

Novels nature of the
events narrated, and



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Novels are fictitious stories intended to give pleasure to the reader by the interesting nature of the events narrated, and of the characters who take part in the action. Those novels are generally considered best which most powerfully absorb our interest, so that we can scarcely lay aside the book until we have read it right through from the beginning to the end.

To do this we may take five or six hours, during which we are to a large extent blind and deaf to all that is going on around us, and omit to perform the ordinary duties of life. The student who reads a novel when he ought to be working, not only neglects to learn his lesson, but at the same time learns idle habits. Nor is his case much better if he devotes most of his legitimate leisure hours to reading fiction. The interest of many novels is so intense that it exhausts the brain even more than study. After an hour or two of recreation in the open air we return to our studies refreshed and vigorous; after the same time devoted to an exciting work of fiction we are not much more capable of brain-work than we should have been if we had gone on studying continuously without any interval. These remarks, however, apply only to immoderate novel-reading. This relaxation, when confined to strictly limited spaces of time, may agreeably vary the monotony of our daily lives.

In order that we may not become the slaves of the novels that interest us, we should carefully train ourselves in self-control, so that we may lay them aside without hesitation as soon as we know that we have read as much as is good for us. With this restriction it is possible to derive much benefit from good works of fiction. Historical novels, like those of Sir Walter Scott, give us brilliant pictures of history, which from their vividness make a far deeper impression than the duller pages of historical textbooks. Novels of modern

life give the Indian student such an insight into social life in Europe and America as he cannot possibly obtain from any other source. All good novelists are keen observers of character, and communicate some of their knowledge of men and women to their readers. The stories they tell are faithful copies of real life, and so enable us to derive from them, without the danger involved in personal experience, much valuable knowledge of the world, which may protect us against temptations to folly and vice. Last and most important of all is the consideration that the greatest novels place before us characters with high ideals whom through the author's skill we learn to admire and love as if they were real human beings. Thus they are often far more efficacious in inspiring high thoughts and noble resolves than the most eloquent preacher, the wisest moral philosopher, or the most persuasive didactic poet.