

of the feverish, unhealthy appetite which has been engendered in the public mind by constant perusal of sensational novels. Our grandfathers were content to have facts recorded in the newspapers without any garnishing, but the present generation must have their facts highly spiced, therefore, the sensation reporter is a necessity growing out of the public taste. There are dozens of papers in the States which exist almost entirely on their "sensations," and if any crime of more than ordinary interest is committed, the circulation of these papers is largely increased, because the public think they will get the horror served up rather more horribly in these papers than in tamer sheets. Sensational novels antidote the sensation reporter, and indeed it is the former which has occasioned the necessity for the latter. Novel writers began early to drift from the path of mere story tellers, and commenced embellishing their narratives with striking situations, wonderful escapes, etc; but it was not until serial stories came into fashion, and the cheap weeklies began to make their appearance, that the sensation writers commenced to come out in full force. With the penny magazines, and their weekly installment of stories, came the necessity for more spice in the intellectual food, it was found that more thrilling incidents, more diabolical plots, more mysterious circumstances and other ingenious devices must be introduced to keep up the interest from week to week. A climax must be reached, not at the end of the novel, but every week, and when the imagination of the author could conceive no more "telling situations," then the story could be finished in any quiet humdrum style. But gradually the straining for situation became greater and greater until now the story serves simply as a thread on which to hang any quantity of impossibilities; murders, forgeries, burglaries, suicides, and every variety of crime chase each other with kaleidoscopic rapidity through the pages of the sensational novel, and the story either ends at last in a sort of general firework display, or quietly fizzles out like a burnt pin wheel, it makes a few revolutions in darkness and then is taken from its peg, and the reader is ready for another string of impossible circumstances. The main objections to purely sensational novels are that they unfit the mind for good wholesome literature, and work alarming and incalculable mischief upon the youth of our country. In the sensational novel little or no attempt is made at character sketching, there is no effort at teaching a moral lesson, it is simply an endeavour to introduce a few personages, make them go through a series of wonderful adventures and hair breadth escapes, and then march them off the scene again, just as a troupe of acrobats, bound on the stage, go through a series of unnatural contortions, make their bows and disappear. These books can have no good effect, indeed their effect is highly injurious to the mind, for they leave nothing to think over with pleasure; we never get on intimate terms with the characters in a sensational novel; we never feel as if we knew them well, and looked on them as friends; we simply gaze at them and their marvellous performances in wonder and astonishment, and when they are gone we scarcely regret them, for we were never really interested in them, but only in their wonderful gyrations. We can feel as if we had known Mr. Pickwick personally; little Nell is to us a sweet little angel whose loss we mourn, but whoever felt, after he had finished a sensational novel, that he had known the people he had been reading about, or had any desire to know them. We by no means wish to entirely expunge the sensational element from our novels, all our best writers of fiction are to some extent sensational writers; it is necessary to a limited degree to sustain the interest in three or four hundred pages of printed matter, but with them sensation is a secondary consideration, and introduced merely to assist the pleasant progress of the story. With the genuine sensation writer, the story, morality, character sketching and even good English, are all minor considerations scarcely worth a thought, and the only aim is to crowd as many horrible incidents and marvellous circumstances as possible into the smallest space. Sensational literature is undoubtedly the taste of the day, and is hourly gaining popularity; and it is well worth our while to reflect for a moment on the effect which it will have on the coming generation. Already it is an old and well worn saying that "there are no children now;" and there are not, not in the sense in which they were known a generation or two ago, they are simply little men and women. There is no doubt but that a great deal of this quick growth of children is due to the class of literature on which their minds are fed; watch any group of boys or girls of ten or twelve years of age who happen to be studious and see what they are reading: Indian tales, which would make Fennimore Cooper shiver in his grave, love stories and romances, where under a thin film of so called morality, subjects of the most delicate or indelicate nature are handled without gloves.