

TRUE JOURNALISM.

THAT, taken as a whole, the English literature of to-day is far cleaner and more wholesome than that of even less than a century ago, is a pleasing and encouraging truth. Upon the shelves of every scholar's library stand books which have not a rival in modern times in the immorality of their contents, and which simply hold their places among purer volumes because they are denominated "classic," and were honored with popular approval in those "good old times" when people were none too prudish about what was spoken or written. Mr. Spurgeon recently said, "Our grandmothers read books which their daughters would be ashamed to open," and a comparison of our modern popular works of fiction with those of the last century will furnish convincing evidence of the truth of his remark. Books, such as now receive the stamp of popular approval and find their places upon library shelves, are certainly more wholesome in their contents than those of a few decades ago. While this is true of the better class of books, the opposite must be said of publications of the periodical press. Improvements in the art of printing and the enormous reduction in the cost of publishing, combined with rapid and cheap transmission over wide and thickly populated areas, has resulted in multiplying, to an astonishing degree, the number of periodicals. By these facilities for cheap production and wide circulation, papers whose contents vary from the simply pernicious to the positively immoral and degrading have been enabled to establish themselves and spread their demoralizing influences throughout the entire nation. Upon the support gained from those whose moral sensibilities were already blunted, they have lived, recruiting at an alarming rate the ranks of their readers from the youth of our land, over whom their influence for evil has become appalling.

The records of our police and divorce courts, our prisons and asylums, are daily furnishing evidence of the terrible effect the circulation of such literature is having upon those who come within the circle of its ever widening and deepening influence. The printing press and the leaden types are inanimate objects, ready to be manipulated by the hand of the good and the bad. They can be made the agents of culture or the disseminators of vice. Which they shall be rests with the intelligent and thinking, the moral and cultured portion of our citizens. As a recent writer on this subject remarked, the essential elements are simple. "Given," said he, "a vile imagination and depraved heart, with a few brains, then put within its control the modern printing press, and hold out a slight pecuniary reward, and you have in combination some of the most dangerous forces that our modern civilization knows anything about." Those are the essential conditions under which is produced that which receives the passive condemnation of a vast majority of our citizens; and yet, until it ceases to be passive and becomes active and aggressive, condemnation is idle and impotent.

For this, journalism, as a profession, cannot be held fully responsible. As well hold the noble science of

surgery and medicine accountable for those unworthy disciples who prostitute the knowledge it gives them to commit crimes against nature. The great responsibility lies not with the press, not with those whose perverted literary taste craves such filthy trash, but with the acknowledged respectable portion of the community—those who, for business or what they deem prudent reasons, furnish the financial support to these manufacturers and retailers of vilest scandal. There are those in this city—men of acknowledged respectability and high social position—who admit these filthy sheets within the sacred precincts of the home circle. They are, thoughtlessly perhaps, but none the less actually, subjecting their children to influences which can but be highly injurious. They are laying the foundation for a tower of sorrow and grief whose weight shall crush them in their declining years. They are sowing the wind, and the harvest of whirlwind must surely be reaped. Instances are not wanting to prove the truth of all that has been said. To-day the heads of parents, guardians, brothers and husbands, bowed in shame for the wayward conduct of loved ones, attest its truth. And yet how many of them realize the full measure of their own responsibility for that which they look upon as an undeserved affliction? They have taken these papers into their families, or have in their business contributed to their support, and any bitterness which may flow into their lives from the impure stream they have thus helped to sustain, is but a righteous judgment visited upon them, and which may at any time fall upon the heads of their equally guilty neighbors.

It is not a pleasant subject to dwell upon, but it is necessary that our citizens should be aroused. This danger is not remote, nor is the cause of it entirely beyond our reach. We are not talking alone of the vile sheets published in New York; the press and people of that State are attending to that matter. It is of one in this city we speak, which is the base equal of the worst of them, which is attacking the purity of our home circles and the happiness and peace of our domestic hearths. It was no evidence of perspicacity on the part of that weekly paper—one which, utterly devoid of anything Sabbatarian, bears at its head the name of the day it desecrates—that it recognized in our pen picture a faithful portrait of itself. Ordinary intelligence and an acuteness of conscience which its long pandering to vice must surely have created, were sufficient. We simply held the glass up to Nature and every one recognized the repulsive features. With equally guilty instinct it knew whom Dr. Marvin meant when, from his pulpit a few months ago, he declared, "We have papers in this city that would be a burning disgrace to Sodom and Gomorrah." This was not an inconsiderate and impulsive expression, but was said deliberately, with full expectation of the torrent of vile abuse which that sheet immediately turned upon him—a sadly weak and sorry answer to such a terrible indictment. For this Dr. Marvin cared nothing; it could do him no harm, nor could it injure any respectable man. A mud cannon, filthy as its missiles are, has but a