

than in Great Britain or France. Were I to include poetry in the list, however, it would swell the works of imagination in France to one ninth of the whole, and in Great Britain to one seventh; while the poems published in this country during the same time were not numerous enough to alter the proportion above stated. But it is to novels and tales that I wish to confine my attention. For very few of the injurious effects supposed to result from romances can be charged upon poetry, especially if it be not read in connection with romances.

I think I may safely draw the inference, from the facts stated, that our countrymen show a very strong predilection for a light and fictitious literature. And I might add other evidence, were it needful. It would be shown in the register of every circulating library, as it is in almost every public original exhibition in the college and the academy. Young men, in such a case, will select those subjects in which they feel the most interest; and how much more common is it, on such occasions, to hear discussed the character and merits of writers who address chiefly the fancy, than those who develop the substantial principles of accurate science and philosophy! It is seen, also, in the character of a large part of our periodicals, which their editors scarcely dare send forth to the public, if not set off with one or two original tales. Excepting a few business newspapers in our larger towns, most of our hebdomadals also must be adapted in the same way to the public taste; and the amorous story often stands in singular juxtaposition with the solemn realities of practical religion in the adjoining column. But the taste of all classes must be suited.*

* Yet it would be but an act of justice to readers that the motto for such newspapers should be, in the words of Burns, —

“Perhaps it may turn out a song,
Perhaps turn out a sermon.”