

not such a stroke as this last in all Dickens. The writer who could draw such a feature with a single dash of the pencil well knew what he was about.

But it would be easy to multiply remarks such as these on the novelists. The fact of their mighty influence on opinion cannot, we think, be challenged ; and so it is of great importance that the influence should be a good one, or at least so far negatively good as not to be hurtful. We are aware that there are very excellent people who would altogether *taboo* this class of works : they would fain render them the subject of a sort of Maine law, render the open perusal of them unlawful, and severely punish all smuggling. But their attempts hitherto have been attended with but miserable success. We have often had occasion to know, that even among their own children, they succeed with only the very stupid ones, who have no turn for reading ; and that model-grown men or women of their training, ignorant of our novel literature, are usually scarce less ignorant of literature of any any other kind, and yet not a whit better than their neighbours. Besides, even were the case otherwise,—even were they to be really successful in their own little spheres,—the great fact of the influence and popularity of the genuine novel would still remain untouched. Dickens would have his thirty thousand subscribers for every new work, and at least his half-million of readers ; and the proprietor of the Scott novels would continue to sell sixty thousand volumes yearly. Further, the novel *per se*,—the novel regarded simply as a literary form,—is *morally* as unexceptionable as any other literary form whatever,—as unexceptionable as the epic poem, for instance, or the allegory, or the parable. The “Vicar of Wakefield,” as a form, is as little blameable as the “Deserted Village,” or “Waverley” as “Marmion” or the “Lay of the Last Minstrel.” And so we must hold, that on every occasion in which the *form* is made the vehicle of truth,