

Essay read before the "Lyceum of the 11th N.Y.
Battery, by J. L. A. Grounse.

Novels and Novel Readers.

The term Novel, from L. Novus, or F. Nouvelle, implies something New. But, as the vast abundance of works of fiction, their sameness of character, their general uniformity in details of incident, plot, character and final catastrophe, preclude the idea of anything essentially new or instructive in them, the term in general has become a misnomer.

That Novel Reading, carried to a great extent, leads to mental dissipation, morbid sensibility, and a distaste for substantial, instructive reading, is easily proved. Yet, if not excessive, and if directed to the most approved works of the best authors, and used rather as an adjunct to years severe study - as the light dessert follows the heavy dinner of substantial viands - novel reading is quite exhilarating, and by no means unprofitable.

It must be confessed that the Novel affords the most agreeable and entertaining method of elucidating the great principles and facts of philosophy and general history; and is, therefore, frequently employed for these purposes. The novelist can select his characters according to his fancy, arrange his plot, and make everything conspire to the triumph of his favorite ideas. But he has too much latitude, and is liable to abuse his privilege, and his opinions are not of so much weight as though presented in plain, logical prose in the form of a treatise; where the cunning combinations of plot, stirring adventures and happy coincidences would not avail him.

It needs, after all, a sound, discriminating intellect and well balanced moral powers to read profitably even the best productions of the school of romance; for the well balanced mind is the only one capable of keeping its

poise, and glean only sound instruction from that which is made up of both good and evil.

But, if even the best works of fiction may be fruitful of evil in the hands of infudicious readers, what shall be said of the vast inundation of cheap, yellow-covered sensation romances that deluge the land? Is it just and generous of the ~~Six~~ Diabolo-Common-Place Prof. Ingraham, Sylvanus Cobb, etc. tribe to minister so assiduously to a depraved appetite and overwrought sensibility?

There is no need to caution men of good sense and intelligence against the current novel literature of the day. They are in no more danger of catching the yellow covered infection than they are of swallowing the "life bitters," "resurrection pills," "balms of gilead" and "universal panaceas" of the advertising quacks of swindling notoriety.

The oration by Dr.

The essay by Mr. Reynolds, entitled "The Gentlemen," also sent to this Bureau, was lost.