

Literary and Scientific.

FICTION.

It is feared by some that books of fiction, pure fiction especially, tend to beget, and particularly in the young, a disregard for the pure truth—that in fact and in truth they teach boys and girls, and men and women, to lie. So soon as a boy can read or understand a story, books are placed in his hand, or he is told the stories, about “Jack and the Bean Stalk,” and “Jack the Giant Killer,” “Tom Thumb,” and “Bluebeard,” and such-like vile stuff. The writer, when a boy, was not overlooked in regard to such literature, and was, at the usual early age provided with the customary supply of it. He learned, perhaps as soon as other boys, that the stories were not true, and wondered why they and others such were ever told and written, and by truth-loving people. If they loved the truth why relate such abominable stories? There are truths strange enough to excite the wonder and imagination of the young, if wonderful stories are an essential part of a child's early education, which is very questionable.

It is argued that there is a wide difference between falsehood which is intended to do others good and falsehood intended to do harm. Certainly the former is not so bad as the latter; but it is easier to step from habitual falsehood that will not do direct harm to another, or that may even do another temporary good, to uncharitable falsehood that will do direct harm, than it is to step to falsehood of the latter kind from the pure, unadulterated and simple truth. In this age of misrepresentation, deception and falsehood, we submit this question of the uses and value of fiction as one worthy of the most serious consideration.

“THE WEEK.”—This journal is certainly supplying “a long felt want” in Canada, and ought to, and doubtless will, receive liberal support. Its “Topics of the Week,” “Current Events,” and “Literary Gossip” and “Reviews” are particularly interesting, and, we judge, manifest a very fair amount of independence and impartiality which, indeed, one would expect from the writers associated with it. To professional men it ought to be a welcome periodical. In the ninth number (Jan. 31) we find it sharply questioning the usefulness of the proposed “Library Act” of the Local Government. In this, “*The Week*” alludes to the distress in Toronto—which is of a local character and evidently not general, as follows: “Night after night the police stations are beset by unfortunates seeking for a night's shelter; what is still worse, and disgraceful to any Christian community, persons guilty, of no real offence, are being sent in greater numbers than ever to the city gaol where they must herd with criminals, merely to give them shelter and save them from dying of hunger.”—And to the “Free Library” there: “With these sufferings unrelieved and these scandals unremoved, to spend money in the circulation of free novels, to which nobody has any more claim than to free theatre or excursion tickets, may be the height of liberality and enlightenment, but surely it is not the height of justice.” This distress and the herding of the hungry with criminals is certainly a disgrace to the wealthy Metropolitan “Queen City” of Ontario. “Half a loaf” would be better there than the “no loaf” of the “free” fiction to be circulated. We must ask “*The Week*” though if it would not be more in accordance with its aspirations to correctness whatever its own views of “empty titles may be, to give to “Mr. Tillef” and “Mr. Cartwright” their proper and correct designation.