

*Some Types of Heroines in Fiction*

NORA LEWIS, '08.

THE casual reading of a few English and American novels suggested a comparison of some types of heroines met with in them, and seemed to show a more or less constant growth in the conception of a heroine distinguished not so much by truly heroic qualities as by the quieter charms of naturalness, good sense and even humor. Theories in such matters are as dangerous as edged tools, but at any rate the paper may serve to recall some pleasant people in the world of fiction.

The princess in the fairy tale, whose character as a rule is somewhat summarily disposed of by her chronicler, when he tells us that "she was as virtuous as she was beautiful," is a fair representative of the earliest and simplest type of heroine—the heroine of the Romance as distinct from the novel of character. She was introduced, not for any interest her character might give her, but simply to bear a certain share of the burden of the story. Her part was to be fallen in love with at the opening of the tale, to suffer more or less during its progress, and finally to be restored to happiness and the hero. We might interchange these heroines among the various stories in which they appear, without any consequent incongruities. They were required by the exigencies of the case to be good and gentle and constant, just as they were invariably beautiful and golden-haired. The Romance has been defined as describing what has never happened nor is likely to happen, and in the same way the heroine of the Romance was not thought of in her relation to the woman in every-day life, but was simply one of the stock characters necessary to the telling of the story.

In the history of English fiction, the Romance, or story of more or less fantastic adventure, was followed by what Taine calls the anti-romantic novel, the novel of every-day life, of which the earliest important examples were the novels of Defoe and Richardson. We see this new conception of the novel in the preface to *Robinson Crusoe*, where Defoe hopes that "there will be no appearance of fiction in it," and with the same purpose Richardson puts his novels in epistolary form, so that his characters, by speaking freely for themselves, may seem more