

The most necessary thing for the practical man is the attainment of an exact and thorough knowledge of \_what is really going on in the world;\_ but it is also the most irksome, for a man may continue studying until old age without having learnt all that is to be learnt; while one can master the most important things in the sciences in one's youth. In getting such a knowledge of the world, it is as a novice that the boy and youth have the first and most difficult lessons to learn; but frequently even the matured man has still much to learn. The study is of considerable difficulty in itself, but it is made doubly difficult by \_novels\_, which depict the ways of the world and of men who do not exist in real life. But these are accepted with the credulity of youth, and become incorporated with the mind; so that now, in the place of purely negative ignorance, a whole framework of wrong ideas, which are positively wrong, crops up, subsequently confusing the schooling of experience and representing the lesson it teaches in a false light. If the youth was previously in the dark, he will now be led astray by a will-o'-the-wisp: and with a girl this is still more frequently the case. They have been deluded into an absolutely false view of life by reading novels, and expectations have been raised that can never be fulfilled. This generally has the most harmful effect on their whole lives. Those men who had neither time nor opportunity to read novels in their youth, such as those who work with their hands, have decided advantage over them. Few of these novels are exempt from reproach--nay, whose effect is contrary to bad. Before all others, for instance, \_Gil Blas\_ and the other works of Le Sage (or rather their Spanish originals); further, \_The Vicar of Wakefield\_, and to some extent the

novels of Walter Scott. Don Quixote may be regarded as a satirical presentation of the error in question.