

THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE NOVEL.

I

 LOVE my books! they are companions true,
Sterling in worth, in friendship
most sincere;
Here talk I with the wise in ages
gone,
And with the nobly-gifted of our
own;
If love, joy, laughter, sorrow please
my mind,
Love, joy, grief, laughter in my
books I find.

(FRANCIS BENNOCH.)

The novel is "feigned history," as Bacon says, the essential difference between it and true history being that the latter is a narration of events that have actually taken place, while the former is a recital of occurrences that have their existence only in the imagination of their author. The object of one and the other when fulfilling each its proper mission, is the spread of truth: history, the spread of real living truth in the sense that what is narrated has actually occurred at some time: while the novel is also the spread of real truth, but in the sense only of those relations felt to exist between persons or things under particular and expressed conditions, the impressions produced, and the conclusions drawn from premises and conditions laid down by the author. When nature is reflected from the pages of a novel, when she appears in her true and unrivalled perfection, then truth is made manifest. In this mirror she appears in all the splendor of her glorious beauty.

Prof. David Masson, in his excellent work on *British Novelists* divides the British Novels written since the

appearance of Scott into thirteen classes, viz:—1, The Novel of Scottish Life and Manners; 2, The Novel of Irish Life and Manners; 3, The Novel of English Life and Manners; 4, The Fashionable Novel; 5, The Illustrious Criminal Novel; 6, The Traveller's Novel; 7, The Novel of American Manners and Society; 8, The Novel of Eastern Manners and Society; 9, The Military Novel; 10, The Naval Novel; 11, The Novel of Supernatural Phantasy; 12, The Art and Culture Novel; 13, The Historical Novel.

This list is evidently not exhaustive, but it gives us a very good idea of the work accomplished by the novelists, and serves to impress us with the variety of subjects discussed by them. Porter divides novels into two great classes: the Novel of Incident and the Novel of Character, according as adventure forms the chief characteristic of a book, or as strong individuality on the part of the personages is emphasized. The former is the novel best suited to youth while the latter is adapted to the taste of more advanced age and riper judgment. What shall we say of those men and women whose sole reading consists of the sensational novel which for the most part depends for its interest upon the incidents? Their minds have evidently not yet outgrown the stage of development of the amusement—seeking child, have not yet arrived at that of the more discerning age of manhood.

For the youth the heroes of a sensational novel are real, objective