

AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS
OF NOVEL-WRITING.

BY MRS. BARBAULD.*

A COLLECTION of novels has a better chance of giving pleasure than of commanding respect. Books of this description are condemned by the grave, and despised by the fastidious; but their leaves are seldom found unopened, and they occupy the parlour and the dressing-room, while productions of higher name are often gathering dust upon the shelf. It might not, perhaps, be difficult to shew, that this species of composition is entitled to a higher rank than has been generally assigned to it. Fictitious adventures, in one form or other, have made a part of the polite literature of every age and nation. These have been grafted upon the actions of their heroes; they have been interwoven with their mythology; they have been moulded upon the manners of the age; and, in return, have influenced the manners of the succeeding generation by the sentiments they have infused, and the sensibilities they have excited.

Adorned with the embellishments of poetry, they produce the epic; more concentrated in the story, and exchanging narrative for action, they become dramatic. When allied with some great moral end, as in the *TELEMAQUE* of Fenelon, and *Marmontel's BELISAIRES*, they may be termed didactic. They

* We are happy to insert this Essay, as, we think, its author has, in it, made an admirable apology for the writers of novels; an apology which, by-the-by, they in some degree wanted; for it has been the fashion among the small critics of the times, and their echoes, to decry works of genius and imagination, for which it is impossible that they could have any other reason than because they have neither, in the first instance, talents to write them, nor, in the second, taste and judgment to distinguish their merit, or appreciate, as Mrs. Barbauld has done, their importance.

The *Novel*, properly so called (and many works the authors of which now think themselves secure in their gravity might be drawn into this class of literature), is a species of composition that has always been admired by men of real genius. Of this predilection we could, had we time, quote many instances, and also much enlarge the history of its objects; but our author has so happily seized on the principal points which we had in contemplation, and, in general, so well observed upon them, that we shall not venture her sentiments and opinions by an unnecessary exhibition of our own.—KARRER.

are often made the vehicles of satire, as in Swift's *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*, and the *Canons of Voltaire*. They take tincture from the learning and politics of the times, and are made use of successfully to attack or recommend the prevailing systems of the day. When the range of this kind of writing is so extensive, and its effect so great, it seems evident that it ought to hold a respectable place among the productions of genius; nor is it easy to say, why the poet, who deals in one kind of fiction, should have so high a place allotted him in the temple of Fame, and the romance-writer so low a one in the general estimation he is confined to. To measure the dignity of a writer by the pleasure he affords his readers, is not, perhaps, using an accurate criterion; but the invention of a story, the choice of proper incident, the ordonnance of the plan, occasional beauties of description, and, above all, the power exercised over the reader's heart, by filling it with the successive emotions of love, pity, joy, anguish, transport, or indignation, together with the grave impressive moral resulting from the whole, imply talents of the highest order, and ought to be appreciated accordingly. A good novel is an epic in prose, with more of character, and less (indeed in modern novels nothing) of the supernatural machinery.

If we look for the origin of fictitious tales and adventures, we shall be obliged to go to the earliest accounts of the literature of every age and country.

Rude times are fruitful of striking adventures; polished times must render them pleasing.—The ponderous volumes of the romance writers being laid upon the shelf, a closer imitation of nature began to be called for; not but that, from the earliest times, there had been stories taken from, or imitating, real life. The *Decamerone* of Boccaccio (a storehouse of tales, and a standard of the language in which it is written), the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre, *Contes de Fabliaux* without number, may be considered as novels of a lighter texture; they abounded with adventure, generally of the humorous, often of the licentious kind, and, indeed, were mostly founded on intrigue, but the nobler passions were seldom touched. The *Roman Comique* of Scarron is a regular piece of its kind. Its subject is the adventures of a set of strolling players. Comic humour it certainly possesses; but the

honour is very coarse, and the incidents mostly low. Smollet seems to have formed himself very much upon this model. But the *Zaide* and the *Princesse de Cleves* of Madame de la Fayette are esteemed to be the first which approach the modern novel of the serious kind, the latter especially. Voltaire says of them, that they were "*les premiers romans où l'on vit les mœurs des honnêtes gens, et des aventures naturelles décrites avec grace. Avant elle on écrivoit d'un stile empouillé des choses peu vraisemblables.*" "They were the first novels which gave the manners of cultivated life and natural incidents related with elegance. Before the time of this lady, the style of these productions was affectedly turgid, and the adventures out of nature." The modesty of Madame de la Fayette led her to shelter her productions, on their first publication, under the name of Sograis, her friend, under whose revision they had passed. Le Sage, in his *Gil Blas*, a work of infinite entertainment though of dubious morality, has given us pictures of more familiar life, abounding in character and incident. The scene is laid in Spain, in which country he had travelled, and great part of it is imitated from the adventures of *Don Guman d'Alvarache*; for Spain, though her energies have so long lain torpid, was earlier visited by polite literature than any country of Europe, Italy excepted. Her authors abounded in invention; so that the plots of plays and groundwork of novels were very frequently drawn from their productions. Cervantes himself, besides his *Don Quixote*, which has been translated and imitated in every country, wrote several little tales and novels, some of which he introduced into that work, for he only banished one species of fiction to introduce another. The French improved upon their masters. There is not, perhaps, a more amusing book than *Gil Blas*; it abounds in traits of exquisite humour, and lessons of life which, though not always pure, are many of them useful. In this work of Le Sage, like some of Smollet's, the hero of the piece excites little interest; and it rather exhibits a series of separate adventures, slightly linked together, than a chain of events concurring in one plan to the production of the catastrophe, like the *Tom Jones* of Fielding. The scenes of his *Diable à quatre* are still more slightly linked

together. That, and his *Bachelier de Salamanca*, are of the same stamp with *Gil Blas*, though inferior to it.

At the head of writers of this class stands the seductive, the passionate Rousseau—the most eloquent writer in the most eloquent modern language: whether his glowing pencil paints the strong emotions of passion, or the enchanting scenery of nature in his own romantic country, or his peculiar cast of moral sentiment—a charm is spread over every part of the work, which scarcely leaves the judgment free to condemn what in it is dangerous or reprehensible. His are truly the "Thoughts that breathe and words that burn." He has hardly any thing of story; he has but few figures upon his canvass; he wants them not; his characters are drawn more from a creative imagination than from real life; and we wonder that what has so little to do with nature should have so much to do with the heart. Our censure of the tendency of this work will be softened, if we reflect that Rousseau's aim, as far as he had a moral aim, seems to have been to give a striking example of fidelity in the married state, which, it is well known, is little thought of by the French; though they would judge with the greatest severity the more pardonable failure of an unmarried woman. But Rousseau has not reflected that *Julie* ought to have considered herself as indissolubly united to *St. Preux*; her marriage with another was the infidelity. Rousseau's great rival in fame, Voltaire, has written many light pieces of fiction which can scarcely be called novels. They abound in wit and shrewdness, but they are all composed to subserve his particular views, and to attack systems which he assailed in every kind of way. His *Candide* has much strong painting of the miseries and vices which abound in this world, and is levelled against the only system which can console the mind under the view of them. In *L'Ingénu*, beside the wit, he has shown that he could also be pathetic. *Les Lettres Perusiennes*, by Mad. Graffigny, is a most ingenious and charming little piece. *Paul et Virginie*, by that friend of humanity St. Pierre, with the purest sentiment and most beautiful description, is pathetic to a degree that even distresses the feelings. *La Chaumière Indienne*, also his, breathes the spirit of universal philanthropy. *Caroline de Lichtfeld* is justly a favourite;

but it was impossible to summarize all the elegant compositions of this class which later times have poured forth. For the expression of sentiment is all its various shades, for the most delicate tact, and refinement and polish, the fruit of high cultivation, the French writers are superior to those of every other nation.

There is one species of this composition which may be called the *Didactic Romance*, which they have particularly made use of as a vehicle for moral sentiment, and philosophical or political systems and opinions. Of this nature is the beautiful fiction of *Télémaque*; it is not rather an Epic in pages & the high merit of which cannot be sufficiently appreciated, unless the reader bears in mind when and to whom it was written; that it dared to attack the fondness for war and the disposition to ostentatious profusion, under a monarch the most vain and ambitious of his age, and to draw, expressly as a pattern for his successor, the picture of a prince, the reverse of him in almost every thing. *Les Veux de Cyrus*, by Voltaire, and *Sibes*, by the Abbé Terrasson, are of the same kind; the former is rather dry, and somewhat too much in the way of a sermon; but the latter is a very agreeable and instructive work. *Hamlet* was a French play, but had lived long in France; it was the invention of a native; a rare acquisition to the latter, *Sibes*, contains, in terms of its story, all that we know concerning the actions and manners of the monarch; the trial of the character of the hero is the history of the reign of Louis XIV. and the progress of the French monarchy. *Hamlet* is a French play, but had lived long in France; it was the invention of a native; a rare acquisition to the latter, *Sibes*, contains, in terms of its story, all that we know concerning the actions and manners of the monarch; the trial of the character of the hero is the history of the reign of Louis XIV. and the progress of the French monarchy.

tion, the whole of which is given in set forms, there is in the frequency in the various illustrative incidents; the whole has an air of the world, and of good company; to an English reader it is also interesting, as exhibiting traits of Parisian manners and modern manners, from one who was admitted into the first societies. A number of characters are delineated, and sustained with truth and spirit; and the stories of Cecile and the Duchesse de G. are uncommonly interesting and well told; while the sublime benevolence of M. and Mad. Lagarays presents a cure for sorrow worthy of a Howard. From the system of Mad. Genlis many useful hints may be gathered; though the English reader will, probably, find much that differs from his own ideas. A good bishop, as Huet relates, conceiving of love as a most formidable enemy to virtue, entertained the singular project of writing, or procuring to be written, a number of novels, framed in such a manner as to inspire an antipathy to this profane passion. Mad. Genlis seems to have had the same idea; and in this manual of education, love is represented as a passion totally unfit to enter the breast of a young female; and in this, and in all her other works, she invariably represents as ending in misery every passion which is begun before marriage.

The French have, in general, remarkable talents for the novel; and, in particular, the French of the last century, have, within this last century, cultivated, with great success, the art of public literature. They have, in fact, produced, in every kind, the most celebrated works of the age, and they have received with avidity every new work, and soon made the French language popular. The French have, in fact, produced, in every kind, the most celebrated works of the age, and they have received with avidity every new work, and soon made the French language popular. The French have, in fact, produced, in every kind, the most celebrated works of the age, and they have received with avidity every new work, and soon made the French language popular.

pit depredations on the public, allured by the splendid character, we may well suppose that Werter's delirium of passion will not be less seducing. Goethe has written another novel, much esteemed, it is said, by the Germans, which contains, amongst other things, criticisms on the drama. The celebrated Wieland has composed a great number of works of fiction; the scene of most of them is laid in ancient Greece.

His powers are great, his invention fertile, but his designs insidious. He, and some others of the German writers of philosophical romances, have used them as a frame, to attack received opinions, both in religion and morals. Two, at least, of his performances have been translated, *Agathon* and *Perognon Proteus*: the former is beautifully written, but its tendency is seductive; the latter has taken for its basis an historical character; its tendency is also obvious. Klüger is an author who deals in the horrid. He subsists on murders and atrocities of all sorts, and introduces devils and evil spirits among his personages; he is said to have powers, but to labour under a total want of taste. In contrast to this writer, and those of his class, may be mentioned *The Sorcerer* of Schiller, and *The Italian* of Alfieri. The former is a writer of the Italian school, and the latter of the French.

These were spread in the continent to an extent so worked the King of Prussia to believe in the deity of the ties, and to have an and phy the wo rich in this kind, or an im-pressive kind, which have, perhaps, amused generation after generation as nursery stories, and lain, like ore in the

mine, ready for the hand of taste, to separate the dross and polish the material: for it is infinitely easier, when a nation has gained cultivation, to polish and methodize, than to invent. A very pleasing writer of novels, in the more common acceptation of the term, is Augustus la Fontaine; at least, he has written some for which he merits that character, though, perhaps, more that are but indifferent. His *Tableaux de Famille* contain many sweet domestic pictures and touches of nature. It is imitated from *The Heart of Wakefield*. The Germans are a very book-making people. It is calculated, that twenty thousand authors of that nation live by the exercise of the pen; and in the space of novels, it is computed that seven thousand, either original or translated, have been printed by them within the last five-and-twenty years. One Chinese novel has been translated. It is called, *The Pleasing History; or, the Adventures of Haw Kio Choam*. It is said to be much esteemed; but can only be interesting to an European, as exhibiting something of the manners of that remote and singular country.

(To be concluded in next issue.)

A BRIEF NOTICE OF THE PARISH OF CHRIST CHURCH, SURREY.

THE PARISH OF CHRIST CHURCH, SURREY, is situated in the district which is now the parish of Christ Church, Surrey, and is the most ancient of the parishes of London, &c. only marked as *Paris Garden and Bank* in the old maps; but which, according to the old books, about 1700 contained 1000 Houses, and now we find nearly treble the number.

It is a singular circumstance, in this situation, to collect vestiges of Roman, Saxon, and Danish antiquities: these we shall leave for a more patient, and, of course, more accurate, investigation; only observing, that in the time of Peter of Colchester, traces were found, which indicated that

* This is an incident in "A Bold Stroke for a Wife" which produces much amusement.—EDITOR.

Europ. Mag. Vol. LIX. April, 1811.

... by degree. The promptings will be required; the letters will begin to reflect more of the individual character of the writer; as the understanding, and especially as the heart, begins to expand, new ideas will rush in, demanding new expressions: Sentiment will begin her reign in the soul, and make the fingers her nimble and willing interpreters.

All arts, however, are best taught by uniting example to precept. In that of letter-writing, English men and women have many and admirable patterns in every style: children few or none. The genuine correspondences of a Mary Montague, a Gray, and a Cowper, must be far superior, as models,

to any fancied letters, but even these scarce could have regular and ordinary patterns for the imitation of children, must obviously be composed, on purpose, by an older person. To furnish such patterns is the object of this work before us.

The topics selected are all such as delighted our author at an early age; the incidents were most of them real; and the traits of natural history, so largely interspersed, have been chosen on the principle of combining strict truth with some degree of novelty. We, therefore, without hesitation, strongly recommend the "Juvenile Correspondence," as examples of epistolary style for children of both sexes.

[By an accident, the following introduction to this Article, prepared for our last Number, was omitted.]

In justice to the fair Editor, as well as to the proprietors of "THE BRITISH NOVELISTS," lately published, we have to state, that to that work, which does the highest credit to the taste and judgment of Mrs. BARBAULD, whose literary talents are too well known to need any eulogy from us, we are indebted for the following elegant and judicious remarks on Novel-Writing: they are extracted from the Introductory Essay to that Lady's collection of the best works of our most eminent authors in this department of literature; which has been farther enriched by Mrs. Barbauld, with a valuable series of biographical and critical prefaces.

body reads. The taste of the times seems to have been for ponderous performances. The Duchess of Newcastle was an indefatigable writer in this way. Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, published in 1664, a romance called *Parthenissa*. It was in three volumes folio, and unfinished, to which circumstance alone his biographer, Mr. Walpole, attributes its being but little read. He most have had a capacious idea of the appetite of the readers of those days. There is a romance of later date, in one small volume, by the Hon. Robert Boyle—*The Martyrdom of Lydinus and Theodora*, a Christian heroic tale. We had pretty early some celebrated political romances.* Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, Barclay's *Argenis*, and Harrington's *Oceana*, are of this kind: the two former are written in Latin. The *Utopia*, † which is meant as a model of a perfect

AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF NOVEL-WRITING.

BY MRS. BARBAULD.

(Continued from page 273.)

In England, most of the earlier romances from the days of Chaucer to those the basis was translations from the romances of France: One of the first original attempts at the growth of the novel was a French romance, which was translated into English by Mrs. Rowe, and published in 1719. The first original English novel was published in 1719, and was a translation of the French novel, *Le Grand Duc de Moscovie*, by Mrs. Rowe.

* In the reigns of the First James and Charles, the studying of *Pompeii's Arcadia* was considered as a part of polite education; and in our own, we mean near half a century since, it was considered as a polite study: many of its scenes were depicted by Haymns such as *Parthenissa* and *Andromeda*, and *Utopia*, upon which a tragedy was formed on the plan of *Shakespeare's* by M. de la Harpe.

† In the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More, the title of the book is to be understood in a greater degree than in any other work of the kind: the author, who is a secret circumlocutor with the subject, the ideas are adapted to the subject, and the style is something like that of a philosopher, the order of which is to be understood in a greater degree than in any other work of the kind: the author, who is a secret circumlocutor with the subject, the ideas are adapted to the subject, and the style is something like that of a philosopher, the order of which is to be understood in a greater degree than in any other work of the kind.

for we speak familiarly of an Utopian scheme and a Quixottish expedition. Barclay was a Scotchman by birth; he was introduced at the court of James the First, and was afterwards professor of civil law at Angers: he died at Rome. His *Argenis* is a political allegory, which displays the revolutions and vices of courts; it is not destitute of imagery and elevated sentiment, and displays much learning; and while the allusions it is full of were understood, it was much read, and was translated into various languages, but is at present sunk into oblivion, though a new translation was made not many years since by Mrs. Clara Reeves. Harrington's *Oceana* is meant as a model of a perfect republic, the constant idol of his imagination. All these, though works of fiction, would greatly disappoint those who should look into them for amusement. Of the lighter species of this kind of writing, the *Novel*, till within half a century, we had scarcely any. The *Atalantis** of Mrs. Manley, lives only in that line of Pope, which seems to promise it immortality:

“As long as *Atalantis* shall be read.”

It was, like *Astrea*, filled with fashionable scandal. Mrs. Behn's novels were licentious; they are also fallen; but it ought not to be forgotten, that Southern borrowed from her his affecting story of *Oronoko*.† Mrs. Haywood was a very prolific genius: her earlier novels are in the style of Mrs. Behn's, and Pope has chastised her in his *Dunciad* without mercy or delicacy; but her later works are by no means void of merit. She wrote *The Invisible Spy* and *Hetsy Thoughtless*, and was the author of the *Female Spectator*. But till the middle of the last century, theatrical productions and poetry made a far greater part of polite reading, than novels, which had attained neither to elegance nor discrimination of cha-

* The *Atalantis*, we have been informed, was soon after the period of its publication, productive of much mischief.—Lorr.

† Which certainly he did not improve. The scenes which would have rendered his piece perfect are so obvious in the novel, that we wonder he could miss them.

describes two lovers in a bower:” but there does not occur either there, or, I believe, in any other part of the work, the name of one English novel, the *Atalantis* only excepted; though plays are often mentioned as a favorite and dangerous part of ladies' reading; and certainly the plays of those times were worse than any novels of the present. The first author amongst us who distinguished himself by natural painting, was that truly original genius De Foe, His *Robinson Crusoe* is to this day an *unique* in its kind; and he has made it very interesting, without applying to the common resource of love. At length, in the reign of George the Second, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollet, appeared in quick succession; and their success raised such a demand for this kind of entertainment, that it has been ever since furnished from the press, rather as a regular and necessary supply, than as an occasional gratification. The history of *Gaudenzio di Lucca*, published in 1725, is the effusion of a fine fancy and a refined understanding; it is attributed to Bishop Berkley. It gives an account of imaginary people in the heart of Africa, their manners and customs; they are supposed to be descended from the ancient Egyptians, and to be concealed from all the world by impenetrable deserts. The description of crossing the sands is very striking, and shews much information as well as fancy. It is not written to favour any particular system; the whole is the play of a fine imagination delighting itself with the images of perfection and happiness which it cannot find in any existing form of things. The frame is very well managed; the whole is supposed to be read in a manuscript to the fathers of the Inquisition, and the remarks of the holy office are very much in character. A highly romantic air runs through the whole, but the language is far from elegant. Another singular publication which appeared in 1756, was *The Memoirs of several Ladies*, by John Bunicle, followed the next year by the *Life of Banicle*. These volumes are very whimsical, but contain entertainment. The ladies, whose memoirs he professes to give,

whole, it seems to greatly recommend itself, and not to be forgotten that the very popular work of *Sarah Fielding* is taken from it. It has not merely given the hint for that production, but the plan, the contrasted characters of the two boys, and many particular incidents are so closely copied, that it will hardly be thought, by one who peruses them both together, that Mr. Day has made quite sufficient acknowledgment in his preface. Rousseau had about this time awakened the public attention to the preference of natural manners in children, in opposition to the artificial usages of fashionable life; and much of the spirit of *Emile* is seen in this part of the work. The present generation have been much obliged to Mr. Day for separating this portion of the novel from the mass of improbable adventure in which it is involved, clothing it in more elegant language, and giving those additions which have made it so deservedly a favourite in the juvenile library. The religious feelings are often awakened in the *Fest of Quality*, not indeed without a strong tincture of enthusiasm, to which the author was inclined. Indeed his imagination had at times prevailed over his reason before he wrote it. A number of novels might be mentioned which are or have been popular, though not of high celebrity. Sarah Fielding, sister to the author of *Tom Jones*, composed several, among which *David Simple* is the most esteemed. She was a woman of good sense and cultivation; and if she did not equal her brother in talents, she did not like him lay herself open to equal censure. She translated Xenophon's *Socrates*, and wrote a very pretty book for children, *The Governess at Boarding-School*. Many more have been cited by the young and tender, and ever *Lucy Widdow*, the translation of Mrs. Sheridan, the wife of Dr. Thomas Sheridan the lecturer, an ingenious and amiable woman. The sentiments of this work are pure and virtuous; but the author does not derive rather pleasure in language, than in virtue and innocence, and she is not content with one day's study, but she is not always content with one day's study.

Miss, is a political story, but it is chiefly written for moral effect, and affords little entertainment.

Mr. Genoa, an author of a very different cast, is known in this walk by *Colinella* and his *Spiritual Quixote*. The latter is a popular work, and possesses some humour; but the humour is coarse, and the satire much too indiscriminately levelled against a society whose doctrine, operating with strong effect upon a large body of the most ignorant and vicious class, must necessarily include in their sweeping net much vice and folly, as well as much of sincere piety and corresponding morals. The design of his *Colinella* is less exceptionable. It presents a man educated in polite learning and manners, who, from a fastidious rejection of the common active pursuits of life, retires into a country solitude, grows morose and peevish, and concludes with marrying his maid; no unusual consequence of a whimsical and morose singularity; the secret springs of which are more commonly a tincture of indolence and pride than superiority of genius.

Mr. Graves was brought up originally for physic, but took orders and became rector of *Claverton*, near Bath. He was the author of several publications, both translations and original; he was fond of writing and published what he entitled his *Sensibilities*, when at the age of near ninety. He died in 1804. But it is not necessary to rest the credit of these works on amusement alone; it is certain they have had a very strong effect in infusing principles and moral feelings. It is impossible to deny that the most glowing and impressive sentiments of virtue are to be found in many of these compositions, and have been deeply imbibed by their youthful readers. They awaken a sense of finer feelings than the commerce of ordinary life inspires. Many a young woman

* The extremely exquisite sensibility which is to be seen in this work will doubtless be contrasted with the most coarse and vulgar which a vulgar mind is capable of. It is not to be wondered at that it should have been so much read and so much admired.

has caught from such works as *Clisson* or *Lucida*, ideas of delicacy and refinement, which were not, perhaps, to be found in any society she could have access to. Many a maxim of prudence is laid up in the memory from these stories, ready to operate when occasion offers.

The passion of love, the most seductive of all the passions, they certainly paint too high, and represent its influence beyond what it will be found to be in real life; but if they soften the heart they also refine it. They mix with the natural passions of our nature all that is tender in virtuous affection; all that is estimable in high principle and unshaken constancy; all that grace, delicacy, and sentiment can bestow of touching and attractive. Benevolence, and sensibility to distress, are almost always insisted on in modern works of this kind; and perhaps it is not too much to say, that much of the softness of the present manners, much of that tenderness of humanity so conspicuous amidst all our vices is owing to the bias given by our dramatic writings and fictitious stories. A high regard to female honor, generosity, and a spirit of self-sacrifice, are strongly inculcated. It costs nothing, it is true, to an author to make his hero generous, and very often he is extravagantly so; still sentiments of this kind serve in some measure to counteract the spirit of the world, where selfish considerations have always more than their due weight. In what discourse from the pulpit are religious feelings more strongly raised than in the prison sermon of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, or some parts of the *Fool of Quality*?

But not only these splendid sentiments, which when properly presented, will readily take part with the reader; the more sober and homely virtues of prudence and economy have been enforced in the writings of *Betsy* and an *Edgeworth*. Many of these good sermons have appeared in the composition of the present age, a romantic degree of sensibility, the delicacy that has been mentioned, and the refinement of the style, have been the distinguishing characteristics of the modern novel.

as less is ascribed to effect and representation. There are many descriptions of characters in the human world, which a young woman in the retired scenes of life hardly meets with at all, and many whom it is safer to read of than to meet; and to either sex it must be desirable that the first impressions of fraud, selfishness, profligacy, and perfidy, should be corrected, as in good novels they always will be, with infamy and ruin. At any rate, it is safer to meet with a bad character in the pages of a fictitious story, than in the polluted walks of life; but an author, solicitous for the morals of his readers, will be sparing in the introduction of such characters. It is an aphorism of Pope:—

“Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
As to be hated, needs but to be seen.”

But he adds,

“But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

Indeed the former assertion is not true without considerable modification. If presented in its naked deformity, vice will indeed give disgust; but it may be so surrounded with splendid and engaging qualities, that the disgust is lost in admiration. After all, the effect of novel reading must depend, as in every other kind of reading, on the choice which is made. If the looser compositions of this sort are excluded, and the sentimental ones chiefly pursued, perhaps the danger lies more in fixing the standard of virtue and delicacy too high for real use, than in debasing it. The most generous man living, the most affectionate friend, the most dutiful child, would find his character fall far short of the perfection exhibited in a highly wrought novel. In short, the reader of a novel forms his expectations from what he supposes passes in the mind of the author, and guesses rightly at his intentions, but would often guess wrong if he were considering the real world. It was very probable in some parts of his history that the character would come to be what the writer had intended, but that the reader would not see it. The author of the novel, however, is not to be blamed for this, as he is not to be blamed for the defects of the real world. The author of the novel is to be blamed for the defects of his representation, but not for the defects of the real world. The author of the novel is to be blamed for the defects of his representation, but not for the defects of the real world.

that, in spite of his irregularities and distances, his history will come to an agreeable termination. He has no doubt but that his parents will be discovered in due time; he has no doubt but that his love for *Sophia* will be rewarded sooner or later with her hand; he has no doubt of the constancy of that young lady, or of their entire happiness after marriage. And why does he foresee all this? Not from the real tendency of things, but from what he has discovered of the author's intentions. But what would have been the probability in real life? why, that the parents would either never have been found, or have proved to be persons of no consequence—that *Jones* would pass from one vicious indulgence to another, till his natural good disposition was quite smothered under his irregularities—that *Sophia* would either have married her lover clandestinely, and have been poor and unhappy, or she would have conquered her passion and married some country gentleman, with whom she would have lived in moderate happiness, according to the usual routine of married life. But the author would have done very ill, so to have constructed his story. If *Booth* had been a real character, it is probable his *Amelia* and her family would not only have been brought to poverty, but left in it; but to the reader it is much more probable that, by some means or other they will be rescued from it, and left in possession of all the comforts of life.

It is probable in *Zeluco*, that the detestable husband will some way or other be got rid of; but woe to the young lady who, when married, should be led, by contemplating the possibility of such an event, to cherish a passion which ought to be entirely relinquished!

Though a great deal of trash is every year poured out upon the public from the English press, yet in general our novels are not vicious; the food has neither strength nor nourishment, but at least it is not poisonous. Our national taste and habits are still towards domestic life and matrimonial happiness; and the chief harm done by a circulating library is occasioned by the facility of its purchase, and the loss of time and money, and then a kind, perhaps, of a new kind of extravagance, to which the hands of the *St. Harry* or *St. George* are applied.

man suitable to her situation in life; but she will not have her mind contaminated with such scenes and ideas as *Crebillon*, *Louvois*, and others of the class, have published in France.

And, indeed, notwithstanding the many paltry books of this kind published in the course of every year, it may safely be affirmed that we have more good writers in this walk, living at the present time, than at any period since the days of *Richardson* and *Fielding*. A very great proportion of these ladies; and surely it will not be said that either taste or morals have been losers by their taking the pen in hand. The names of *D'Arblay*, *Edgeworth*, *Lochbald*, *Radcliffe*, and a number more, will vindicate this assertion. No small proportion of modern novels have been devoted to recommend, or to mark with reprobation, those systems of philosophy or politics which have raised so much ferment of late years. Mr. *Holcroft's Anna St. Ives* is of this number:—its beauties, and beauties it certainly has, do not make amends for its absurdities. What can be more absurd than to represent a young lady gravely considering, in the disposal of her hand, how she shall promote the greatest possible good of the system? Mr. *Holcroft* was a man of strong powers, and his novels are by no means without merit, but his satire is often partial, and his representation of life unfair. On the other side may be reckoned *The Modern Philosophers*, and the novels of *Mrs. West*. In the war of systems these light skirmishing troops have been often employed with great effect; and so long as they are content with general warfare, without taking aim at individuals, are perfectly allowable. We have lately seen the gravest theological dissertations presented to the world under the attractive form of a novel, and with a success which seems to show that the interest of the generality of readers is much strongly excited when some serious end is kept in view. It is not the intention of these slight remarks to commend those of the present day who have successfully entertained the public; otherwise Mr. *Cumberland* might be mentioned; that you run in your circles of literature, otherwise a name would be put to the pen which would be counted as one of the new writing men.

original novel of *Giles Williams*, in which the author, without the assistance of any of the common events or feelings on which these stories generally turn, has kept up the curiosity and interest of the reader in the most lively manner; nor his *St. Leon*, the ingenious speculation of a philosophical mind, which is also much out of the common track. It will bear an advantageous comparison with Swift's picture of the *Strulbrugg* in his *Voyage to Laputa*, the tendency of which seems to be to repress the wish of never-ending life in this world; but in fact it does not bear at all upon the question; for no one ever did wish for immortal life without immortal youth to accompany it, the one wish being as easily formed as the other; but *St. Leon* shews, from a variety of striking circumstances, that both together would pall, and that an immortal human creature would grow an insulated unhappy being.

Some perhaps may think, that too much importance has been already given to a subject so frivolous; but a discriminating taste is no where more called for than with regard to a species of books which every body reads. It was said by Fletcher of Salton: "Let me make the ballads of a nation, and I care not who makes the laws." Might it not be said, with as much propriety, let me make the novels of a country, and let who will make the systems?

To the Editor of the European Magazine.

ENCLOSE you a copy of the Epitaph on Dr. Rose, written by the late Arthur Murphy, Esq. The gentleman who lately gave some account of Dr. Rose did not, perhaps, know that his monument is in Chiswick church-yard, near to that of Hogarth, which bears an inscription from the pen of Mr. Garick, the most perfect of its kind that was ever composed. I do not wish to point out the errors of the engraver, as Mr. Asper's will probably receive hints to this effect from another quarter. Thinking that the readers of the account of Dr. Rose would be displeas'd with Murphy's Epitaph on him, I have published it in the following manner.

WILLIAM ROSE, LL. D.

Died July 4, 1793, aged 67.

Whoe'er thou art, with silent footsteps tread
The hollow'd mould, where Rose reclines
his head;
Ah! let not fully one kind tear deny,
But pensive pause where truth and honour lie.

His the gay wit that fond attention drew,
Oft heard and oft admir'd, yet ever new:
The heart that melted at another's grief,
The hand in secret that bestow'd relief:
Science, untaught with the pride of schools,
And native goodness free from formal rules.
With zeal through life he toil'd in learning's cause,

But more, fair Virtue! to promote thy laws:
His ev'ry action sought the noblest end,
The tender husband, father, brother, friend.
Perhaps e'en now, from yonder realms of day,

To his lov'd relatives he sends a ray;
Pleas'd to behold affections like his own,
With filial duty raise this votive stone.

DESCRIPTION of the MONUMENT erected to the MEMORY of LORD NELSON, in GUILDHALL.

THE pyramid on the back ground is supposed to be the tomb of the immortal NELSON, decorated with naval trophies, the fruit of his victories; while the female figure in the centre (personating the city of London), in grateful remembrance of the signal services he rendered to his country, perpetuates the memory of his great actions to posterity, and finishes with admiration the record of his last glorious achievements off *Trafalgar*. Britannia on the left supported by a lion (the symbol of unshaken courage) is pensively musing over a portrait of the conqueror, and in silent grief deplores her loss. The recumbent figure in the fore-ground representing the ocean, roused by the fame of his heroic actions, participates in Britannia's sorrow and regret for her hero's fate.

The naval action in front of the pedestal exhibits the situation of the fleet towards the conclusion of the battle, when the hero was mortally wounded by a shot from the maintop of a seventy-four, with which ship the *Victory* appears to be closely engaged. In the picture two British frigates, with implements of war and navigation, bear with deep concern the fate of their beloved hero. On the base is the following inscription:

From the original design by Richard Brinsley Sheridan.