

The Future of the Novel.

THE perusal of a 'first novel' from the pen of a young American writer, in conjunction with some recent derogatory remarks by a prominent New York editor on the subject of fine writing" is drawn from Mr. James Lanús Allen's expression of his views regarding certain tendencies of American fiction. The novel in question is "Hecla Sandwich," by Mr. Uffington Valentine. Mr. Allen states that its significance rests upon four grounds, namely: "Its choice of a great American theme; its reliance upon the dramatic presentation of human character as the novelist's true business; its insistence in giving human life its true place in nature; and its adherence, for all this, to the lofty standards of English style." These four things, then, we may infer, Mr. Allen regards as desiderata, if not as essentials, of American fiction. On the subject of fine writing he says in the Saturday Review supplement of the New York Times:

"There seems to be need to bring this familiar matter up anew, because of late, voices (that ought to be better employed), have been raised among us in depreciation of the value of fine writing, in contempt of a mere 'drapery of words.' As though words were ever a drapery. As though style were some cheap trick, some unworthy artifice by which nothing, having been well written, is made to acquire the value of something. As though any deficiency or merit, any loss or lack, or credulity of perversion, or fitness or failure in our recent or in our current fiction, could in anywise be traceable to whatsoever respect, whatsoever reverence, whatsoever cultivation, whatsoever practice may exist among us, as a reading and a writing people of the always manly and bold and fearless and noble and ennobling fine art of literature. . . .

"Thus the fine art of literature as regards fiction is simply a test and a revelation of the story. The richer the story is, the more it can reveal. If any good story has ever been hurt or ruined in the telling, not the art of literature is at fault but the incompetent workman who misused the art. But never since the world began has the whole art of fiction, most sagaciously and prodigally exercised, ever been able to make a success of a false story.

"Therefore, if there is anything the matter with American fiction at present—and all seem agreed that something is the matter—then the trouble does not lie in the fact that the novelists of the land may be trying to write their stories in good English. It is not because they may be clinging to the old notion that fiction is literature and literature essentially an art."

Our national fiction, continues Mr. Allen, is not suffering from an excess of fine writing, or is it suffering from a national lack of material for stories.

CENTRAL CANADA EXHIBITION.

The annual exhibition of the Central Canada Exhibition Association will be held at Ottawa beginning on Monday Sept. 11th and lasting during the week. This has grown to be one of Canada's important exhibitions; and in particular is known for a splendid display of live stock. It is probably, outside of Toronto, the most attractive and best attended of Canadian exhibitions.