. And if a given situation is of a very special kind, the reader must be made to feel by a profound and accurate moral and psychological analysis that the same history might be his if moral restraints were wanting or in abeyance, so that he is made to feel, by a deduction which is all the more powerful because he is left to draw it for himself, that the depths of baseness and wickedness or the supreme height of moral and spiritual triumph are within the possibilities of his own nature, whose unawakened tendencies he suddenly sees most plainly and faithfully laid bare. It is in this power of bringing typical experiences home to the feelings and consciences of thoughtful men, that George Eliot seems to me to be unrivalled among English novelists and dramatists. Instance of this subtle, transcendent power will be cited presently. Meanwhile it is worth while, and especially in connection with the much debated question of the relation of the novel to moral truth, to say a word in favor of the view that fiction is in certain respects an unequalled vehicle for the conveying and impressing of such truth. It may be added that the sphere of the true novelist, such as I conceive George Eliot to have filled, is distinguished clearly from that of the mere story-teller, who furnishes the largest part of the mental pabulum of the young people of the age, and equally so from that of the preacher. The story-teller and the preacher, having so little in common in other respects, are yet alike in this, that their greatest power is reached when they describe particular situations, and they