

wears off, and the monotony of business increases, he becomes restless, morbid and uneasy. Thrown among strangers, whose coldness, to a sensitive heart, seems a strange contrast to the warmth of domestic affection, debarred, by daily avocation, from mingling much with society, his spirits falter, and vainly yearning for home enjoyments he seeks for something to supply their place,—and the need of recreation becomes more and more apparent. And now, solicited by some gay companion, he is half-tempted to seek it in the halls of revelry, where a few moments of so-called pleasure are dearly bought by future upbraidings of conscience, when his glance falls on a book that has lain, forgotten and unopened, on his table; he takes it up, becomes interested and absorbed in its contents,—and the hours, which would otherwise have been devoted to noisy mirth and sparkling wine, have passed unheeded and innocently away. But what volume is it that has fascinated him? It is a work of imagination, whose sole aim was the presentation of right principles, in the most striking and interesting light,—one calculated to win the attention of the gay and youthful. It embodies a story of every-day life,—and so forcibly depicted are its characters, so vivid its descriptions, that the reader almost forgets that he is not an actor in the scenes: the beauty of earnest and active endeavours, of a well ordered life, are placed in liveliest colours, his ambition to “go and do likewise,” is aroused, and he rises, from its perusal, a wiser and a better man.

Again: It is evening,—and a group of ladies are seated, in a fashionable drawing-room, in the city. Two of them are deeply engaged in conversation, the purport of which may be conjectured from the half-whispered sentences that reach the ear, “Dear me, did you ever hear anything like it?” or, “I wonder Mrs. R. would have acted so,” &c. &c. But let us direct our attention to a lady who is seated a little apart near a centre table, on which stands a lamp. She too is busily occupied,—but it is in reading a work which endeavours to expose the folly and unkindness of slander. The author might have written with greater ease perhaps an essay on the subject, but, justly concluding that in such a form it was more liable to be rejected by those for whose benefit it was intened, he weaves it into a

narrative,—and thus, while he interests, insensibly instructs the reader. More clearly than ever before she perceives that it is a sin against the law of love,—and, rising from a perusal of the book, inwardly resolves that by both precept and example she will discountenance it for the future.

Here, forcibly recurs to our memory a remark made by a lady “not a long time ago.” In alluding to works of the above description, her answer was that “she was too serious to read them.” A few moments after we heard her engaged in an animated discussion on some trivial article of apparel, and for half an hour its merits and demerits were dwelt on with a zest which showed that the heart of the speaker was engaged in the subject. The writer must be pardoned in believing that the lady had mistaken her motive,—and that want of intellectual taste, not religious principle, had actuated her refusal to peruse them.

In conclusion, while we have endeavoured to prove that well-written works of imagination, of a moral and intellectual character, may not only be harmless but positively beneficial in their tendency,—and while we would be very far from placing them in the stead of those of a religious, scientific, or literary character, yet, at the same time, we would claim for them a place in the household library, which, while justly excluding all works liable to pervert the judgment, or vitiate the taste, should be freely opened to those which while they are subservient to virtue, afford a healthy stimulus to the imagination, that great and glorious boon bestowed by the Creator, and surely not in vain. No, for let persons pronounce against it as they may, it is good for all to let their spirits soar sometimes, above the petty cares of earth; to remember that the wants of our spiritual are as real as those of our physical nature; that life consisteth not merely in the abundance of worldly endowments, and tangible pleasures possessed,—but, properly to enjoy existence, the mind must be actively alive to beauty in all its manifestations,—and the heart must feelingly respond to every noble and philanthropic sentiment.

Cheerfulness and good nature are the ornaments of virtue.

Change of fortune is the lot of life.