

the bottoms by the river side, without suggesting an attempt to multiply and improve the produce by culture. That the abstract exclusive right of property in the soil should be vested in these wandering tribes, might perhaps admit of learned dispute; but though we cannot come armed to the discussion with Puffendorff and Grotius, common sense we conceive bears us out in the assertion, that humanity will be a gainer, when the present race shall be melted down into a nobler population. The Americans being a young people have all the spirit of adventure that is necessary for colonizing and improving this extensive country. We may talk of them as vile land-jobbers, actuated only by selfishness and love of gain; but these base motives work so much general good in their aim at individual advantage, that we are almost inclined to prefer them to the indolence and apathy of the Spaniards, the former possessors.

The American government will, it is to be hoped, prosecute their plans of discovery in this interesting country, and with means somewhat more adequate to their end. There are six degrees of latitude between the mouth of the Columbia, and that of the river by which Mackenzie reached the Pacific. Of the intervening space we know nothing but a few points of the coast. It is chiefly, however, about the country to the South of the Columbia and towards the mountains of New Mexico, that we are anxious to gain information; having convinced ourselves, both from the kindly latitudes under which it lies, and the accounts, imperfect as they are, of the adjoining countries, that in that interval will be found, not only objects of philosophical curiosity, but some of the choicest and most valuable settlements to the West of the Mississippi.

ART. V. *Amelie Mansfield.* Par Madame Cottin. 3 tom. 12mo. Londres. Colburn. 1809.

NOVELS are read so generally and with such avidity by the young of both sexes, that they cannot fail to have a considerable influence on the virtue and happiness of society. Yet their authors do not always appear to be sensible of the serious responsibility attached to their voluntary task. In several novels which we frequently observe in the parlours of respectable families, there cannot be a doubt that the warmth of colouring in certain

certain passages produces, in the imaginations of many of their readers, disorders which are far from being sufficiently corrected by the moral maxims, the good examples, or the warning events. Of such grievous misdemeanours Fielding is notoriously guilty; other writers also, from whom better things might have been expected, have stained their pages with indelicate details. But the practice is a shameful violation of good manners, and admits of no excuse; for either the details are superfluous, which is most frequently the case; or else the story should be suppressed altogether, as one which will do more harm than good to far the greater number of those who will certainly peruse it.

But there is another way in which it may be apprehended that novels are frequently hurtful. The *epic*, poem and the *romance of chivalry* transport us to a world of wonders, where supernatural agents are mixed with the human characters, where the human characters themselves are prodigies, and where events are produced by causes widely and manifestly different from those which regulate the course of human affairs. With such a world we do not think of comparing our actual situation; to such characters we do not presume to assimilate ourselves or our neighbours; from such a concatenation of marvels we draw no conclusions with regard to our own expectations in real life. But real life is the very thing which *novels* affect to imitate; and the young and inexperienced will sometimes be too ready to conceive that the picture is true, in those respects at least in which they wish it to be so. Hence both their temper, conduct and happiness may be materially injured. For novels are often *romantic*, not indeed by the relation of what is obviously miraculous or impossible, but by deviating, though perhaps insensibly, beyond the bounds of probability or consistency. And the girl who dreams of the brilliant accomplishments and enchanting manners which distinguish the favourite characters in those fictitious histories, will be apt to look with contempt on the most respectable and amiable of her acquaintance; while in the shewy person and flattering address of some contemptible and perhaps profligate coxcomb, she may figure to herself the prototype of her imaginary heroes, the only man upon earth with whom it is possible to be happy. Nay if she should venture to indulge her lover with a private assignation, she knows from those authentic records that her conduct is sanctioned by the example of ladies of the most inflexible virtue. She may still plead the same authority for her justification, if for the sake of this fascinating youth she render herself an out-

cast from her station and her family. Whatever she may give up, she has learned from her oracles that no sacrifice can be too great for real love; that real love, such as subsists and ever will subsist, between herself and the best of men, is adequate to fill every hour of her existence, and to supply the want of every other gratification and every other employment. And although she may be prevented by fortunate circumstances or by the prevalence of better principles from exhibiting in her own fate the catastrophe of a melancholy novel, yet tinctured with such notions she must even in prosperity be lamentably disappointed in her fondest hopes, and look with a joyless heart to the society of ordinary mortals, to the ordinary duties and ordinary comforts of life; those duties which the sober-minded discharge with cheerfulness, and those comforts in which they acquiesce with contentment and delight.

But whatever may be the case with other novels, we were led to anticipate great satisfaction from the perusal of *Amelie Mansfield*: for the title-page informs us that it is the work of Madame Cottin, the author of *Elizabeth* or the *Exiles of Siberia*, one of the most beautiful, interesting and edifying narratives with which we are acquainted. It exhibits human nature in a most engaging and instructive view; conjugal and parental love brightening the winter of adversity, and filial piety inspiring an amiable girl with a fortitude which no hardships or dangers could subdue. Nor are these the visions of imagination only. The author assures us in her preface that the subject of her history was true, and that both the virtues and the sufferings of the real heroine were beyond the description. In fact, what in a novel might be considered as romantic fictions are not superior to the noble examples which real life has exhibited of a wife, a daughter, or a mother's love. Such examples have a powerful tendency both to purify and exalt the character. And from the evidence which *Elizabeth* afforded of a sound judgment and well-regulated mind, as well as of uncommon talents, we should have conceived that any work which was sanctioned by the name of Madame Cottin, might, from that circumstance alone, be recommended with confidence for a young lady's library.

With these prepossessions we began the novel before us. It is certainly a work of genius; but we regretted to find it in many respects very unlike what we had promised ourselves from the author of *Elizabeth*; and we now proceed to mention so much
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of the story and of the manner in which it is told, as may point out on what grounds our opinion is founded.

The count of Woldemar had one son and two daughters. By his son, the baron of Woldemar, he had a grandson Ernest. He had grandchildren also by each of his daughters; for one of them was married to the count of Lunebourg, father of the heroine Amelia and of her brother Albert; and the other was married to the baron of Geysa, and had a daughter Blanche. Now the old count of Woldemar was exceedingly proud of his family, which we are told had given electors to Saxony, and kings to Poland; and having seen his children married suitably to their dignity, he thought proper to extend the same care to his grandchildren, that after his death the blood of the Woldemars might not be polluted, at least to the third generation. So he made a will, by which he appointed his grandson Ernest heir of his fortune and title on the condition of marrying Amelia; in case of refusal on her part he deprived her of her share in his fortune, and the young gentleman's hand was next to be offered to Blanche of Geysa on the same terms. If the young man himself should be refractory, he lost his claim to his grandfather's inheritance, which in that case devolved upon Albert with the obligation of marrying Blanche.

Having made this judicious settlement, which he might as well have let alone, the old count died when Ernest was ten years old, Amelia scarcely nine, and her brother Albert fourteen. While he was yet living, all his grandchildren had been educated together at his own house, an arrangement which he conceived would facilitate his favourite plan. But here he was mistaken. The young people quarrelled at their romps; and Amelia could not bear the haughty spirit of Ernest, who appears indeed to have been a spoiled child. One day in particular he endeavoured to make her swear obedience to him as her future husband; for with the same prudence which seems to have directed all the measures of this far-sighted old gentleman, they had even when children been informed of their grandfather's will. Amelia stoutly refused, and struggled to get free; her brother came to rescue her; Ernest knocked him down with a large book, and then made her own pretty mouth bleed by his endeavours to stop her cries of murder. What was still worse, he refused even at his mother's entreaty to ask Amelia's pardon, pleading his right to insist on his wife's obedience. His mother, who seems to have had more sense than her father-in-law, though she had as much pride as if she had been of his own blood,

blood, very wisely sent her son to the university of Leipsic, without insisting on an interview between the young couple in their present temper; and Amelia, enraged at his want of submission, as soon as it was reported to her, swore an oath of her own that he never should be hers, the direct counterpart of the oath which Ernest had dictated.

In these dispositions Ernest and Amelia parted, and saw each other no more for many years afterwards. In the mean time his preceptors at the university, though they acknowledged the superiority of his genius and his progress in his studies, complained of his haughty and inflexible spirit, and threatened on that account to send him back to his family. Provoked at the threat, he quitted the university by his own authority and returned home. Here he did not find Amelia, who was living with her parents. His mother, who was now a widow, entrusted him to the care of a steady young man; who though but six years older than himself and accustomed to reprove him with freedom, had alone acquired an ascendant over him. With this companion she sent him to travel, and had the satisfaction of hearing that the most favourable changes were taking place in his character and conduct.

But Amelia, steady to the aversion produced by their childish quarrels, lent a deaf ear to his mother's representations, and listened only to the accounts of his former misdemeanours. There was however another cause which contributed still more to her alienation from Ernest. She had fallen in love with Mansfield, a young poet, who on account of his talents was received by her parents with distinction and kindness, not as one who could ever think of aspiring to their daughter's hand, but as a man of genius whom they admired and protected. We shall not follow all the progress of this courtship, which is very prettily detailed in a narrative of Amelia's. Only we beg leave to observe, that a well educated girl who had any thing like a proper regard for her reputation, or a proper sense of her dignity, should have resented as an insult the proposal which her lover presumed to make, of meeting him privately in the evening 'under the great yew trees of the little park,' a proposal the more improper, as the only pretence which he alleged was that she might bid him farewell. In short, although her father on his death-bed had insisted, and her brother had solemnly assured her that her marriage with Ernest should be left to her own free choice, yet without condescending to wait a year or two, till she might have an opportunity to judge for herself if her cousin

was indeed as amiable as he was now represented, she forsook all for love, and eloped with the poet.

For this rash step she suffered severely; and here we presume the history is intended for a warning to those young ladies who marry in haste. That her family should renounce her was only what she must have expected; her brother, however, though provoked at her indiscretion, remained firmly attached to her; but Mansfield, for whom she had made such a sacrifice, and who had sworn that his love should end only with his life, Mansfield grew unfaithful and profligate, forsook her at last, and was killed by a Russian officer in a quarrel about an opera girl. From that period she lived at Dresden for three years in the most profound obscurity, having no comfort but her brother's tenderness, being permitted to see Blanche once only during all that time, and entirely disowned by every other relation.

But after this long season of distress, happier days arose again on poor Amelia. Her husband's uncle, Mr. Grandson, a plain but respectable old man, had retired to a delightful residence in Switzerland, where he lived in splendour on the fortune which he had made by commerce, and invited Amelia to be the mistress of his house and to inherit his wealth. Warned as she had been of the miseries arising from imprudence, we may now expect that it can only be some external calamity which is to disturb her repose. We have no suspicion that she will ever forget the good resolutions which she expresses so beautifully in the following passage of a letter to her brother. 'Ah! mon ami, ne crains point que je t'afflige encore par de nouvelles erreurs. Je suis retenue dans la route du bien, non seulement par mon intérêt, mais par le tien qui m'est plus cher encore; et j'ai du moins recueilli ce fruit de mes fautes, qu'elles m'ont inspiré une si grande méfiance de moi-même, que désormais je ne veux voir que par tes yeux, n'être éclairée que par tes conseils, ne suivre que tes exemples, et enfin ne conserver de moi que mon cœur pour t'aimer; et si dans la suite on me trouve quelques-unes des vertus de mon modèle, je m'enorgueillirai de pouvoir dire, comme la terre odorante du poëte Persan, *Je ne suis pas la rose, mais j'ai vécu pres d'elle.*' But alas! the tempter found his way into paradise, appearing again in the form of a beautiful youth, and still more charming than before; her better resolutions vanished before him, 'and her last state was worse than her first.'

In a dark and tempestuous night of February, Henry Semler and his attendants were saved by the exertions of Mr. Grand-

son's domestics from perishing in the snow, and welcomed with the utmost humanity and kindness to a safe shelter in the abode of wealth and beauty. Of this hospitality Scmler was unworthy. He came under a fictitious name for a most unmanly purpose. He was no other than our old acquaintance Ernest, the young count of Woldemar. Indignant that a man so low as Mansfield should have been preferred to him, he had stolen away from his companion with the hope of finding some means to introduce himself to Amelia as a stranger; and his intention was to gain her affections and then to abandon her with contempt. This was certainly a design which no one who deserved the name of a gentleman could entertain for a moment; yet with unpardonable inconsistency the author evidently intends that Ernest should be regarded as a man of a high and generous spirit.

But as the wicked are often caught in their own snare, so our promising youth became desperately enamoured with Amelia, though he could not endure the thought of marrying Mansfield's widow, or of wounding by such a union his mother's happiness, to whom he was tenderly attached. And now the author puts forth all her strength in describing the struggles between love, pride, and filial affection, and the gradual but fatal triumph of love. Although Ernest never condescended to give any account of his situation, and for some time at least declared that to their marriage there were obstacles which he knew not how to surmount, yet Amelia permits his tender assiduities. The good uncle however, who never dreamed of any thing but an honourable courtship, but who thought it long in coming to a proper conclusion, hastened the catastrophe which he meant to prevent. Upon his remonstrances, Ernest declared that he would soon be free, and happy to marry Amelia, but declined an immediate union. He was ordered by Mr. Grandson to quit the house instantly, but Amelia was moved to compassion by his rueful countenance, and with inexcusable rashness granted him a private interview at midnight. Here he swore to be her husband, and she, as might be expected, forfeited her title to a station among virtuous women. But after all his oaths the fickle youth was persuaded by his mother to renounce his mistress; and we have now a tale of sorrows, in many places admirably told and deeply interesting. Amelia, worn out with anguish, died at the moment when the countess of Woldemar consented to their union, and Ernest could not survive the woman whom he had forsaken.

In this novel we certainly find much to admire, and much even

even to approve; but there are some things so improper as to disgrace and discredit the whole work.

For the reasons suggested in the beginning of this article, every person of good morals will concur in reprobating the indelicacy of certain passages. But independently of this circumstance, it is extremely improper that such characters as Ernest and Amelia should be held up, as they evidently are, to our love and esteem.

In the character of Ernest we have already taken notice of one particular, which is decidedly inconsistent with a high or generous mind. But we find him still more reprehensible as we advance in the history. With a profligacy incompatible both with honour and humanity he forsakes Amelia after he had repeatedly bound himself to her by engagements which every honest man would regard as indissoluble, and which became if possible of still stronger obligation when he had reduced her to a situation where his infidelity must be the source of irretrievable misery. The author endeavours to screen him from reproach by ascribing this painful sacrifice to his apprehensions for his mother's life. But unless these apprehensions could have excused him for abandoning his wife who had never injured him, they could not excuse him for abandoning Amelia. In fact, his mother had no right to demand the sacrifice, and was both unjust and cruel in demanding it. And without troubling our readers with detailing the mean artifices to which he stooped in order to conceal from Amelia his real name and situation, or with suggesting the deliberate baseness of concealing what she had so unquestionable an interest and right to know, enough has been said to point out the gross impropriety into which the author has fallen in the formation of her hero's character. We do not insist that the hero of a fictitious history should be faultless. The history may be both interesting and instructive by representing the gradual perversion of a character originally good, or by the awful warning which is exhibited when a man of real worth is driven by the frenzy of passion to the perpetration of a deed which the next moment tortures him with remorse, and ends in his ruin. But the author must never forget, that while the victim of passion continues enslaved to passion, while the character originally good continues perverted, so long they must be represented as objects of abhorrence. Besides, there are designs which the worthless only can deliberately form, or even entertain for a moment; and our author has conceived and brought forth a hero, who, to high pretensions of honour and an exquisite sensibility

sibility of virtue, unites feelings and practices which can belong only to a profligate scoundrel. Yet this monstrous production is to be the object of our love and esteem, for he is esteemed and beloved by persons of the most exemplary virtue, who are perfectly apprised of the whole of his conduct.

When again we turn to the heroine, we cannot say that the author has furnished our young ladies with a very edifying speculation. We pass over her conduct before her arrival in Switzerland; but we must observe that from the beginning of her attachment to Ernest, she falls into a series of deliberate improprieties which can hardly be supposed in a young woman of good sense and good principles. It was folly and meanness to permit the assiduities of a man who had never condescended to give an account of himself. It was worse to permit the continuance of those assiduities, and even of indiscreet familiarities, after he had presumed to declare that although he was unmarried he could only be her friend. But when under those most questionable circumstances she consented to a private and midnight interview, it is plain that if it had ended innocently, the lady would have been indebted not to her own virtue but to her lover's forbearance. Nor is there any real penitence to restore her to esteem: for even when she has every reason to believe that the man who injured her so deeply had basely forsaken her, she continues still the slave of a disgraceful passion. When she is forsaking her child to go in quest of her faithless lover, we find in her journal the following words among others still more disgusting. 'Dis, homme cruel! es-tu satisfait de la passion qui me devore? son empire est-il assez terrible? et la puissance que tu exerces sur mon lâche cœur te laisse-t-elle quelque chose à désirer?'

We may be told indeed that, doomed as she is to sufferings so severe, her errors whatever they may be, will be considered as a warning, not as a model. This might be the case if her sufferings arose from her errors. But her sufferings arise from quite different causes. Her lover does not forsake her because she ceased to be respectable, but because he could not resist his mother's solicitations. Her imprudent attachment to Mansfield, is indeed attended with the punishments which were its natural consequences; but her worse than imprudent conduct with Ernest, does not at all alienate her friends; she is still beloved as the most amiable and revered, as the most respectable of women; and, but for the most improbable concurrence of two most improbable circumstances, the silliness of Ernest

Ernest and the unnatural barbarity of his mother, her crime would have conducted her at once to dignity and splendour. Now we are apprehensive that many readers may be more encouraged by the happiness which might be expected to crown her guilt, than warned by the melancholy catastrophe which is produced entirely and obviously by accidental causes. And although it is true that in the midst of her desolation she is stung with the pangs of remorse, it is an obvious reflection that these pangs would soon subside if she were united to her lover. Indeed, this reflection is forced upon us, because in the deepest remorse and deepest misery, she still glories in her shame, she adores him whom she must have considered as completely worthless, and dwells on the happiness of her love with all the exaggerations of the wildest fancy, and with an eloquence which cannot but be fatally impressive on a youthful mind. Hear, for instance, the following account which she gives of the state of her mind in a church to which she had retired at night for shelter and safety,—a passage which affords a favourable specimen of the author's talents, though not of the soundness of her judgment.

‘ Je me suis retirée vers le chœur, qui m’a paru être le plus sombre et le plus reculé ; là, je me suis couchée par terre, sur un tombeau sans doute, mais je n’ai pas peur des tombeaux ; tout ce qui est insensible et mort me fait envie ; je voudrais être cette pierre insensible, ce monument glacé, cette ruine qui s’écroule ; je voudrais n’avoir jamais existé.—Oh ! qu’il est affreux, en quittant la vie, de voir l’ignominie dont on s’est couvert, réjaillir sur ceux qu’on aime, et d’avoir perdu le droit de demander des larmes à un ami, à un frère, à un enfant !—S’ils en versent sur mon mort, ce sera des larmes de honte.—Ah ! que ne puis-je, comme ces froides pierres, ne vivre dans aucun souvenir, et être morte dans tous les cœurs, comme je voudrais l’être pour l’éternité !—Au milieu de ces réflexions, j’ai senti que le poids de la vie m’étouffait ; je me suis levée : “ Non, non, ai-je dit, c’en est trop ! je ne veux plus voir la terre des vivans, ni aucun homme : je veux mourir.—Adieu, Ernest ! adieu ! je cours m’ensevelir dans l’éternel oubli de ce monde et de toi.” J’ai voulu sortir de l’église pour exécuter mon funeste dessein ; les portes étaient fermées ; les cierges de la chapelle étaient éteints ; j’étais seule dans ce vaste édifice : il m’a semblé que la main de Dieu me retenait ; alors je suis revenue sur mes pas, mais avec un esprit plus tranquille. Tout, autour de moi, était silencieux et sombre comme dans la vallée de la mort. Je marchais lentement sans pouvoir former aucune idée distincte, lorsque tout à coup j’ai entendu un bruit de cloche. Un moment après, derrière la grille qui sépare l’église du chœur intérieur, des voix de femmes ont frappé mes oreilles ; ces saints cantiques, cette mu-

sique

sique religieuse, m'ont jetée dans une espèce d'extase : je croyais avoir quitté la terre et être appelée au concert des anges. Il m'a semblé voir le ciel ouvert, et Ernest à mes côtés ; il me souriait avec amour : " Ma bien-aimé, me disait-il, notre hymen fut décidé sur la terre, mais elle n'était pas digne de voir notre félicité, et c'est ici qu'elle doit s'accomplir." Il m'a pressée sur son sein ; nos âmes se sont confondues ; elles sont tombées ensemble dans des torrens de délices qui se succédaient sans fin ; des voix divines ont répété : *toujours ! toujours !* et les voutes célestes, retentissant de tous côtés ont répondu : *toujours ! toujours !*

' La musique a cessé, et la vision enchanteresse a disparu ; mais le bien qu'elle m'avait fait est resté après elle ; j'ai pu pleurer et prier ; j'ai remercié Dieu de m'avoir envoyé sur la terre le châtement de ma faute ; heureux qui a assez souffert dans ce monde pour être sûr, au moment de la mort, que son expiation est finie ; je l'ai imploré pour mon fils, innocente victime qui ne recevra plus les caresses d'une mère ! pour Albert, dont les vertus n'avaient pas mérité une sœur comme moi ; pour toi, Ernest, l'auteur de tous mes maux, mais que j'aimerai jusqu'à ma dernière heure, comme à celle où je me donnai à toi. Ah ! puisse ce Dieu de miséricorde, ton juge et le mien, te croire assez puni par les peines que j'ai endurées ! puisse-t-il prolonger mes tourmens s'ils doivent servir à racheter les tiens ! et puisse-t-il, ô toi, qui fus l'idole de mon cœur ! te pardonner comme je te pardonne !—Vol. iii. p. 119.

In this passage, besides the slavery to a disgraceful passion which is mingled with the remorse of Amelia, but which is directly incompatible with real penitence, we have to remark how much the youthful mind may be perverted by the exaggerated description of the happiness of love. Other representations in the same taste are to be found in the book. Of these we shall only point out the following, in a letter from Ernest to Amelia, on their expected marriage. ' Que ne puis-je voir briller ce jour qui doit nous réunir, ce jour de bonheur, de volupté qui se prolongera jusqu'à la fin de notre vie, et peut-être au delà. Ah ! si l'amour est le sentiment qui remplit le plus le cœur, c'est que c'est celui qui voit le plus loin dans l'avenir, et qui portant avec certitude que l'éternité même ne pourra user ses jouissances, ne l'envisage que comme le commencement d'une félicité sans terme.'—Vol. iii. p. 58. They who allow themselves to indulge in such delirious dreams must soon awaken to a miserable disappointment, even when they believe themselves to have reached the summit of their hopes.

The reader however must not suppose that the whole novel is written with the same pernicious tendency. There are two excellent young men, Albert the brother of Amelia, and Adolphus the

the companion of Ernest, whose letters may in general be perused with advantage. But upon the whole we cannot recommend the book. We object to the indelicacy in some places. We object to those representations which encourage the vicious to hope for success. We object to those romantic visions which throw into a dead gloom the brightest scenes of real life. We object to those incompatible assemblages of virtues and vices, which must either shock us by their incongruity, or pervert our sentiments of right and wrong. We lament that such a work should have proceeded from the author of *Elizabeth*; and still more, that there should be a wish in Britain for importing, from the schools of France and Germany, those novels and dramas which tend at once to corrupt the taste and deprave the national character.

ART. VI. *The New Testament, in an improved Version, upon the Basis of Archbishop Newcome's new Translation, with a corrected Text, and Notes critical and explanatory; published by a Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, and the Practice of Virtue, by the Distribution of Books.* pp. 612. 8vo. London, Johnson, 1808.

THE advantages derived from the labours of the many eminent men, who have devoted their talents to the elucidation of the holy scriptures, have been so great and decided, that the public must always receive with pleasure every honest and judicious attempt to add to their acquirements in this unspeakably important branch of learning. Those indeed who call to mind that the most learned and distinguished divines have published works of this description under the modest title of 'New versions,' or 'Attempts at revising the present English translation,' will probably be startled at the arrogant appellation of an 'Improved version'—an appellation, evidently assuming a fact, of which, not the authors, but the public, are the judges. The name of Archbishop Newcome, however, must command respect; a Society for promoting Christian knowledge cannot be suspected, *à priori*, of coming forward with any sinister design; and a hope may reasonably be indulged, that there will be found in this publication, if not the highest merit, at least some useful suggestions, the result of accurate research and diligent inquiry, made in a spirit of impartial candour, and dictated by a desire of advancing religious truth.

It is then with no small regret, that we impart to our readers
the