

up certain reflections more creditable to the sermon than flattering to the carnal heart.

Let it be granted that there are some sermons which are very much more interesting to most people than some novels. We should not need to go far to find attempts at fiction which are very dull reading indeed.

And there are some people who think any sermon much more interesting reading than any novel. There are still some sturdy Presbyterians alive, who look on all fiction as the work of the devil, and who shun it as sin. They would no more think of reading these manufactured lies than of perusing Rabelais, Boccaccio, or Tom Paine. There are others, not so pronounced in their religious opinions of the matter, who take no pleasure in such literature. After reading a page or two they lay aside the book with a yawn and say, "Oh! well, I suppose they all got married at the end, just like the rest."

There are some sermons which are more interesting than any novels, if we judge by the number of their readers. A Brooklyn divine declares that he has evidence that his sermons are read by twenty-five millions every week. Not many works of fiction have had twenty-five millions of readers since the world began. The sermons of the late C. H. Spurgeon were read by two or three millions every week at the time of his

death. If we judge the comparative interest by the depth and permanence of the effects produced on the readers' minds, the argument is unquestionably on the side of these sermons.

But when all due allowance has been made for these special cases, the average novel is probably more interesting to the general reader than an ordinary sermon. One reason for this is the tendency of human nature. Most young men will rather sit on a sofa beside a pretty girl and listen to her conversation than hear a very good sermon. And the novel meets this weakness by telling him how some other young gentleman did the same thing.

Then, notwithstanding the vast number of novels issued from the press, it is a question if the average human being does not get a good deal more sermon than novel, and consequently that is most interesting to him of which he gets least. Most works of fiction have a very limited circulation. This is clear from the very small sums that even good novelists get for their work. But the quantity of sermon matter emptied on any Christian land is truly astonishing. If every one of the 4,500 Protestant clergymen of Canada preaches three times a week, every one of the 2,500 Roman Catholic priests once a week, and every one of the 5,000 preaching laymen of this country once in ten days, there are upwards of a million of sermons