

workman. Margaret was wretched, but to all her supplications Tregear still said that he had no fear. In her distress she spoke to Polglaze and asked him to shake hands with Tregear. He refused, but he pressed his rough hands to his temples and said, "I loved you then, I love you now, as much or more than Joe Tregear."

A day or two after that both men were again at work together, and silent as death in their solitary shaft. They were suddenly startled by a falling stone. A few lumps of earth then came tumbling down, and the whole shaft seemed to tremble.

The works were giving way. The two men looked at one another, for a moment, with blanched faces. It was the first time they had looked into one another's eyes since that fatal day, except to dart glances of scorn and hate. They ran to the kebble and gave the signal to be drawn up. They were touching one another now, their hands almost clasped together on the rope. Their very breath seemed to intermingle. It was terrible after such a course of hate to be brought together under these circumstances. As they were both shouting to be drawn up, the rope tightened and strained, but the kebble would not move. More earth now fell, but still the kebble remained at the bottom of the shaft. Whilst shouting louder and louder for help, the terrible truth flashed through their minds that there was only one man at the windlass, and that he alone was unable to raise them both, and

all this time the shaft was trembling and earth and stones falling.

As they stood there in the kebble, their bodies and hands touching, and glancing into one another's eyes, the awful thought came to them both in an instant that one of them must die—must die to save the other—his enemy!

One of them must die—but who should it be?

They again looked at one another, and there was an eternity in the glance. Then one of them let go the rope and dropped out of the kebble, which immediately began to rise. Who was it? The willing martyr was Tom Polglaze.

"Tell Marg'et," he shouted, as the kebble rose above his head, "tell Marg'et I did it to save her pain—to save you whom she loves! I forgive you! but be sure and be good to—"

The shaft gave way, and nothing presented itself to Tregear's gaze but a mass of slate and rubbish. Tom Polglaze was in eternity, as noble a soul as ever died for any cause that is dear to man; as devoted as any martyr, as generous-souled as any patriot—though only a poor miner.

It was long before Joseph Tregear and Margaret Powhele recovered from that shock. They mourned the brave dead as a brother, and a neat little stone, overlooking the village churchyard, long afterwards reminded the tinmen of Tregoeze of the noble deed of self-sacrifice of a hero who was one of themselves.

THE FAMILY PARLIAMENT.

[THE RULES OF DEBATE will be found on page 756. The Editor's duty will be to act as a kind of "Mr. Speaker;" consequently, while preserving due order in the discussion, he will not be held to endorse any opinions that may be expressed on either side, each debater being responsible for his own views.]

CAN FICTION BE MADE A POWER FOR GOOD?

OPENER'S SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER,

I suppose, Sir, that there are few subjects more provocative of discussion in the family circle than that of Fiction—whether it be a power for good or for evil. This is undoubtedly a very broad question, and if the whole body of English fiction be considered, probably all candid readers will admit that there is much to be said on both sides. I, for one, will not attempt to deny that the majority of the novels and stories which are issued annually by thousands from the English and American presses are comparatively useless—nay, I am quite ready to go farther than this, and acknowledge that much, very much, of our fiction is absolutely harmful; but having done this, I unhesitatingly assert that fiction often is, and can always be made, a mighty power for good. This is the proposition which I wish to bring under the consideration of

the Family Parliament, and which I am now prepared to defend.

It will at once be seen, Sir, that the second part of my proposition is but a corollary dependent upon the first; for if it can be proved that fiction often *is* a power for good, it will then be easy to trace what kinds of fiction exert this beneficent influence, and to show that all fiction might be made to possess the desired characteristics. I may, therefore, best start the subject by the assertion that much of the fiction which we possess is a threefold power for good: it is a moral force; it is an educative influence; it is a healthful means of amusement.

Good fiction—as distinct from the admittedly bad, which it is not my desire to defend in any way—exerts a strong moral influence, inculcating lessons of truth and purity, honour and courage, unselfishness and thrift, and, in fact, every other virtue. This it does unobtru-

sively, not by showing that "honesty is the best policy," and that the best men and women are the most fortunate in all their worldly concerns, but by evidencing that the highest happiness to be found on earth results from doing right under all circumstances, howsoever strong and howsoever plausible may be the temptation in an opposite direction. Hundreds of instances from modern fiction will occur to all readers thereof, in which the heroes and heroines are good, true, loving men and women, erring at times, as humanity ever must, but whom it were wise to emulate in our own daily lives, and whose conduct under varying circumstances may often serve as a guide to ourselves in somewhat similar positions. I might well occupy an hour or two, Sir, in relating true anecdotes in proof of the position I have taken up, but two instances will be sufficient for my purpose; and I select them because they both relate to works which can scarcely be classed among those written with a distinctly moral and religious purpose, and my case, as I venture to think, is thereby strengthened. The first story was vouched for by the present Lord Lytton, who stated at a public meeting some time ago that he once chanced to meet an eminent and opulent Parisian tradesman, who said that he owed all his success in life to the writer of "Night and Morning." "An absolute pauper, and forced to endure severe privations, he was yet possessed with an ardent love for what was of material and social benefit;" and Lord Lytton's description in "Night and Morning" of a lad in a similar position rescued him from despair, put new life into him, and caused him to climb the first rung of the ladder which led to his ultimate success. The second instance will perhaps be best told by reading an extract from a letter written from America to Samuel Warren, the author of "Ten Thousand a Year." The correspondent wrote:—"At the time I had the pleasure of reading 'Ten Thousand a Year' misfortune had laid her heavy hand upon me, and sometimes, when those who instead of aiding rather assisted in oppressing me, my heart would fail me. But when I thought of Charles Aubrey, so finely portrayed by you, who, though born to affluence and reared in luxury, how he bore his misfortunes, I felt ashamed that I, but a mechanic, one of the toiling millions to whom God had given health and strength, should so far forget His goodness as to despair. So I put my shoulder to the wheel right manfully, and turned neither to the right hand nor to the left, and with a firm reliance on His providence determined to extricate myself from the pecuniary embarrassments I was surrounded with, and have succeeded. As to glorious Kate, I cannot tell you how I appreciate her character more than by saying that I hope the little stranger born to me some few nights ago, whom I have taken the liberty of naming Kate Aubrey, will take her namesake as a pattern of excellence, and follow it." Cases like these surely speak eloquently in favour of fiction. And if any further testimony were needed, I have only to refer with all reverence to the wondrous parables told by our Lord, who deigned to enforce His teaching in this very way.

Again, Sir, I maintain that sound fiction is a great educative power. To sum up this view of the question in a few words, I would say that historical tales clothe the dry bones of the past with veritable flesh and blood, and teach history in just the way in which it is likely to be remembered; while the stories of every-day life convey a knowledge of manners and customs, and afford an insight into varied types of character, such as most of their readers would not readily acquire by other means, but which may be of incalculable advantage to them in their after-careers.

Lastly, fiction is a healthful means of amusement. Many people assert that the chief or only object of fiction is to amuse, but while I strenuously deny this, I maintain that healthy fiction *is* a healthful and innocent delight. When wearied with work, or saddened by trouble, or helpless through sickness, fiction is an undoubted boon, affording changeful relief to the mind, and a pleasant source of recreation.

And now, Sir, if there be any truth in my case at all, if existing fiction *is* very often a power for good in one direction or another, surely *all* fiction might well be made such a power. The responsibility undoubtedly lies with the authors and publishers. If writers would but consider what may be the result of their work—its influence for good or for evil—if publishers rigidly declined to issue any novel or story unless it was not only harmless, but actually contained the seeds of good, the question as to the value of fiction would soon cease to be a debatable one. And it is because that in respectable and well-conducted magazines—whether distinctly religious or otherwise—the fiction is carefully selected and jealously watched, so that no sentence, or even word, may offend or harm, that I would speak my last word in favour of the serial stories which appear in the best popular periodicals.

OPPONENT'S SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER,

I cannot help remarking, Sir, that the honourable member who has opened this subject has undoubtedly tried to take the wind out of everybody's sails, and to leave them no argument wherewith to withstand his strong gale of assumption and assertion. He is wise enough not to attempt to defend fiction as a whole; he does not even claim that fiction generally is a power for good, but only that all fiction may be made such a power; and he thinks he has proved his proposition when he asserts that some existing fiction is already a power for good, and that all fiction might be made like thereunto. Such being the case, I think, Sir, I may well feel a little aggrieved. I am quite prepared to prove that fiction as it exists does an incalculable amount of harm, but as the question has been put, this would be of no use; my opponent would at once retort that he had only argued in favour of pure and healthy fiction. I am therefore compelled to accept the challenge as it has been thrown down, and join issue with him on the very limited ground which

he has selected—namely, that good fiction is a power for good. This, however, I am quite willing to do; and I trust I shall be able to convince the Family Parliament that fiction even of the best type generally does more harm than good: that it is, in fact, a potent source of evil.

To simplify the matter, I may at once admit that good fiction—historical or other—may possess a small educative influence, but it surely cannot be argued that it is one-tenth so valuable as history or biography; and if this be admitted, to read fiction for the sake of the education it may possibly afford cannot but be considered a grievous waste of time. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that most modern fiction is anything but a safe guide in construction and grammar, and my opponent can scarcely claim that it is educative in this respect.

Fiction regarded as a moral force and as a means of amusement may well be considered together, for it is beyond dispute that the chief object of writers of even the highest type of fiction is to amuse, and that novels and stories are read not for the sake of the moral lessons they may indirectly inculcate, but for the amusement and recreation which they afford. Novels *do* amuse—this cannot be denied; but herein lies an insidious source of danger, especially to the young. The charm which fiction exercises over some minds is so great that in its favour the duties of life are neglected, study is set aside, needful and healthful exercise is forgotten. Boys and girls, young men and women, ay, even fathers and mothers of families, oftentimes yield themselves so readily to the absorbing influence of fiction, that it grows to the dimensions of a baneful giant, overshadowing them wheresoever they go, wasting precious hours, and influencing for evil their whole career in life.

Again, can it be denied that novels, however pure and true in tone, are calculated to unsettle the minds of their readers, especially if they be of an impressionable age? Boys' minds are naturally too full of the love of change and of the spirit of discontent; girls' minds are too prone to high-flown fancies and romantic thoughts, to need the unnatural stimulant in the same direction provided by fiction. I firmly believe that if we could only see one tithe of the actual and positive harm, the sin and misery, which has resulted from the spirit of unrest caused by excessive novel-reading, we should be appalled.

The honourable member who opened this debate gave two instances of careers influenced for good by characters in works of fiction. Such cases may at times occur; but is it not evident that if people choose models from the novels they read, they are just as likely to select the bad as the good? If a story is true to life, as the best fiction ought to be, evil must often be triumphant, and right must often be humbled before wrong; the spoils of this world—its money, its pleasures, its luxuries—will often fall to the wrong-doer, and it is more than probable that readers of fiction may be led away to emulate the evil characters, and prefer happiness for a season, even at the sacrifice of what they know to be right and true. If we only con-

sider for one moment how much easier it is to do wrong than to do right, to follow an evil example rather than one which is noble and true, we can scarcely arrive at any other conclusion than that, from a moral point of view, fiction, even if it be written from the highest motives, must do more harm than good. A special and perhaps unusual instance of this was afforded only a year ago in the French courts, when a murderer asserted as the only reason for his crime that he wanted to enact a scene he had been reading about in a novel!

And if it be the case that the best types of fiction as it exists are endowed with a strange mixture of good and evil influences—the evil, as I maintain, largely preponderating—how can we hope that the general mass of fiction can ever be made a power for good: that is, of course, for good alone, or for good to the comparative exclusion of evil? Is it in any way possible or practicable? I fear not. True it is that in some of the high-class popular magazines, the fiction may be judiciously selected and carefully edited—nay, in this respect I am ready to go farther than my opponent, and say that if the only fiction in the world were of the kind provided in such a magazine as ours which has originated the Family Parliament, we should have much cause to be grateful, and both my fears and convictions would soon disappear. But a few isolated instances are but the proverbial exceptions which prove the rule. Authors *will* continue to write of good and evil, as they may choose; and the flood of irresponsible and harmful fiction will of necessity always continue to issue from the press, to the exclusion of higher and better work. After all, the question we have to consider is a very broad one—not whether some hundredth or thousandth part of fiction may be made a power for good, but whether all fiction can by any possibility be forced to surrender its evil influence. Can we make fiction as a whole pure and healthy? and even if this be possible, can we guard against its taking an undue position in our daily lives? Sir, I feel assured we cannot, and I confidently leave this question to the decision of the Family Parliament.

[RULES OF DEBATE.—*The course of debate is as follows:—Two principal speakers holding opposite views on the question discussed are selected by the Editor. Readers of the MAGAZINE are then invited to express their own views on the subject, to the Editor, who will at his discretion select some of the most suitable and concise of these communications for publication in a subsequent Part of the MAGAZINE. The Opener of the Debate is to have the right of reply.*]

TO OUR READERS.—The Editor will be happy to receive the opinions of any Readers on the above Question, on either side, with a view to the publication of the most suitable and concise communications in the January Part. Letters should be addressed "The Editor of CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, La Belle Sauvage Yard, London, E.C.," and in the top left-hand corner of the envelope should be written, "Family Parliament." The speech should be headed with the title of the Debate, and an indication of *the side taken by the Reader*. All communications on the present Question must reach the Editor not later than November 10.

An Honorarium of £1 1s. will be accorded (subject to the discretion of the Editor) to the *best speech on either side of the Question*; no speech to exceed 50 lines (500 words).

THE FAMILY PARLIAMENT.

[THE RULES OF DEBATE will be found on page 56. The Editor's duty will be to act as "Mr. Speaker;" consequently, while preserving due order in the discussion, he will not be held to endorse any opinions that may be expressed on either side, each debater being responsible for his own views.]

CAN FICTION BE MADE A POWER FOR GOOD?

(Debate resumed.)

TONY :—I should like to inquire of the hon. gentleman, the leader of the Opposition, if he is aware of the magnitude of the change he is proposing, for a social revolution would certainly ensue if we all adopted his views as to the hopelessness of getting good from fiction.

Has he considered that the term "fiction" includes not only the much-vituperated novel, but the child's fairy-tale, the rhymed romance, the vivid reproduction of the life of our ancestors, some of the most exquisite fancies of the poets, and the plays of Shakespere? Will the hon. gentleman but figure to himself a state of things in which he is deprived of his Shakespere, his Chaucer, his Scott, his Coleridge, and the greater part of his Tennyson? Can he in cold blood imagine his child-friends without their Hans Andersen, their "Arabian Nights," their beloved "Alice in Wonderland," forbidden to make the acquaintance of Cinderella, and Dick Whittington, and Red Riding Hood and her grandmother; not even allowed to sympathise with the sorrows of Rosamond, or to learn how Harry and Lucy made their beds; our boys ignorant of the history of Robinson Crusoe and the travels of Captain Gulliver? Even the "Pilgrim's Progress" must be swept away with the rest.

J. F. HESLOP :—"Fiction a moral force." Granted. But I contend, Sir, that the "force" predominates in favour of moral evil, increasingly so. "The mind is the standard of the man," the faculty of mind is man's noblest possession, by that faculty he ought to regulate the good or evil of his doings. His reasoning powers are the powers by which he must discern between right and wrong. By strength of mind we are enabled to cope successfully with the stern realities of life, therefore it must be clear, Sir, that anything which inclines to frustrate the purposes and endanger the proper fulfilment of the various functions of mind must, in the nature of things, be a grave moral and social evil. Then the question arises—What is the influence of fiction *in toto* on the mind? Why, Sir, it enervates the mind, it stultifies the reasoning faculties of its devotees, by offering them the light, weak food of second-hand imagination, founding moral discernment upon flimsy ideals of fancy instead of sound philosophy and the logic of facts. Feasting on the momentary pleasures of sensationalism, its participants are rendered mentally and morally unfit for the unavoidable realisms of practical life. All this is evidenced by numberless living proofs. Society is outstocked with glib-tongued mental nonentities, so victimised by fiction, effeminating the nation's noblest youth, obstructing the development and growth towards true manhood. Therefore I think, Sir, the honourable Member's three assertions are painfully in want of logical support.

J. BALLINGER :—I have had, Sir, as the librarian of a free public library, many opportunities of observing the habits and idiosyncracies of fiction-readers. I could point to many instances of the wives of men in the humbler ranks of life who come to the library for novels for their husbands, which they select with the greatest care, not because of any knowledge they possess to enable them to judge between good and evil books, but to obtain something attractive and interesting in appearance, and, in some cases, in order that they may tell their husbands how carefully they have selected it, that it looks nice, and so on. And why all this? It is a work of love! To keep the good man in at night, to provide entertainment for him at home, so that

he may not hunger for the hollow friendship of low companions. When I think of how these women have said to me with tears in their eyes, "Ay, sir, but you know how to pick a book to please my husband," or "Will you find me another good one, if you please, sir—it keeps my husband in o' nights," I can have no doubt of the good influence of fiction on the lives of such.

JOHN BISHOP :—A universal affirmative or negative is hardly admissible in this case. To answer the question by Yes or No would be to miss the mark, but yet I incline to No. The Bible, Sir, makes use of parables, or little tales. If they are true, they furnish no excuse for novels; if false, they only excuse very short novels, and that to a very limited extent. I suppose that the space which the parables occupy in the Bible is about a hundredth part of the whole book. Are authors and readers content to limit themselves to that proportion of fiction as compared with all the books they read or write? If so, I have no disposition to find fault. The reading of novels with young and old consumes an exorbitant amount of time. A man so engaged shows that he has a very low estimate of the value of time, and a very poor notion of how to improve it. That is not the way to benefit his fellow-creatures, nor to forward his own temporal and eternal interests. Those who are trying to make the best use of their time are conscious of its rapid flight, but the aim of the novel-reader is rather to kill it. He has not been awakened to a laudable ambition to familiarise himself with arts, sciences, and religion. These cover too wide a field, they demand too much attention and labour to allow of wasting time and mental energy over novels, if one would make much out, and do them justice.

* C. A. PRITCHARD :—Sir,—On this question I feel bound to support our honourable Opener, for Mr. Opponent will never convince me "that fiction even of the best type generally does more harm than good," or that it can possibly be in all cases "a potent source of evil." Did Mr. Opponent limit his censure to bad, trashy, or even indifferent fiction, I could well understand his strong condemnation of the same. But he does not so; he puts his veto strongly, forcibly, and decisively upon fiction of the purest type; he attacks all novels, be they good or bad; and it is on this ground I would venture to take up the cudgels and say a few words in defence of pure fiction. Good fiction has, I believe, a very, very great influence on the minds of young people, an influence not perhaps at first perceptible, but surely enough there, manifesting itself in a hundred little unseen or unnoticed ways; for as a boy or girl is known by his or her friends, so I think are they both equally known by their books. The story of a noble deed or brave self-sacrifice will bring the ready tears to many a young girl's eyes, will cause a thrill of admiration to run through many a brave lad's frame, as, with a longing known only to themselves in its intensity, they wish they could even do likewise. And that longing is not always transient; it must not always be despised or sneered at as the excitable fancy of a sentimental child; those girlish tears are but the foreshadowing of the woman's tenderheartedness and love; those boyish thrills are but the prelude to the man's steadfastness and faith; they

* This speech is by a winner of the Honorarium in an earlier Debate.

exert an influence on his whole character, an influence which helps him to be nobler, truer, braver than he was before; which shows him there is a higher aim in life than the mere gratification of his own selfish pleasures and wants; which teaches him to think of others as well as of himself, and to be courteous, kind, and generous to all.

MRS. SULLIVAN :—It is only too true that most things which, in this world, are capable of being made powerful agents for good, are also capable of being turned to the worst uses; and thus it is recorded that the inventor of the printing-press was kept awake all night by troubled thoughts of all the harm that printing might do in unworthy hands. It almost seems as if it must be so, for light must cast shadow, and the pendulum must swing as far on one side as on the other. Fiction may be used in the service of evil, but those who think that it is in itself an evil thing, confound it with falsehood. Now, fiction is not falsehood, but is a *vehicle for conveying truth*. Every parable in the best Book of all is a fiction, and might be elaborated into a volume, but each one contains and clothes a truth. The fables of antiquity, fictions themselves, are keenly edged with truths that could not probably be so strongly enforced in any other way. And the very fact that fiction has existed and has been appreciated from ancient times, proves that human nature needs it.

MILLIE RUNDLE :—As I understand this question, Sir, fiction is to be taken as a whole, and therefore it seems to me that the honourable Member, the Opener, has not fairly grasped the subject with which we are dealing when he isolates a few cases from the vast bulk of readers, and tells us, to them fiction has caused great good. Things in this country are happily decided by a majority, and when against these few isolated ones we set the evidence of medical men, who affirm that the cause of many and many a girl's ill-health is the reading of fiction in the shape of novels; when other evidence shrieks at us from within the walls of our lunatic asylums—a very large proportion of the inhabitants of our mad-houses, so doctors say, owe their loss of mind to the excessive poring over trashy fiction—when we ourselves see the mistress of a home deep in the imaginary wrongs of some unreal heroes, while her own children, ay, even her husband, are buried up to their necks in real, true trouble; when we see the lives of, oh! such a vast number of undergraduates simply wasted through their excessive fondness for fiction; when we hear the lame excuse for their efforts being crowned with the "wooden spoon," that they "really—aw—have had no time—aw—for solid reading"—then, Sir, I think all of us will find it a hard matter to say fiction as a whole can be made a power for good.

J. EATON FEARN :—I think no one will deny the fact that trashy tales have a very injurious effect on the people who read them; and surely it is a logical inference to draw that if inferior literature has a power for evil, good literature must have a contrary effect. I believe, Sir, that many a one through reading fiction has imbibed a literary taste, and thus sown the seeds of future attainments. Why, if fiction must be removed from our shelves, just think of the precious, soul-inspiring, and delightful works which would have to be destroyed! It touched your heart, and stirred a good feeling in your soul, did it not, my reader, as you read of the heroic deeds related by Homer or Virgil in their immortal poems? Thousands of thirsty souls have drunk deep in all ages of the sparkling water in this well of great literary lore. Who, indeed, has not received comfort from the reading of such a book as the "Pilgrim's Progress"? Must our children henceforth be refused to read "Arabian Nights," "Robinson Crusoe," or such-like innocent stories? Surely not! But apart from the literary pleasure derived from a perusal of fiction, I contend, Sir, that no one can read a good author without profit in one way or another.

MARGARETTA MARSH :—To begin with, I must ask Mr. Opener the difference between a "good" lie and a "bad" one.

You cannot have a good lie, and, in my opinion, fiction is the same. It is, according to Walker, an invention or lie; therefore, I say, how can any fiction be termed good? I place *all* fiction under one head—viz., bad—although I acknowledge that some is very bad. My reason for classing all as bad is because I have found that all fiction is hurtful to me. I have not been long in the world, but I should say no one has read more novels for their age than I have, both what Mr. Opener would call "good" and "bad." These books of lies have had great fascinating powers with me, and, though a forbidden pleasure (as I then thought), many have been the nights I have sat up in my room to finish reading the adventures of a hero or heroine. Indeed, once I dropped to sleep over the romantic nonsense, and set the bed on fire.

Many instances could I give of life ruined through novel-reading, but time will not allow, and, in conclusion, I unhesitatingly assert that no fiction or lie can be made a power for good until the fiction is taken out of it. I have much pleasure, Sir, in supporting Mr. Opener.

A. D. G. :—I believe that fiction can be made a mighty power for good. A love of fiction seems inherent in human nature, and like every other feeling implanted in us, may be turned to good account. When our great Church poet said :—

"A verse may find him who a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice,"

he was thinking, no doubt, of his own sacred calling, but the remark holds good for things secular as well.

FLORENCE RHODES :—The Opponent says that if fiction is realistic it must often show vice triumphant. True, but who envies the rich uncle the wealth which he gets from the murder of the Babes in the Wood? Who would be Lady Macbeth when she has attained the object of her ambition, but has lost all that makes life dear, and gained a "mind diseased," which gives her no rest till she is driven to self-murder? Even when the wicked are throughout victorious by means of their crimes, the novelist who is true to life must depict such remorse, followed by the searing of the conscience and deterioration of the moral character, as forces one to acknowledge that virtue in rags is preferable.

Other speeches, supporting Opener's argument that Fiction *can* be made a Power for Good, received from:—A. L. C., Mrs. S. (Leamington), L. K., J. N. Montgomery Campbell, W. T. Osborne, A. Harrison, J. Sutherland, Emmie Jeffrey, T. W., E. Q. V., M. Stobart, Rees Thos. Heins, W. King, E. Bollam, Annie White, A. M. M., Mrs. Nicolle, K. G., May Tarbolton, Alice D., Lucy Holmes, Marie Compton, M. Muir, F. Clements, Jessie Donisthorpe, Curio, W. A., A. W. S., W. Speakman, F. E. Sancto, Russell Bransby, C. Sargeant, Anon., Susie Welch, F. Moberly, James Young (Belfast), J. Cullen Sawtell, F. W. Brewer, James Pichover (2), J. Holmes, F. Maitland, Frank Crouch, James Young (Edinburgh), J. Ture, Henry Maclean, W. H. T. (Neath), B. Gray, M. R. A., Redclyffe, E. E. M., J. R. T., J. Maxwell, E. Harwood, Lizzie Carter, F. W. Stuart, J. Routledge, Miss Roger, F. T., Aimée, J. J. M. Davis, W. T. Shannon, R. L. Fleming, Lillian Rose, Thomas P. Gordon, F. A. Wood, H. Dixon, J. Trewavas, H. L. G. (Abingdon), Annie M. Brunson, G. S. Selby, W. J. Ritchie, J. A. W. Oliver, Lucy Awdry, and others.

Other speeches, supporting Opponent's argument that Fiction *can not* be made a Power for Good, received from—G. D. Clark, Ash Grove, Felix Homo, F. Gibson, Milly Palmer, S. T. Twomly, M. E. Rangdale.

TOTAL NUMBER OF SPEECHES RECEIVED :—Supporting Opener, 83; supporting Opponent, 11.

The Honorary of One Guinea is awarded to Catherine D. Logan, 10, St. Stephen's Crescent, Bayswater, London, W., whose speech will be given in our next issue.

The Debate on the next question, "Should Early Closing be made Compulsory?" will be resumed in our next issue.

THE FAMILY PARLIAMENT.

[THE RULES OF DEBATE will be found on page 56. The Editor's duty will be to act as "Mr. Speaker;" consequently, while preserving due order in the discussion, he will not be held to endorse any opinions that may be expressed on either side, each debater being responsible for his own views.]

CAN FICTION BE MADE A POWER FOR GOOD?

(Debate concluded.)

G. S. SELBY :—I dare venture to assert from observation that fifty per cent. of the readers of our land have had the germ of a taste for *good* reading first implanted by the reading of works of fiction. Dr. Adam Clarke, the commentator, had his interest aroused and his attention first turned to the study of Eastern matters by the perusal of the "Arabian Nights." Jules Michelet, the French historian, like many another lad, had his youthful imagination fired by the reading of "Robinson Crusoe." And who, Sir, amongst the members of the Family Parliament has not to thank the perusal of some work of fiction at an "impressionable age" for many a pure and noble resolve, the benefits of which were felt in after-years?

The insidious query of Opponent as to whether people are not as liable to choose the bad as the good may, with equal justice, be asked of any book in creation.

H. G. L. (Abingdon) :—The Opponent in his remarks denies that fiction, with its evil and good, can be made a power for good. I think it can. It is, I know, difficult to draw the line between harmful fiction and that which is pure and healthy in tone, but in all things bad and good are mixed, and novels as a class should not be condemned because they are in keeping with this rule. It is useless to try to bolster up the morals of our youth by the exclusion, for instance, of such a widespread and, it might be said, subtle influence as that of fiction, which portrays, and itself is made up of, good and bad, pure and evil. Let youth see both, and in nine cases out of ten the good—speaking strictly of that found in books—will be most powerful, and will leave its mark on the character. All who have the power to do so should strive to make fiction, whilst not less interesting, still worthier of the place it occupies in nineteenth-century literature; and, if this is conscientiously aimed at, then it can be a vast influence for good. Finally, Sir, let no honourable member of the Family Parliament veto fiction before reading "John Halifax, Gentleman."

W. J. RITCHIE :—Works of fiction can be made a power for good by acting as an antidote to the theatre, the gaming-house, the dram-shop, and the allurements of evil companions; and the love of retirement acquired by reading works of fiction has been the means of making many a man reflective, and a useful member of society, whose influence would otherwise have been baneful.

M. E. RANGDALE :—I am rather young, but would like to say a few words on this subject. For some time it has been one of great interest to me, having observed the difference between my friends, those who read fiction and those who do not. The former take little, if any, interest in any pursuit; they are absorbed for a few hours in a novel, the rest of the day is spent in dreamy idleness. They have a craving for some excitement, and their present life to them seems a mistake. Sir, to me fiction seems something the same as intemperance. People get a liking for it, and they go on from a little reading to more, until it is with difficulty they lay down their books, no matter how important the duty is that calls them away—unkind and hasty words are too often spoken. Poison is good in some cases, deadens pain, so fiction deadens the good and noble traits in a man's character.

* CATHERINE D. LOGAN :—On first glancing at the above

title, I thought there could be few who would venture to deny that fiction has been, and is, a mighty power of good; but after a careful search for actual results hitherto obtained by *individuals*, I must confess they are few. Nevertheless, I still hold that it could be made a great means of good amongst all classes of readers.

The question is a difficult one, for no one can determine how much of the story he has been reading is "make-up," nor which of its characters are fictitious. For my own part, were I able to write a good story, a considerable part of the plot, and certainly most of the personages figuring in it, would be taken from life, and would likely be the people with whom I in my small groove had come in contact. My novel would be classed under the head of "fiction," yet little of it might have been due to imagination, and very much might have been simply the narrative of real lives and actual events somewhat coloured. We know how the story of some *actual* wrong inflicted—some *real* hardship endured—some noble life spent—fires us with indignation, moves us to pity and sympathy, or inspires us with a great ambition to make *our* lives pure, true, and brave, and why should not fiction do the same? It seems to me to rest very much with the readers themselves as to whether what they read is working in and through them for good. I am convinced that, as a rule, the lives that are ruined through the reading of fiction are those whose principles are weak or bad, and whose characters are ill-regulated and uncontrolled. One person may read a book and be none the worse, ay, and will even gain strength, courage, faith, or any other virtue from the reading, whilst another reading the same work may be affected in the contrary way.

While, doubtless, much rests with the reader, still fiction might be made a very much mightier power for good, if authors would write with a distinct aim in view beyond the mere fame and gold they hope to get. There are plenty of evils to be redressed in all classes of society, and writers have the greatest chance of making them known, which is one step towards the remedy.

It is a broad question, but if the greatest Teacher the world has ever known—He who came to work the good of all men—did not disdain the use of metaphors, but adapted His teaching to the capabilities of His scholars, we shall, I think, be quite safe while we follow His example. He knew that few would care to listen to long discourses, so He took a better way, He told them many things in parables, because He had much to say to them, and because He knew that the nearest way to the hearts of men was then—as, indeed, it is now—to tell them stories of their own times and countrymen.

Do not think me irreverent if I say that all the parables given by the Great Master are but a sort of fiction. Yet what Christian ever would dare to question the good they have worked? Who would ever try to calculate the number of lost ones found by hearing or reading the simple story of the Prodigal Son, who, when he came to himself, arose and went on his way home to his father, and who, when yet a long way off, saw that father seeking him, and ready to welcome his sinning son home again?

Therefore, I maintain that fiction can be made a very great power for good, if each of its writers would only write when he has something to say, some lesson—be it great or small—to teach, or some grievance or wrong to be redressed,

* To this speech the Honorarium of One Guinea has been awarded by the Editor.