

For example, who has done more to render the study of history an easy and pleasant task than Sir Walter Scott himself? Just let us think for a moment of any historical period which has been permanently pictured in our minds, and can we not trace the picture to its origin in some historical novel? Or to particularise by inditing Sir Walter Scott for treason against himself, when he penned the paragraph we are discussing, who of us is there who understood the true character of James, *the First*, and life at his court, before reading the *Fortunes of Nigel*, or appreciated fully the historic picture of Mary Queen of Scots before laughing and crying and boiling with indignation over *The Abbot*? Have we not studied the "forty-five" from *Waverley*, the spirit of the Covenanters from *Old Mortality*, the valorous conduct of the Celt from *Rob Roy*, the Porteous Riots from the *Heart of Midlothian*? Or turning to other fiction writers, where did those of us, who are not lawyers, get our knowledge of the working of chancery but from Dickens' *Bleak House*, an acquaintance with early American aristocracy but from Thackeray's *Virginians*, an introduction to Florentine art and science but from George Eliot's *Romola*, our first idea of true criticism but from *Tom Jones* and *Wilhelm Meister*? The list might be extended to reach the historical information we may derive from perusing such books as *Chien d'Or*, *François de Bienville* and *Twice Taken*.

But those enumerated are sufficient, and now it may safely be asked, what mind has been injured or weakened by acquiring mind-food through these channels? Do we ever confound the means for the end in such study? Are our minds not rather strengthened in separating the chaff of fiction from the wheat of historical fact? Of course, the mind of an intelligent reader easily distinguishes between the pleasurable element and the intel-

lectual; and may it not be said that only those who have studied history through a dramatic or epic medium are able fully to enter into "the spirit of the times" of an historical period, or to know minutely the characters of the men who took part in it. Why do our most popular historians approach nearer and nearer to the engrossing style of the novel writer, if it be not that they value the pleasurable element as a powerful incentive in acquiring knowledge? For one who has read Hume's *History of England* in detached portions, there are twenty who have read Macaulay's from beginning to end; for the few who have read any of the countless general histories of Canada, there are hundreds who fairly revel with delight in Parkman's works: and for one who has read a volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, there are thousands who take the greatest pleasure in Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* and his *Philip the Second*. And yet it is the pleasurable element in the latter volumes which Sir Walter Scott seems to warn us against, and which when it appears in school-work he would fain despise. Nor is he alone. There are many very orthodox people with the popular novelist in this matter. Like the trustees in the preceding anecdote, these grim-faced folk resent the pleasurable element in school and call it "tag," just as Scott has called it the *Royal Game of the Goose*. Blindly taking their stand upon the narrow proverb that there is no royal road to learning, they for the moment turn their backs upon those genuine principles of the true education, which, when reduced to practice, does for children, what historical novel writing has done for the students of history, making the school a pleasant place, and rendering the lives of children free from some of the many difficulties to be encountered in acquiring knowledge.—*Educational Record, Que.*