should be and would be, were its time and opportunities used to the best advantage (as shown by the hero and heroine), and least advantage (as shown by the evil characters.)

Besides giving us a deep insight into human nature, the novel does much for us intellectually. It enlarges our vocabulary more than any other class of books, for it abounds in dialogue, which, when written by masters of style, must increase the conversational power of the reader.

The philosophical novel gives us the views of men and women who have devoted their lives to some particular branch of knowledge. Physicians, philosophers, and politicians, disseminate their ideas, in this way, far more widely than they could by a formal treatise on the subject under consideration.

Historical novels are an important branch of fiction. The two principal benefits to be derived from history are a knowledge of the relation of cause and effect, as illustrated in the workings of historical forces, and a knowledge of the past, of the manners and customs of forgotten nations. These have been aptly called the philosophical and picturesque aspects of history. It is the duty of the novelist to present to us mainly the latter, though he often does the former.

A great fund of information can be derived from works like Professor Eber's romances of ancient Egypt, Kingsley's "Hypatia," and from works that depict to us phases of modern civilization with which we have been unacquainted. Could we have obtained in any other way such an insight into English society as has been given us by Trollope and Thackeray? or have realized the poverty of East London as Walter Besant has shown it to us? Balzac's and Maupassant's studies of French life will be highly prized by students of the twentieth century. Such works are almost as good as travel; they both instruct and entertain.

Though most novels do us more or less good intellectually, it is from a moral rather than from an intellectual point of view that we should judge them. Here is where they do the greatest good or the greatest harm. So much has been said of the evil effects of fiction, that perhaps we hardly realize the good it does. The best novels present to us types of honor, nobility, and virtue, placing before us lofty ideals, which are yet real enough to seem our friends.

They teach us by the expression of lofty thoughts and motives; they preach to us by the recital of noble deeds; they make us sympathize with humanity by the spirit which the skillful writer infuses into them. Can any sermons compete with the novels of George Eliot, in the good done? Her books seem to breathe on all mankind a divine essence of pity and tenderness.

Books might be called the conscience of the public. A book or a woman will sometime revolutionize the world. The good done by Dickens can never be estimated. He educates and enlightens, while moving us to smiles or tears.

This century has been remarkable for its literary activity, but its last decade has begun with the death of some of our greatest writers. This gives the future a somewhat gloomy aspect, but it is only one of Nature's laws, which holds true in literature as in every thing else. An age of war is succeeded by one of peace; an age of poetry, by one of prose; an age of earnest activity, by one of partial inertia. "Don Quixote" laughed Spain's chivalry away; the religious writers of France were succeeded by the mockeries of Voltaire and Rousseau; and in America, the romance of Hawthorne and the philosophy of Emerson are followed by the airy nothings of Howells and James.

If there seems to be a dearth of great minds at present, Nature is only gathering her forces for another generation to compete with and perhaps excel those gone before.

The history of the world of literature is like a wheel. Each epoch is a spoke, now uppermost, now undermost; but as the wheel revolves, the same spoke, in the course of ages, will return to its original position, the wheel in each revolution advancing a given distance. So it is with literature. The same epochs return with unceasing regularity, but with each revolution we advance.

BEAUMELLE STURTEVANT.

"CHILDREN OF GIBEON."

WALTER BESANT.

"Though I speak with tongues of men and of Angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Charity! Charity! How much we hear about charity! How many are devoting their lives to the cause, forming societies, building institutions for the widows and orphans, for the sick and the helpless!

How many of Charles Dickens' works are devoted to the condition of the poor, and what a masterly portrayal of the woes of the seamstress in Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt!"