

as you know the condition of the field there; merely adding that I shall be pleased if you can make it convenient to spend the time from the general council till emigration in Great Britain." I received an excellent letter from Elder W. W. Riter, Herisan, and wrote, giving him full liberty to visit Landschlacht, Constance and Carlsruhe, if he felt to do so, requesting him to keep this office posted as to his movements.

Sunday, the 13th, I spoke to the Saints in Geneva, followed by Brother Schettler; we had an excellent time. In the evening I addressed a full house for over an hour. I packed my trunk and got my things in order, and am making all arrangements possible to leave on the 21st, for London. I must say it seems like leaving home, for nearly every hand extends me a welcome, and all express the best of wishes for my welfare. Sunday, the 20th, I spoke over an hour to the Saints and gave them a farewell address, blessing them in the name of the Lord.

On the 21st, at 3 p. m., I took train for Paris, en route for London, several of the brethren accompanying me to the station. Arrived at Paris at 8 a. m., of the 22nd, and continued to Boulogne, arriving at 2 p. m.; and took steamer at 7 p. m. for Folkstone, arriving at nine o'clock. Continued per train for London, and arrived at 11:20; took cab for Florence Street, and arrived as the St. Paul clock chimed the midnight hour, and went to bed with Brother R. Bentley.

On the 23rd, I wrote President George Q. Cannon of my arrival in London, and my readiness to answer any call. Until the 30th, I spent the time visiting with the Elders and Saints in and around London, when I went per train with a number of the Valley Elders to Birmingham, 93 Albion street, and met Brother John M. Kay. He had made arrangements for me to stay at the office in company with President George Q. Cannon, Cousin J. N. Smith, W. S. Snow and Isaac Bullock, during the conference.

On the 31st, at the general council of Elders which convened at 10 a. m., there were one hundred present, Geo. Q. Cannon presiding. President Cannon addressed the council for a considerable time; when I was called to report the Swiss, Italian, German and Dutch mission, which I gave in short, and was followed by J. N. Smith, of the Scandinavian mission, and presidents of different conferences through the European mission. The good time we had together, I can truly testify was such as has not often been surpassed in any assembly with which I ever met. For the good Spirit of the Lord was with us, and each one spoke by its influence. I truly thank my Father in heaven for the privilege I enjoy, of being with this council meeting and hearing the abundance of good instructions from the Elders called upon to speak. It seems like home in reality to be where the mother tongue is spoken. Reports can be found in the *Millennial Star*, Vol. XXVI, page 57, and continuing through the succeeding numbers.

After spending many happy hours and visiting with many of the Elders, personally known to me at our homes in Zion, and spending a profitable time receiving instructions, as well as the knowledge of releases to return to Zion next emigration, the general council ad-

journed, and I returned to London, to labor under the direction of President Bentley in that district.

JOHN L. SMITH.

WORKS OF FICTION.

In Mr. Howell's little book, "Criticism and Fiction," he reports a correspondent writing to him, in answer to some bragging claims for the novel as a mental and moral means: "I have very grave doubts as to the whole list of magnificent things that you seem to think novels have done for the race, and can witness in myself many evil things which they have done for me. Whatever in my mental make-up is wild and visionary, whatever is untrue, whatever is injurious, I can trace to the perusal of some work of fiction. Worse than that; novels beget such high-strung and supersensitive ideas of life, that plain industry and plodding perseverance are despised, and matter-of-fact poverty, or every day distress, meets with no sympathy, if indeed noticed at all, by one who has crept over the impossibly accumulated sufferings of some dashing hero, or gaudy heroine."

Mr. Howells drops the controversy, but says: "Novels are now accepted by every one laying claim to cultivated taste—and they really form the whole intellectual life of such immense numbers of persons without question of their influence, good or bad, upon the mind, that it is refreshing to have them frankly denounced;" and he confesses that much fiction has been wholly injurious from its falsehood, its folly, its wantonness, and its aimlessness.

Much novel reading is the emptiest dissipation, like opium-eating, leaving the mind the weaker and crazier for the debauch. But fiction reading is not responsible for all the evils in the character of its victims. The reader who uses care in choosing from this fungus growth in the fields of literature, may nourish himself on the true mushroom, at no risk from the poisonous species.

The tests are plain, simple, infallible. The novel that flatters the passions, and exalts them above the principles, is poisonous; the immoral romance that presents the sins of sense unvisited by the penalties, swift or slow, but inexorably certain in the real world, is poisonous; the tale that tickles our prejudice, lulls our judgment, or pampers our appetite for the marvelous, is innutritious and unwholesome; the story that teaches through its "gaudy heroine," that love, or the passion mistaken for it, is the chief interest of life, above prudence, obedience, reason, duty, will make no reader either healthy or wealthy or wise. Any novel that sins against truth, which alone can exalt and purify men, that leaves its reader in doubt between what is right and what is wrong, what is noble and what is base, what is health and what is perdition in the actions and characters which it portrays, is a mental and moral pabulum to be let alone.

But if a novel is true to the motives, the impulses, the principles that shape the life of actual men and women; if it presents that truth which includes the highest morality and the highest art, it cannot be wicked, it cannot be weak, it cannot create wickedness nor weakness; if it is true to what men and women know of one another's souls, it will be true enough, and it may be great, and beautiful, and beneficent.

All literature must be instructive or entertaining, or both at once. The novel is no exception. Dickens warms our hearts at his Christmas fires; Thackeray rouses our indignation and quickens our contempt at his sham feasts; Mrs. Stowe makes us witness the demolition of hoary wrongs; Charles Kingsley, MacDonald, Mrs. Ward, make us take theological notes; but all the time we are entertained. They give us the strong story, with its startling incident, its merriment, its pathos, its intricate plot, its wondering what will come next.

In the plot, the incidents, interesting in themselves, must be so carried forward as to form one chief, unified action. There must be something to tell, and each incident must help tell it, but still leave the reader in suspense to the end. Reade, in *Christie Johnstone*; George Eliot, in *Silas Marner*; Blackmon, in *Lorna Doone*; Payne, in *Confidential Agent*, show, in this respect, constructive power of the highest order.

The end of the story must have a suitable proportion and relation to the beginning, happy if that is the plan, righting the wrongs occurring in the action, doing justice to virtuous and vicious, or a noble termination in tragedy, lifting the reader's nature into a high plane of sacrifice and pathos, if the beginning points that way. No one wants to read a pointless story.

The characters must be clearly drawn, interesting in themselves, suited to the situations and action, and studied from real life. There should be at least one who may impress us as a worthy, personal friend, whose name lingers in our minds. The dialogue, clever and natural, must be true to the nature of the speakers. The action is the result of the mental and moral forces at play. The novelist studies men and women; he is concerned with their thoughts, their feelings, their actions. His material, is his impressions of life. The air of reality is his supreme virtue. Anthony Trollope weakly confesses that he could give his story any other turn; the lack of reality in some of his stories is the same confession. The novel is a failure, which does not make its persons visible to us.

The incidents and situations must seem probable. Heroes who wait in the middle of the highway for a span of runaway horses, and stop them by main strength without yielding an inch, are no longer acceptable. The quandary in which John Ward, Preacher, and his heterodox wife find themselves, could never have happened in real life. Such a couple would have quarreled a dozen times, before he could have so sweetly popped the question and got such a sweet "Yes, sir, please!"

The descriptive portions must be as much as possible incidental, brief, suggestive of pictures and strictly confined to what is closely connected with the development of character, and in strict subordination to it. Human interest must absorb everything else. The best story-tellers never divert attention from the actors. Charles Reade in his incomparable *Cloister and Hearth* shows master strokes of this kind of this indirect, suggested description.

The novel must be instructive. The masters of fiction have been deliberately didactic. Bunyan never insisted more strongly on God, duty, immortality, the "sinfulness of sin and the beauty of holiness" than the liberal and artis-