

lesson of the plain unvarnished fact of history and biography, or of that science which reveals 'God's deep wisdom in the natural world,' stand out more palpable to the young mind if less disguised by spangles and rosy wreaths?

Again we say, lest we should be misunderstood, that we do not pronounce a wholesale condemnation of all literature of this class. Yet we think we may very pertinently ask whether we have not, for the present, enough of this kind of thing, and to spare? It was all very well for Addison—who had a great affection for the lotos style of life, by the way, and who was in his day a great cultivator of the dream-inspiring shrub—to say 'Fiction lures him [man] to the severe task by a gayer preface.' But does it? A far more thoughtful writer on education, who had narrowly watched and closely considered educational influences—Hannah More—observes that 'the habitual indulgence in such reading is a silent mining mischief.' The truth of this remark, multitudes can attest from their own experience. Another writer of our own times has well said: 'The novel, as a mode of presenting truth or exhibiting human nature, cannot, upon religious grounds, be condemned. But the *habit* of novel-reading is, of course, another thing. The surrender of the mind and of the life to this, is what every moralist and Christian must condemn. There is an infallible softening of the brain and ossification of the heart attendant on novel-reading. There is but little attention demanded, and the mind is dwarfed. There is a perpetual appeal to emotion, which, as it expends itself in luxurious tears, produces no virtuous action. Is there no higher end for which to live? Is there no more remunerative employment for mind or time? Are self-respect, self-government, and self-improvement growing with the habit? When 'the Master' demands an account, what shall be the response for such an use of immortal energies and opportunities? It fits not for life. If life be a vigorous pulling up the stream against wind and current and toil, then other bone and nerve and flesh-producing pabulum must be provided; but if it be unconscious floating on the river, and

along the odorous banks of sentimentalism, then, of course, let us eat our lotos-fruit, and dreamily, lazily glide on, until startled by the rapids of approaching death, or fully aroused by the swift and arrowy plunge beyond the Niagara of the grave.

We very greatly fear that if this kind of literature continues to inundate our Sunday-schools, and the shelves of our juvenile libraries are too greatly flooded by these lotos-books, our young people will imbibe an unhealthy and ineradicable taste for fiction in early life, which will inevitably develop into a *habit* of novel-reading in after days, and show the 'silent mining mischief' it has wrought in a fearful sentimentality among our daughters, and an 'infallible softening of the brain' among our sons.

Those who have the management of our school libraries should see to this betimes. Our teachers should take care that the books that they recommend to their scholars,—and they can easily guide the scholars in this matter—shall not be always 'pretty stories,' however evangelical the truth or irreproachable the morals dressed up in the 'pleasant garments' of fiction. But the other day we had an illustration of the tendency of our too exclusive reading in this direction. A scholar—a bright intelligent youth of some twelve summers—who had run through a short lotos-course—took home from his school library the life of Bernard Palissy, the potter. Pronounced 'stale, flat and unprofitable,' by one who had so recently banqueted off *jujubes*, it was returned unread. It was 'dry,' and not by any means of the 'pretty story' kind of which he had had so large a taste. It happened, on the Sunday afternoon that witnessed the unread return of the famous Frenchman's life, we passed, on our way to the school, a young man, who carried under his arm several newspapers and a three-volume novel. Shamelessly carried through the streets on a Sunday afternoon, and in a few minutes to be followed by the request of our little scholar for something of the lotos-order from the school library, the thought was forced upon us whether the youth we had seen might not have imbibed his taste for fiction from the