

And last, though not least, our religious literature must be clothed in the drapery of fiction, or it will be passed by as old-fashioned and uninteresting; while the latest religious romance will be seen occupying a conspicuous place upon the centre table. Nor will the devoted Christian—devoted, at least, to this kind of reading—suffer sleep to close his eyes, till it has been read through, and the enchanting story, if not the religion of the book, is deeply lodged in his memory.

But it is not my object at this time to go into a detailed exposure of the evils of novel reading. Suffice it to say, that when the father learns that his son, who is in a course of public education, has become devoted to this kind of literature, he abandons the hope that he will ever rise higher as a scholar than to become a writer of tales for some newspaper or periodical, or possibly the author of a play, that shall at least once appear upon the boards of Thespis. Or if his son be destined for business, instead of learning, the father expects that remissness and effeminacy will take the place of manly enterprise and success. The mother, too, who finds her daughter, in spite of all her warnings and rebukes, given up to secret midnight communings with the latest romance, almost abandons the hope of ever interesting her in those domestic pursuits that have always been the glory of New England women, or even in the higher and purer branches of literature. Indeed, she will be thankful if her daughter, in the ebullition of some glowing fancy scene, does not evaporate into ether, and pass into that place described by Milton,—

“—— All these, upwhirled aloft,
Flew o'er the back side of the world, far off,
Into a limbo, large and wide, since called
The Paradise of Fools:—to few unknown
Long after.” —