

least on the public mind ?" the reply would probably have been, "Why, the writing in our newspapers and our novels." And now the same reply would serve at least equally well to indicate the kinds of writing that are most telling and influential. None others exert so great a power over the general mind of the community as novels and newspaper articles. And the mode of piecemeal publication recently resorted to by our more popular novelists gives to the effect proper to their compositions as pictures of great genius and power, the further effect of pamphlets or magazines : they are at once novels and newspaper articles too.

Considerably more than a century has passed, however, since a judicious critic might have seen how very influential a class of compositions well-written novels were to become. "The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" appeared as far back as the year 1719, and at once rose to the popularity which it has ever since maintained. But it failed to attract the notice of the critics. The men who sat in judgment on the small elegancies of the wits of the reign of George I., and marked how sentences were balanced and couplets rounded, could not stoop to notice a composition so humble as a novel, more especially a novel written by a self-taught man. But his singularly vivacious production forced a way for itself, leaving the fine sentences and smart couplets to be forgotten. In a short time it was known all over Europe ; several translations appeared simultaneously in France, much about the period when Le Sage was engaged in writing, in one of the smaller houses of one of the most neglected suburbs of Paris, his "Gil Blas" and his "Devil on Two Sticks ;" and such was the rage of imitation which it excited in Germany, that no fewer than forty-one German novels were produced that had Robinson Crusoes for their heroes, and fifteen others that, though equally palpable imitations, had heroes that bore a different name. Eight years