

the Reformation as a last resource; he seeks to divide in order that he may ruin. As in every case he was partially successful in starting the conflagration, so in this one did he set the match to very strong combustibles; but we ever find that the flames had no more effect on the life of the Church than had those in the days of Moses on the branches of the burning bush.

NOVEL READING.

In considering this subject we must do so from a threefold standpoint: the reader, the novel, and the author. It was our intention to commence with the authors and then speak of the readers; but we come to the conclusion that it is better to know ourselves before we begin to study others,—so let us commence with the readers.

There are three kinds or categories of novel readers: 1st, people who read for information and improvement; 2nd, people who read merely that they may be able to speak about the works afterwards and appear well-read or learned; 3rd, people who read for a pastime, or merely for the excitement of the imagination. Let us take a short glimpse at each of these three categories!

1st. There are people who read novels for information and improvement. A novel, although a fiction, is not always false; often it is fiction based upon history. Take for example Sir Walter Scott's novels. They are nothing more or less than history, but history so clothed in the language of fancy, so decorated with scenes painted by the author, so peopled with imaginary beings that hover around the real historical personages, that really there is ten-fold the enjoyment in reading them and just as much benefit to be gained (from an historical standpoint) as in the reading of the cold dry pages of some so-called authentic history of that epoch. They are fictions; but truthful. Take again Lord Lytton's works (Bulwer), and we find them to be nothing other than elegant histories. What a fund of information can be drawn from these works! See again Disraeli's novels: they are the real history of European diplomacy. But besides those who read for the sake of historical information, there are others who read to glean information upon other subjects such as religion, &c. But the latter class of readers is few in number, mostly of those who wish to study these works for the purpose of pointing out to others the dangers that lurk under the glitter of romance. And, most certainly, if the number of those who read novels with the object of gathering information is small, much smaller is that of the people who read for real honest improvement.

2nd. Numerous, however, are the readers who read that they may be able to speak of the works and thus, with a superficial knowledge, pass for men of learning and wisdom. This is truly an acted lie; because you skim over page upon page and nothing remains in your mind but a vague idea of the purport of the work and the names of a few characters: with these you rush into society, literary circles and learned company. Your presumption (vulgarized cheek) drives you ahead and with your vague ideas and bear-roll of names some of which are meaningless to yourself, you pose and command, usurp conversation, pretend to universal knowledge and cause those who are really versed in the subject to be silent. Thus you display at once your own ignorance to those who know you to be a superficial reader, and your want of tact, to those who can see through the glitter of your mask. You might as well stand up

and say: "friend I have made a life study of these books and I am going to instruct you upon them, you who are ignorant." This would be a lie—but no more serious a lie than the acted one of which we are speaking. We said that this superficial reading, when done for the purpose of deceiving others and when used afterwards with that intention, is on a level with cheating. To cheat is merely to so deceive that you deprive another of that which is of use to him or is his right; but to do so in such a manner that he is, so to speak blindfolded. What does the one who runs over a whole library of books, picking their names and, here and there, the name of some character, that is likely to be mentioned in the circle in which he moves? He merely spends his time preparing ammunition, wherewith to deceive his neighbors and to give them a false opinion of his knowledge, to cheat them of their original opinion, the one upon which they should base their conduct toward him. And if by this means a man goes farther and secures a confidence or a position, of which he is really unworthy and which he is unfit to occupy, does he not by this means cheat, some worthy and competent person out of that confidence or position? Of all species of reading, and we speak principally about novels, this is the meanest and the most to be despised. Times numberless we have listened to persons in company usurping all the conversation and fairly dazzling us with their brilliant enumerations of authors, poets and characters: in fact one would feel himself completely in the shade; yet by asking a single question about some of these works, personages and characters thus enumerated, the learned (?) reader becomes confused, he stammers, he gets red, he has forgotten that particular point, he has not read that novel for years,—in a word, "the cat is out of the bag." One example just to illustrate our thought: A certain young gentleman in a debating club, (it was a Mock Parliament) stated that, "like *Oliver Twist*, the opposite side of the house was *always calling for more*." A person really unacquainted with the character of Dickens, in all simplicity asked the question, "who is *Oliver Twist*?" The orator was thunderstruck, he never expected that anyone would ask such a question; he dreamed that every one (except himself) knew who *Oliver Twist* was: he had heard the remark made by a speaker upon an election-platform and used it second hand, without even understanding its purport. Had he not been questioned he would have passed for a reader of Dickens; the question, however, exposed his ignorance. This superficial reading, or glancing over title pages, in order to "bumbag" the public is not only an acted lie and an act of cheating, but it is extremely dangerous for the person who is guilty of it. Many and many a humiliation would be spared, and many an exposition of ignorance would be avoided if people would not pretend to know more than they really do know. The ignorant man always imagines that nothing remains for him to learn; the more learned a man becomes the more he feels his own ignorance. Newton, nature's greatest miracle in learning, when dying said, "I am like a man on the sea-shore; I have picked up a few beautiful shells; but there are yet millions upon millions of them; my day is done." The ignorant man always boasts of his own knowledge; the learned man always imagines himself ignorant. In fine, it is a folly and a loss of time to read novels, or any other books, merely in order to glean enough from them to enable you to keep up a conversation, dis-

play your supposed knowledge, and finally, despite yourself, unmask your real ignorance. They of the first category of readers are few; they of the second more numerous; but they of the third are as ten to one.

3rd. People who read novels to while away the time or to enjoy the excitement of imagination that goes with sensational stories. These are the most numerous and the most foolish. They don't read to learn, to glean information, nor yet to improve themselves in manners or in knowledge; nor do they read in order to be able to speak of the works afterwards; they merely read to while away, (that is to lose) time, or else to enjoy a false excitement of the imagination. Both reasons or rather objects are sinful, not to speak of the other injuries they cause. It is sinful to lose time in one way or the other; it is also sinful to concentrate the mind with all its faculties upon that which must inevitably corrupt the heart. We will prove these two points and with that close this article. To lose time is doubtlessly sinful: time is a gift from God and it is distributed with uneven measure; some more, some less, but all have sufficient for the purposes of this world and of the next, provided it is properly employed. It is as bad to lose time reading nonsense as to be losing it in performing nonsensical actions; it is as bad to waste time in filling the vacuum of the mind with poisonous matter as to waste it in filling the body with injurious substances. And what greater waste of time than sitting hour after hour following some mad hero or crazy heroine through all the mazes of an impossible life. If the work be historical, the fiction in it is only a gloss, the history alone is true; if it be not historical, then it has an undercurrent of true or false principles. And never will you get a young novel reader spending hours over a work that has for its object the imparting of true principles; immorality or irreligion must flow through the novel in order to satisfy the worldly heart and the perverted imagination. And this brings us to the second point, the sinfulness of concentrating the mind upon that which corrupts the heart. In real life never do you meet with any of those characters of romance; we mean of the common novel of our day; blood, murder, adultery, impiety, and all the evils (like the demigods of the Pagans) are exalted into heroes and heroines and held up as models to the untrained mind and become examples for them to follow. And what are the consequences: Suicides daily recorded in our papers; murders by youths not out of their teens; seductions; unhappy marriages; elopements; robberies; insane asylums filled and prisons replenished yearly; the poor-house, the gutter, the hospital and finally the grave! All, all, the results of that fearful evil, the reading, light, trashy, immoral and irreligious novels. If you doubt it just read the papers that daily come from large cities; you will find the confirmation of what we state. Yes; to read and not know how to read, nor what to read, is a fearful danger that is rampant over the world to-day. Let this suffice for one article. We shall have more to say on this subject later on.

"TRUTH" SPEAKS.

In a recent number of *Truth* the celebrated Labouchere has an article upon "A Rescued Nun." After going over the history of Miss Golding's lies about French convents, bringing Mr. Edward Littleton to task for acting as "manager" for the firebrand female, and giving a set down to the "North Sussex Protestant Parliamentary Council," of which organization the said Littleton is

styled "Honorary Secretary," he concludes with these remarks: "I am not a Roman Catholic; but I see no reason why Roman Catholics should be attacked in this fashion. Any one who knows France must be aware that in no country are there more people who would be delighted to bring a charge that holds water against conventual establishments. The poor silly 'Rescued Nun' is very possibly, as her sister suggests, suffering from brain disturbance. I therefore do not—if this be the case—blame her. But what is to be thought of her *impresario*, the man Littleton? What of the 'North Sussex Protestant Parliamentary Council?' What becomes of the funds obtained through these lectures? Do they go to the 'rescued nun' or the Sussex Council? I have read carefully the statements of the 'rescued nun,' and the evidence certified to by the French Mayors and physicians rebutting it, and I have no hesitation in saying that the allegations of the 'rescued nun' are devoid of the shadow of the shade of truth."

It is certainly pleasant to find such a writer pronouncing thus upon a subject that is now discussed quite universally. In almost every country under the sun there are "ex-priests" and "escaped"—(or rather "rescued") nuns. "Rescue sounds more heroic," wrote a friend the other day. And these people are playing upon the bigotry, the ignorance, the folly and the sentimentality of certain classes of audiences. Only the other day do we find the ex-nun of Kenmare—Miss Cusack—raising the roof off a hall with her denunciations of Miss Golding. She positively ridicules the absurd stories told by Miss Golding. Had she the chance of being first in the field with such stories it would be all very fair; but Miss Golding is a rival; she has entered upon Miss Cusack's territory; every shilling paid to hear Miss Golding is a shilling lost to Miss Cusack. It is a matter of business with these ladies; only one sometimes runs foul of the other, and their interests clash. The "ex-priest" and "ex-nun" business is such a good speculation that we are having a regular epidemic of them at present. Only when their dupes will begin to find out that they are supporting and paying these people and are laughed at, in secret, for their pains, will they awaken to the fact that they are being actually robbed.

The other day we received a letter from the editor of the *Catholic Citizen* of Milwaukee, asking us about an "ex-nun," a "rescued" member of the Congregation of Notre Dame, in Montreal, who, under the name of Margaret St. Omer, is preaching throughout the west and unfolding the horrors of convent life. We informed the editor that there never was such a person, either novice or professed, in the Congregation of Notre Dame here. In fact no person bearing, either in the world or in religion, such a name ever entered that community; and decidedly no one ever left it. There was the notorious Miss Diez Debar, who played the very devil—in the literal as well as figurative sense—in Chicago, at the Church of the Holy Family, and who is now continuing her infernal work under different names—that of St. Olier and that of St. Maur—and who is probably the Miss St. Omer in question.

They are dangerous people in society, and the community is happy which has escaped a visit from one of these creatures. A few lessons like that recently taught to the lying and black-guard editor of the *American Eagle* might serve to bring these impostors to their senses, to cause the public to see through their veil of deceit, and serve to banish the plague from the land.