

The Future of The World.
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The World of The Future.

The word novel calls to the minds of most people a world of trashy fiction - stories of wildest exaggeration of love and sensation - tales in which all women were Madonnas, and all men brave, handsome knights or princes. In these ideal stories, love, happiness, and sunshine held sway forever, and at the close of the book we find that "our hero and heroine lived happily ever after."

The novel-writers of the idealistic schools dealt almost wholly with ideal life, with life as it might be, but not as it is. The interest which readers took in such fiction lies almost wholly in its wild exaggeration and unbounded imagination. But because some novels have an immoral or exaggerated tone, is it just to assume that all fiction is immoral in tone? Has no other branch of the tree of literature borne corrupt fruit? However this may be, the idealistic novel has had its day - it is a thing of the past - wrecked on the rock of exaggeration.

The World of Real Life is a production

of modern civilization. It has arisen and flourished since the beginning of the eighteenth century. After the French Revolution in 1789, the middle classes in France became anxious to have the story of their lives written, and in this way the realistic novel sprang up.

The modern novel is a mixture of the realistic and the sociological novels. In it is painted the picture of real life and ordinary men and women, as we see them around us in our everyday affairs. And thus, during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, fiction has been a perfect picture of real life. Every phase of human life has been taken up and studied. And, in telling the story of life as we see it, the writers have not produced works of monotonous reality, neither have they shown only the dark side of our existence, and painted this world a cold, hard unfeeling one.

The novel of the future - the sociological novel - the novel written for a special purpose - will be a gradual and natural evolution from the modern real

istic novel. Indeed, in much of our older fiction we find traces of sociology. Take for instance the works of Charles Dickens, Lord Bulwer Lytton, Charles Reade, and Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. In all of these productions we find the author's favorite object of reform.

In all the works of Charles Reade, we find his favorite subject of prison reform and private-asylum abuses.

Charles Dickens startled the English Literary world, and won for himself an envious reputation when he gave to the public his stories dealing principally with the oppression of the weak, and also telling of the misery, vice, and crime existing in the slums of London.

The first novel in America which truly represented social life was written by Mrs. Harriet B. Stowe just before the Civil War. Uncle Tom's Cabin, which told of the struggles and hardships of the tyrant Slavery. The novel was written for a purpose, and it created an unusual excitement on its appearance. It was written with the avowed purpose of

putting down slavery in The Southern States. The question of slavery was one which was agitating the thinking minds of The North and The South, and there is no doubt that Mrs. Stowe's forcible and pathetic appeals added a great deal of animation to the opposers of slavery.

The literature of a nation at any time is not a separate factor, having no connection with the country's other interests. It is a natural outgrowth of the work and life of the country, and is closely related to the nation's development and progress. On this account, it is natural that the field of the future novelists should be the questions which are disturbing the nation.

Mr. Howells, the novelist, declares that the sociological novel must go out of date, since the newspaper is the reformer's means of agitating his schemes, and that fiction must bow down before the Press. That this is a mistaken idea may be shown. True it is, that the newspaper has a large circulation,

but its circulation is not so large as that of the novel. It is absurd to ~~deny~~ that fiction has a great influence in moulding public opinion, and it must have a greater influence now than ever, on account of the greater area over which it circulates.

Again, it has been argued that readers cannot grow enthusiastic over fiction which is concerned with any topic of reform. But is this the case? On the contrary, think of the enthusiasm produced by the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin. It is said, again, that on this account, such fiction will soon be on the decline. But, by careful examination, it will be found that anyone with a fit theory to air, or a special reform scheme to work, will make use of the novel in giving his ideas to the world.

The greatest novelists of the past have principally been men. Woman, weak, fragile woman - knew nothing and cared but little for political and other questions of interest in the past. But the soci-

ological novel opens up a new field in literature for her. By her stronger emotions and more sympathetic nature, she is more capable than man of interesting the public in many of the topics of the time. These topics are questions which vitally concern her, and which she, more than anyone else should decide. In doing this, the novel will be her great aid and instrument. Men will turn from works of profoundest philosophy to hear the touching little stories which women will write in advocating her reform schemes.

Many sociological questions are being agitated just now, and it is safe to assume that they will be the subjects of many sociological novels of the future. Among these, Woman's Rights and Social Purity hold first place. They are subjects which are claiming the attentions of thousands of thinking minds. The question of whether woman shall or shall not wield the ballot has not been finally settled. Woman is not to be discouraged at one failure. "Man is a

creature of wants" - woman, a creature of more wants. She wants to vote, and will do whatever lies in her power to direct the minds and thoughts of men in regard to this all-absorbing topic.

Fiction written with any avowed purpose of reform, although it will not long remain popular, still has a great deal of influence in moulding popular opinion.

As an example of the future sociological novel, I give the instance of Madame Sarah Grand's Heavenly Twins. Here, Social Purity, lies hidden in an amusing, absurd, yet, withal pleasing little story of love and sensation. The story will be read, and talked of, by the great sea of novel readers, and it will add its share of influence in deciding questions of social purity.

The modern novels which have not a moral either hidden or revealed are very scarce. It is true that they are usually hidden, for it takes away a great deal of the spice and savor of a story if it end with a moral in

bold, black type. The bright, active Frenchman, The witty Irishman, and The practical Intellectual American, do not need such a pointing out of the book's object.

Someone has said that "The popular modern novel is a work of amusement, of interest, and even of instruction, but it will be a long time before it becomes a work of art." So the work remains for the master-novelists of the future to ennoble fiction, and make their productions works of instruction, and studies in art.