

FICTION NEEDS DISINFECTING.

THERE is a class of fiction—and it is a very popular class—generally or always written by women, that deals with the relations of the sexes, and usually holds man up as a consummate brute or an imbecile. The claim is made that these novels are needed to present the truth in a "fetching" manner, and thus give the people the arguments for the overthrow of existing social organization. *The Saturday Review*, London, looks upon this literature as inimical to moral health. We quote:

"There was a time when we looked for women to summon the good apothecary and the ounce of civet to deodorize the air of fiction; but is it not now time for man to call for the permanganate to disinfect it? Indeed, the ladies—always missionaries, one way or another—have set out to wash the soiled domestic linen in public, with a boldness astonishing and entertaining to gentlemen who see themselves prodded in the soiled-clothes basket, as was Falstaff—prodded, not only in the hallway, but on the doorstep, and in the streets; until, to read some novel namable to the feeblest memory, men have come to see that in their new crusade of morbidity and suggestiveness—called so these missionary ladies say 'telling the truth about the sexes'—they are to be sent to the wash-house with the general domestic linen; and all this in the name of 'telling the truth.'

"There is the same lack of proportion in the minds of these ladies in the use of 'painful incidents' as there is in the construction of their novels, and in both classes it has the same origin. It is this very lack of 'sizing things up,' of giving them their proper relations, which is at the bottom of the crusade against man. Zola's detailed, impacted, measured realism, or naturalism, is infinitely preferable to the suggestiveness of Lovels written in the splash of unhealthy sensationalism to set the world right. To be sure, it is an old game to shoulder off on some missionary scheme emotionalism broken loose. It is no wonder that in this fat civilization of England there should be surplus emotion; but that it should be taken seriously because it inspires a feverish story with a moral is a sweet satire on our noble selves. The real truth is, this craze for writing and reading treatises on the sexes, with accompanying commination services against man as he is, has its origin in ennui. Do these ladies write in the belief that there is nothing beautiful but decay? Let us reason together. Fiction is an art, or at least it is of the art of literature. The real end of art is beauty; the employment of it is, no matter what we say, the highest kind of amusement—if we write good things and noble things, so much the better. But these Deborahs write of man decayed, and of woman whose sorrows really come from ennui. Presumably they want to write a fine and a beautiful thing; therefore they are—perhaps unconsciously—prophets of decay.

"They write for a purpose? To reconquer a lost paradise and reconstruct the shattered harmony of creation? Amiable and large design! And so we get discussions of problems, and pronouncements about which there is nothing new at all, neither in reason, nor in incident, nor in character. And because it is an age of cheap bookmaking, and the air is full of noises regarding the rise of women and the fall of man and his remaking, we are apt to think there is a great to do in the world. There were George Eliots and Elizabeth Barrett Brownings once, who looked at life in the same old sane fashion, who saw, or tried to see, it while, who were able to leave the band-box, to see the wide life and weigh it. Because here is an unhappy marriage and there is an infidelity, or there, again, people who are trying to get more out of life than there is in it, and who cannot see that the readjustment of man is no guarantee of happiness—we have the sick air of the boudoir and the irritability of overstrained emotion. Why should fiction, why should an art be turned into a sermon for the conventicle? Let us have the essay on *Regenerated Man and Crushed Women*, but leave us some ro-

mance where romance ought to be found. Photography is detail and it is not truth, it is not even an impression, it is a sudden arrest of a phase, a single incident; real art goes to one central thing, selects and rejects from Nature, has the large, wise, balanced outlook, and does not generalize for the world on the single fact, out of focus, through photography. The gloom, the pessimism, the morbidity, of these 'feminine novels' is neither more nor less than narrowness of view and disproportion. We hear so much about the unhappiness of women and the badness of men; but, after all, each of us is one of this naughty thing called the World and Society, and and do we find among our friends such gloom of life, such discontent—save among ladies who are the slaves of nerves? Monotony is an evil on one hand, but too much life, too much social and emotional excitement, is an evil on the other. But why should motony, or boredom, or hystria send ladies to the pen? To be the pioneers in the readjustment of social conditions? Very good; but why should they not be pamphleteers? Why should they take a nice art and turn it into a desk for jeremiads and social doctrine? Purpose? The end of fiction is the telling of a story. That is the central thing. Much more of the objective outlook and much less introspection is needed in the novel of 'the eternal feminine.' For what is without ourselves, and the story of that without, is more important than any theory of our own, illustrated by photography, the insidious enemy of Art.

"It is to our hope and comfort that there is more health than sickness in our fiction, after all. We have many pure romanticists, who tell a story and tell it forcibly well, and carry us out of the heat and ennui of this crowded life. Problems?—but problems are the curse of these days of too much self-analysis—problems and cleverness. So many people are clever now; it has no merit. To say a deep thing is much better than to say a clever thing, and to preserve the romance of life is as important as to keep the commandments. And therein lies the virtue of the romanticist. His stock in trade, though warfare and adventure be his high-roads is hope, courage, the pride of race, the indomitableness of the great, the inconsequence of the little and the cowardly. A country is safe whose lower middle-class is romantic, even sentimental. And in spite of vogues and fashions of a season, the bulk of England read healthy romance—Scott, Dumas, Victor Hugo, Stevenson, Hardy and 'those others.' It would seem as if, after all, we are to be saved in the end by the Philistine."

VANITY OF VANITIES.

He wrote his name
On the sands of fame
And dreamed 'twould perish never;
But time's gray wave
Those shores did lave,
And the name was gone forever.

With tender smile
She bound awhile
Young love in a fetter of flowers;
But e'en as she dreamed
He was true as he seemed,
He had flown to rosier bowers.

Now youth and maid
In the churchyard laid,
Know neither of love nor glory;
But many a youth
And maid, in sooth,
Tell over and over the story.

Highest of all in Leavening Power.—Latest U. S. Gov't Report

Royal Baking Powder
ABSOLUTELY PURE