swelled the procession that day, knowing, as he must necessarily do, that if ever the occasion required, that service would prove a strong arm in defending the honour of Great Britain. (Cheers.) Only so recently as the Crimean war, the packet service came forward and conveyed nearly 100,000 men and 10,000 horses to the Black Sea, with the interruption of only one mail taken from the postal service. Indeed to such a pitch of perfection had the mail packet service at Southampton been brought, that if at any time the Government of the country should require troops to be conveyed to the colonies or elsewhere, he could promise that, with only seven days' notice, Southampton would be ready to transport 12,000 men, and supply them with every comfort required upon a long sea voyage. (Cheers.) Last December, when, ever regardful of and prompt to defend the honour of his country, Lord Palmerston determined to despatch troops to Canada, the West India steamers, with only seven days' notice, were enabled to embark and convey 3,600 men, with all their baggage and equipment. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. TUFNELL, in acknowledging the toast, expressed a strong opinion that the establishment of the large steam companies had materially tended to promote the commercial prosperity of the country.

Lord PALMERSTON then rose and said—I beg to propose to you a toast which I am sure you will drink with the greatest pleasure, and all due honour—I mean, "The Health of your worthy Mayor." (Cheers.) Amongst the great improvements of modern times—of recent times, in our internal organisation—one of the most remarkable, and one that has been attended with the most beneficial results, has been the restoration of the ancient privileges of self-government belonging to municipal corporations. The advantages of that system are manifold. They are great for the communities themselves. They enable these corporate bodies to govern their own affairs, according to their own knowledge of their own local interests, far better than can be done by those central authorities which in other countries interfere in all rural and municipal concerns. They educate the people; they accustom men to debate and discuss and consider measures; and be assured, gentlemen, that the difference between great things and small, I mean with regard to influence, is not at all so great as it is usually conceived, and that those who are accustomed to debate, to discuss, and to govern local matters, qualify themselves for the discussion, debate, and management of national affairs. Well, then, municipal corporations as at present constituted not only administer local affairs in a manner more conducive to local interests, to the general satisfaction and welfare of the country, but they are schools all over the country of political education to form the public mind and the public character to a manly political condition. But the benefit is not confined to the places in which these institutions exist. It was well said by our great poet Pope, that "Ten judge ill for one who writes amiss." Where the bulk of the nation are not accustomed to public affairs, and have no political education, ten will judge ill for one who acts amiss. But when the public mind is well prepared for local political discussions, in municipal bodies, to judge of arguments, to investigate actions, to determine upon results, those public men who are charged with the administration of the nation at large are much more likely to have fair and competent judges of their conduct. Nothing can be a greater object of desire for such men than that those who judge their conduct should be capable of forming an impartial judgment. The result of this municipal organisation is, that corporations are apt, and generally do, choose the best men of their body from time to time to hold the office of mayor. You have done that in the present instance. (Cheers.) You have admirably discharged the duty which the municipal system imposed upon you; you have the satisfaction of having confirmed your own judgment by a second time electing the same man; and, therefore, when I call upon you to drink to the health of the mayor, I am calling upon you not only to do honour to one of your most distinguished citizens, but to record the accuracy of a judgment which you yourselves have passed upon the act which you have performed. (Loud cheers.)

The MAYOR, in a feeling speech, acknowledged the flattering way in which the toast was received and honoured. He expressed his satisfaction at having had the opportunity of offering the hospitality of the town to the noble viscount, and stated that the name which Southampton had acquired for hospitality should not suffer in his hands.

Professor OWEN, in proposing "Success to the Hartley Institution," said he had a special reason for wishing success to it, and to all such local museums as fostered and promoted a love of natural history. It was through such institutions that they might hope for the formation and spread of a public opinion which might react in accelerating the acquisition of a metropolitan museum of natural history—one worthy of the capital of the greatest commercial and colonising empire the world had seen. (Cheers.) With our opportunities of acquiring the rarest desiderata from the remotest regions, the naturalists of Europe expected to find in England the most complete collections for the illustration and advancement of their science; and the energy and intelligence of our countrymen abroad furnished rich and rare materials, had we at home the means of usefully displaying them. (Cheers.) And the question of space for such arrangement was not affected by whether one passerine instead of 20, one beetle out of a hundred, or a type mite out of a thousand, should be selected for display—other considerations compelled the provision of adequate space for the galleries of the National Museum. Here only, and only by its resources, could the materials be collected for advancing our knowledge of those parts of natural history yet left dark, through the difficulties arising out of the vast bulk of the animals in the living or the fossil state. He sincerely trusted, in conjunction with his scientific friends, that further legislative delay might not be interposed to frustrate their hopes in this matter. (Cheers.) He thought the commercial and business community of the town of Southampton would derive benefit by the discipline of the mind gained by the young through the teaching of natural history. The power of observation was sharpened and the faculty of methodical arrangement improved by the characteristics of that branch of study. The vicinity of the town was peculiarly suitable for original research and experiment, directed and stimulated by the elementary teachings in the Hartley Institution. They had at hand the three conditions of aquatic life for both plant and animal—the river, the estuary, and the sea. The country was rich in the fossil evidences of ancient life, and its tertiary beds, as at Hordle, had yielded some of the most interesting and curious novelties of this nature. A good local series, well arranged in the museum, would be a great help to the geologist. The young who might leave the laboratories and lecture-room would carry abroad tenfold means for the appreciation and enjoyment of the scenes of nature they might be destined to traverse: every bird, every shell, every bank of flowers, the contour of the distant hill, would have a significance and interest to them unfelt by those who had not enjoyed the advantage of instruction in the principles of zoology, botany, and geology. How full of interest to this day were the itineraries of our great naturalist, Ray, through his wise appreciation of the features and life of the country through which he journeyed. He (Professor Owen) bought a volume of those itineraries to read on his way to Southampton, and came unexpectedly upon an observation which, from the prevailing tenor of the remarks of previous speakers, he was induced to quote. "At Leith," wrote Ray, "we saw one of those citadels built by Oliver Protector, one of the best fortifications that ever I beheld—passing fair and sumptuous. This is one of four forts that he has had built—the other three are at St. Johnston's, Inverness, and Ayr. The building of each of them (as we were credibly informed) cost above £200,000 sterling; indeed, I do not see how it could cost less. In England it would have cost much more." Now, considering the relation of this sum to the scanty and hardly extracted revenue of that period, he could not help being struck by the analogy of the policy of the great administrator of the Commonwealth, and a part of the patriotic policy of the great administrator of our own day, to whom we had been indebted for so large a proportion of the pleasure, instruction, and success of that inaugural day. (Loud cheers.)

The next toast was "The Press," proposed by Professor Isaacs.

Mr. THOS. NORTON, in proposing the last toast, said that an additional interest had been thrown upon the day's proceedings by the fact that the most popular Prime Minister who was ever honoured by the people of England had given them his presence and approval. (Cheers.) Many topics had been introduced and observed upon—the House of Lords, the House of Commons, the power of the democracy, and, from a quarter from which he least expected such a proposal, an anticipation of the great encroachments which recent legislation would allow the masses of the people to make on the privileged classes; but his duty was of a lighter, pleasanter, and more homely kind. What he had to speak of came nearer the domestic institution. The toast was "The Ladies"—(cheers)—and in giving it, the Viscountess Palmerston, the spouse of their noble Premier, first demanded notice. (Renewed cheers.) Sprung from a noble race, she had always lent her patronage to every charitable and good work. She was the sister of Lord Melbourne, of whom the Duke of Wellington once said, in the House of Peers, that amongst the other claims which he had on the gratitude of England was his having indoctrinated our youthful Queen in the knowledge of our constitution. (Hear, hear.) He impressed upon her how far authority should go and how far loyalty might be expected. Of that gifted stock was this noble lady, and she lent to her exalted husband sympathy; she shared his triumphs (and they had not been a few), and she gave to him what was better and holier—comfort in his sorrows or his trials. Long might she be a solace to him, and long might their days be happy together. (Cheers.) The next name was the wife of the worthy mayor. (Cheers.) A descendant of our race sprung from some of the leading people of our transatlantic brethren, she might now look tearfully to those pleasant homesteads where she passed her infancy. Without touching on politics or pronouncing any opinion on the subject, he would express his regret, as a friend of our common humanity, that such a sanguinary contest should devastate the territory of so flourishing a republic, and indulge in the hope that when she revisited the scenes of her childhood the calamities of war might not have reached her kindred. (Hear, hear.) He regretted they were not cheered by the presence of the fair sex at this festivity, but he saw the portrait of her most gracious Majesty—a good daughter, a good wife, a good mother, a Queen who had never governed by party, who accepted her responsible advisers from her Parliament, and gave them her trust and confidence. (Cheers.) Her Court had been the abode of the domestic virtues, and no breath of scandal had ever gone forth against the purity of her palace. (Cheers.) By an easy transition he came to the women of England, and he would say that having spent many years of his life in official positions abroad, wherever he went they were effective missionaries of civilisation and goodness. They gave excellent example to inferior races, and in their conduct reflected glory on our own old country from which they had emigrated. Look at their conduct in India! In the midst of a mutiny of soldiers, disciplined and armed by ourselves, and surrounded by a multitude of foes, the English soldier, though with a mere handful of his brothers in arms, among an immense population, never forgot his country, and the English wife was true to herself. (Cheers.) She displayed the fortitude of a real heroine, and vindicated the destiny of her race by proving its true superiority. He had seen many races of women—white, yellow, brown, and whitey-brown—(laughter)—but of all the types of female excellence, there was none to equal in grace, beauty, and loveliness the fair daughters of our own beloved land. (Cheers.) He had heard of provincial distinctions—for instance, of the Lancashire witches, but the array of beauty he saw that day convinced him that the women of Hampshire need not shrink from comparison with the fairest and most beautiful. (Cheers.) He had only one word more to say by way of advice—it was, that in case there should be any one amongst them who felt disposed to lead a life of old bachelorism the sooner he abandoned that foolish crotchet the better, as he had no doubt that in happy matrimony he would find many blessings of which a selfish celibacy was deprived. (Laughter and cheers.) He concluded by giving "Lady Palmerston and the Ladies of Hampshire," and "The Lady Mayoress and the Ladies of Southampton." (Loud cheers.)

Lord PALMERSTON—I am highly flattered at having been chosen to return thanks for the best part of human creation. Until I heard the eloquent speech in which that toast has been proposed I thought I was to return thanks for the most eloquent part of human creation, but I now feel myself labouring under the disadvantage of having to speak on behalf of those who are so much more capable, if they were present, of speaking for themselves. (Laughter.) It is well known that there are two two kinds of eloquence. There is the eloquence of words and there is the eloquence of feeling. Now, if we may dispute with the ladies the eloquence of words—and it would be a bold boast on our part to do so—(laughter)—I am sure that we must in honesty confess that in the eloquence of feeling the women beat the men. (Cheers.) Well, then, I am glad that this company has done justice and honour to the ladies. I quite agree with the hon. gentleman who spoke last, who has had varied experience of the female form—I presume both mental as well as physical—(laughter)—in many parts of the world, so that my judgment of any particular set of ladies cannot be worth so much as his, because I have not the same range of standards of comparison; but I quite agree with him, speaking positively and not comparatively, in eulogising, in admitting, and in admiring the great beauty and merits of the ladies of Hampshire. (Cheers.) But we are not the only persons who render justice to the ladies of Southampton, for that beautiful ornament I see before me (a silver cradle) is a proof that the people of Southampton can appreciate female virtue, female qualities, and female distinctions; and that upon those, which are the most interesting occasions of that domestic life which the hon. gentleman has so well celebrated, they are ready to give a substantial and permanent tribute and proof of their respect for one of the most distinguished ladies of Southampton. (Cheers.) For Lady Palmerston I beg to return my most sincere thanks. I can only assure you that she went home deeply sensible of the kind demonstrations of good feeling towards her and towards me which we witnessed in the course of the morning. (Cheers.) She was obliged to return home, because she expected friends whom it was her duty to meet; but I can assure you that nothing can give her greater pleasure than the knowledge of the goodwill and opinion of the people of Southampton. A visit to it is always one of her most pleasant drives. She says to all who come to her, "If to-morrow is fine, I will give you a great treat. I will take you to see the most beautiful town in England—the town of Southampton." (Cheers.) Again, on her part, as well as my own, I beg to thank you most sincerely. (Loud cheers.)

The company then broke up.

There was also last night a concert in the lecture-hall, for which the services of several eminent *artistes* were engaged. At dark the town was brilliantly illuminated, and fireworks were let off from the top of the old Bar-gate. This evening the whole proceedings will be wound up by a grand ball at the institution, to which 1,100 invitations have been issued.

It is only justice to the mayor and corporation, and the other gentlemen who took an active part in the inauguration of the new building, to add that their arrangements were made with a desire to secure the general convenience of all who participated in the ceremony. To the mayor, Mr. F. Perkins, the inhabitants are especially indebted, as he personally bore the large expense involved in the different entertainments which so materially contributed to the success of the gathering.

GERMAN SYMPATHY WITH GARIBALDI.

The following are the chief passages of a letter addressed by Karl Blind to Garibaldi:—

"There are defeats which carry within them the germs of future triumphs. In uplifting the hand courageously against a usurpation that gnaws at the heart of your country, in raising the cry of 'Rome or Death!' you have given timely warning to a people lying in jeopardy of becoming the prey of a foreign vampire policy, and you have foiled, at least for a time, those nefarious despotic projects into which Italy was being drawn. Yes, in spite of the reverse that has interrupted your work of emancipation, yours has been a great service to the cause of progress. On the day when Italy shall enter into possession of her capital your name will be inscribed on the tablets of history as that of the true conqueror.

"Throughout the whole enlightened world you are held at this moment in deep sympathy. Permit me, my dear friend, to offer to you also heartfelt greetings in the name of numerous German friends. Wherever there are men of freedom, there are you thought of with affection; and no royal amnesty that would seek to throw the veil of oblivion over your deeds can ever erase your glorious acts from the memory of the nations. No! they will never forget that you have sacrificed yourself in order to warn your endangered fatherland, as little as it will ever be forgotten that you, through an ever-memorable 'rebellion,' established the basis of national unity, after having, years before, defended the honour of the Roman Republic against the overpowering number of her foes. The ingratitude of a King will not weigh heavily on your heart in presence of the universal popular sympathies. Kings pass away, but nations remain; and to nations seeking to establish the truly free state the future belongs with certainty.

"KARL BLIND."

FATAL ACCIDENT AT ROCHDALE.—On Wednesday afternoon an extraordinary accident happened in a narrow thoroughfare called The Baum, at Rochdale. One of the warehouses in the street, four storeys in height, was occupied in the lower part by Mr. Petrie, ironmonger, in the upper part by Mr. Jackson, machine-broker; and on Wednesday afternoon a sale of machinery was going on in the third storey, about 40 persons being present. About half-past three, while the sale was progressing, the flooring between two beams suddenly gave way, carrying with it the persons and machinery standing upon it, and breaking through the floor below. Several of the unfortunate people and some machines were checked at the next floor, while the remainder (men and machinery) breaking through, descended to the basement. The persons, including the auctioneer, who were left in the sale-room, were cut off from retreat by the chasm thus formed. The noise was heard in a warehouse opposite, and three gentlemen from it were the first to enter. They rescued one man, and shortly afterwards a crowd collected, rendering it necessary to turn out the whole police force in Rochdale to protect those working in clearing out the ruins. The fire-escape was brought, and by this the men up stairs descended, while those in the ruins below were being taken out. The lifeless body of Mr. Abraham Knight, broker, Blackwater-street, was soon brought out, and shortly after the body of John Turner, cotton-spinner, Corn Mill-brow. Mr. Mattley, of South-lane, lay fixed by a portion of a scutcher of three tons weight, which it was necessary to break up before he could be released, and shortly after the arrival of one of his sons he had ceased to exist. These were all that were killed, but a good number—at least 11 are named—were bruised, crushed, cut, and otherwise injured. A man named Richard Priestly had a very narrow escape. He was standing by the scales in the sale-room when he felt the floor give way, but seizing the scale chains, he fortunately saved himself.

CLEVER SMUGGLING.—An important seizure of smuggled tobacco (says *Galignani*) was made at the Lisle Railway station two evenings back. Two trucks, laden with 21 elm beams, about 16 feet long and squaring 16 inches, had just arrived from Belgium, when a customs officer who happened to strike one of them fancied it sounded hollow. They were consequently examined, and it was ascertained that the inside had been scooped out and filled up with about 2,500 kilos. of tobacco.

THE FROME AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

FROME, THURSDAY.

This society held its 25th annual exhibition and public meeting yesterday. The show of stock was in most respects superior to any that have previously been held, and the cheese department came in for very marked commendation. The dinner took place in the afternoon at the George Hotel, and was presided over by the Earl of Cork and Orrery. His lordship was supported by the High Sheriff of Somerset, Mr. R. N. Grenville, the Marquis of Bath, the Marquis of Clanricarde, the Right Hon. Sir W. G. Hayter, M.P., Lord E. Thynne, M.P., Lord H. Thynne, M.P., Colonel Jones, the Hon. and Rev. R. C. T. Boyle, the Rev. F. R. Joliffe, and many of the principal residents in the district.

After the usual loyal toasts had been disposed of,

Mr. RUSSELL DUCKWORTH proposed "The Members for the Eastern Division of Somerset."

Lord HENRY THYNNE responded.

The Right Hon. Sir W. G. HAYTER also acknowledged the toast. He said it so happened that no person representing the eastern division of Somerset was present. Both the gentlemen who enjoyed that honour were probably at Wells, and otherwise engaged; but in his capacity of member for the city of Wells he begged to return his sincere and cordial thanks for the toast which had been proposed and so warmly received. It had been his good fortune to represent the city of Wells for a quarter of a century—(applause)—and all he could say was that if the constituency of that city were as well satisfied with their representative as their representative was with them, he hoped that the connection which had so long existed would not terminate just yet. (Laughter and applause.) They had been told it was a salutary rule of this society to forbid the discussion of political questions at its meetings, but if that were not the rule, he for one would decline on these occasions to enter into the political questions of the day, for he felt assured of one thing, that whatever party had the good fortune to be in the ascendant, the only object it had in view was to do its duty to the country completely and conscientiously. In carrying out this object parties might differ in their opinions. Some might be attached to the Devons, and they might be so far behind as to prefer the old Somersetshire long-horns to the short-horns; but the grand object of all was to carry on the business in what they thought the best and most profitable way. (Cheers.) In Parliament, as in farming, there was a great difference of opinion as to the best method of proceeding. As they had just heard, some farmers would persist in ploughing with only two or three horses, when they were assured it was far better and more economical to plough with four or six. But still they all tried to cultivate their land in the manner they thought best. (Renewed applause.) The last session had been accused of having done nothing, and it might be said that was ground for satisfaction, for in doing nothing they had certainly done no harm. (Laughter.) Though he was not quite of the opinion of the Liverpool banker, who never thought his gold was safe while Parliament was sitting, yet he was sure it was better to pause in legislation, and consider what laws had been passed than to go on to pass laws which they did not understand. (Hear, hear.) The session had, however, been productive of two measures of some importance—the Parochial Assessment Act, which he hoped would serve to level the present inequalities in the assessment of many parishes, and the Highway Act, which had been the subject of debate at Wells that day; and he hoped the result of that measure would be that at least they would "mend their ways." (Laughter and applause.) But gentlemen attended here to gather some information with regard to agricultural proceedings. All liked to throw a stone on a heap, and if a discussion should arise to-night, a good deal of benefit would doubtless ensue from the expressions of opinions they might hear. Some years ago he (Sir W. Hayter) had a large farm in an adjoining county, and on it he had a threshing machine which was destroyed by the mob. The reason why that was done was, because the mob thought it would lessen labour. Now, he was afraid that idea had not yet been entirely removed from the minds of the people; and he would say to any gentleman present, who was of opinion that the use of machinery tended to decrease the necessity for labour, disabuse yourself at once of that idea. He (Sir W. Hayter) was sure that steam gave much larger and better employment than the old system. Let them look around, and ask themselves whence came the wealth and increased prosperity they saw? Was it not because of the introduction of machinery that the agricultural labourer came into the town and obtained increased pay and increased comfort? He (the speaker) had seen it stated in a publication that the application of steam to agricultural purposes now amounted to 40,000—some said 4,000,000-horse power. But did that mean that 40,000 horses had been displaced? Far to the contrary; for the increased development of manufactures, trade, and commerce gave more employment to horses than ever. (Hear, hear.) He had the experience of a life spent in farming, and he was certain that the introduction of steam had been of great service to the farmer. He (Sir W. Hayter) now used steam for almost every agricultural purpose, and he found that so far from lessening labour it gave room for more. And that was done in this way:—If he saved £50 by the use of machinery, he did not let that £50 lie idle, but endeavoured to make it out £100. (Applause.) Thus, he thought the farmer might go on increasing in prosperity, and thus, too, the labourer might increase in happiness, prosperity, and intellectual development, by the application of steam to agriculture. (Cheers.) He asked pardon for throwing out some hints on another subject. He was induced to do so by the example of Lord Derby. In a speech which his lordship recently made at an agricultural meeting he referred to the advantages of saving the sewage of towns for agricultural purposes. In Hertfordshire, too, that talented and ingenious novelist, Sir Bulwer Lytton, had spoken on the subject. Now he (the speaker) resided not far from Wellington College, and there he had witnessed the method by which the sewage was utilised, and the results that had flowed from it. The inhabitants of the college are 300 in number. The college itself was built on ground consisting of Bagshot sand, or land the fee-simple of which would be exceedingly dear at 5s. an acre; for so barren was it that by no possibility would one blade of grass grow on it in a natural way. The sewage of the college, inhabited, as he had said, by 300 persons, was conveyed to a large tank. This tank was divided by ways, and the sewage was let in at the bottom. By a method which Sir W. Hayter minutely detailed, the sewage was conveyed over the land, and the following was the result. Thirty poles were sown with grass in 1861. This was cut in April of this year. Altogether it had been cut eight times, and even after that he had seen the grass a foot and a quarter high—(applause)—and it had after all been sold for £8 for fodder. Now, 30 poles were one-fifth of an acre, and if we find that one-fifth produces £8, an acre would produce £40. (Cheers.) But that was not all. He had seen potatoes grown there which weighed a pound and a quarter, and cabbages as high as the table. In conclusion, Sir W. Hayter urged a trial of the system in the town of Frome; and if any one doubted the practical results of the experiment he had stated, he had only to visit the Wellington College, and if he was then dissatisfied, why he (Sir W. Hayter) would be very happy to pay his railway fare. (The right honourable gentleman resumed his seat amidst loud applause.)

Mr. BARTON gave "The Health of the Member for the Borough of Frome," which was well received.

Lord EDWARD THYNNE returned thanks in a speech of some length. After adverting to his connection with the borough of Frome, his lordship said, he had for some time been a supporter of that department of the society which provided rewards to agricultural labourers. He defended that class of prizes against the strictures that had been cast upon it, stating that he thought the agricultural labourer had as good reason to be proud of the corduroy breeches given him as a reward for long and faithful servitude as the nobleman had to be of his garter or other order of merit. (Applause.) The noble lord, however, expressed his disapproval of the system of making the rewards dependent on the longest periods of service, and said he would prefer prizes being given for a shorter term.

"Prosperity to the Trade and Manufactures of Frome" was proposed by the Marquis of CLANRICARDE, who spoke at some length of the wonderful elasticity of the commerce of the country, and of the great advantages offered by such meetings as that which he addressed on all subjects appertaining to the district.

Several local toasts followed, and the important meeting broke up about 8 o'clock.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE LANCASHIRE DISTRESS RELIEF FUND.—Yesterday evening the band of the London Rifle Brigade set a good example in the cause of charity—the cause of almsgiving for the relief of the distress now existing in Lancashire being unitedly promoted by the professors of arms, music, and the drama. The gratuitous use of the Theatre Royal, Sadlers Wells, was generously granted for the occasion by Miss Catherine Lucette, the lessee. There was some excellent acting by the amateur band of the United Thespians. During the evening the band of the London Rifle Brigade played a variety of operatic overtures and airs in the absence of the band belonging to the establishment, which was under Mr. St. Luke. The leader was absent on a similar philanthropic mission at Rochester. The house was crowded on the occasion, and the entertainment is expected to contribute considerably to the general relief fund now raising.

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET.*

Epidemics in literature are almost as common as epidemics in crime, and may be accounted for on the same principles, and looked for with equal assurance. It is not amongst the lowest, or even the mediocre, ranks of literary ability that the appearance of these epidemics may be most confidently expected. They are not justly to be confounded with the manners of plagiarism, or the stupidity of paraphrase. A book comes out, which excites the attention of the reading public, which meets with extensive and careful comment, which is a thing apart from the constant supply of novels furnished to the constant demand of a novel-reading public, as a banquet is a thing apart from one's ordinary daily dinner, though the one must comprise some of the component parts of the other. Readers who are also writers naturally feel a more vivid and critical interest in such a book than those to whom it is only an amusement, not a suggestion. It takes hold of them, they begin to think how they would have departed from, modified, or adhered to such a plot, or improved on such a style; they conjure up certain ideas somewhat similar, more like indeed than they are themselves aware, and thence arises a school, or kind of fiction, whose members increase as rapidly as its merits differ widely. The epidemic literature of the present day may be loosely designated as of the detective type. Mr. Wilkie Collins is at the head of the school, which he did not originate, however, but whose characteristics he has intensified. The sensation literature of this day is a variety of the school of fiction inaugurated by Mr. Charles Dickens, and which has departed from the undisciplined imaginativeness and inconsistency of his style, and assumed an elaborate symmetry in the construction of its fancies which invests the most *outré* designs with mathematical precision and realism. Under this *régime* the art of narration is cultivated to the highest possible degree, and the object at which its writer aims is so to tell his story that the attention of the reader shall be directed to every incident and every shade of expression, shall be concentrated on hints and bent on inferences; and this result is sought without any real importance being necessarily attached to the slight links which form the chain on which the excited expectation is made to hang. Mr. Wilkie Collins has succeeded, in his late famous novel, "The Woman in White," and is succeeding in his present work, "No Name," in exhibiting the art of narration in its highest perfection. No one cares nearly so much for the story as for the manner in which it is told. No one wants to reach the end, the way is so pleasant, in its in and out windings, in its ingenious labyrinths, and faint puzzling glimpses of rocks and ravines ahead. It is also so agreeably trodden, there is no loitering, and there is no haste. One acquires a self-gratulatory sense of business as one reads a book in numbers by this inimitable story-teller.

Every one who marks the characteristics of the popular fictions of the day must see upon them his impress, must notice that they are founded upon the temporary success of complicated crime and passion, and then upon the ingenious demolition of the fabric. Mr. Wilkie Collins has his disciples and his compeers in the foremost ranks of the *littérateurs* of to-day, and he has his humble followers in the hindmost. Detective literature is at a premium on every railway book-stall, and must be a source of amusement to Scotland-yard.

"Lady Audley's Secret" is the latest example of detective literature, and is a remarkable book. It is written by a lady who is rapidly acquiring literary fame by another book, marching side by side with this one. "Aurora Floyd" nears its completion in the pages of *Temple Bar*, and "Lady Audley's Secret" has been published from the *Sixpenny Magazine*. The former work must claim to be ignored, except so far as its general popularity is concerned, until it, too, shall make its appearance as a whole, so that the author cannot be measured by a standard of her own creation. The comparison which at once presents itself is with the models on which this lady has manifestly formed her style, and the sources whence she has been accustomed to derive food for her fancy and her taste. There is no question of her ability; and there is no doubt that, even if the prospective fame of "Aurora Floyd" were not already casting its indications upon her, this book would give a place and a name to Miss Braddon in the foremost ranks of the novelists of the day. But it is because her talent is so unquestionable, and because enough is already known of her forthcoming book to deprive such strictures of any air of severity, and to free them from any risk of being regarded as mere depreciation, that we propose to examine this remarkable novel more closely than indulgently. Miss Braddon is too clever; she possesses the true faculty of novel writing in too high a degree to need indulgence; she gives her readers a right to expect much from her, and to resent any disappointment of their anticipations. She is an exceptional, though not an original, writer; she has applied certain powers and peculiarities of her intellect, and certain attributes of style, to the working out of a design which is but a combination of different suggestions derived from those authors between whose intellect and hers there is the strongest accord. She is above any imputation of plagiarism, yet Mr. Wilkie Collins might have contributed the plot of her story, and Mr. George Sala might have lent her its principal character. There is precisely the degree of difference in these materials which might be anticipated from their being handled by a woman. The plot which might be Mr. Collins's is exaggerated; the character which might be Mr. Sala's is consistently drawn in those small particulars which even that cunning artificer cannot always realise. The conception is a daring and a difficult one, but as the reader pursues it he can trace the germs of each of its complications. The substitution of a dead woman for a living one, the "narrative of a tombstone," its revelation to one newly returned from a foregn land, and the deliberate pursuit of circumstantial evidence, step by step and fact by fact, are suggested by "The Woman in White;" but they are so differently applied, the interests involved are so unlike, the catastrophe developed is of so different a nature, that the similarity of machinery is rather a testimony to the adaptiveness and the skill of the writer than any imputation on her own resources. In the complicated story of a woman's guilty life, which forms the subject of this novel, there is an inner complication, which is so subtly contrived as to take the reader by surprise quite late in the tale. He does not perceive that all the slow and deliberate revelation of crime which he has been perusing, and which is full of mystery, is yet apart from the secret. This, again, is one of Mr. Wilkie Collins's devices; but, as in the instances before mentioned, so differently applied, that it is perfectly justifiable, even commendable. Again, there is an adaptation of Miss Braddon's powers to the prevailing fashion, in the absence of the usual interest of a novel—the difficulties and troubles of love, and the concentration of all its action and passion upon motives which are more exceptional and generally weaker. The first novelists of the day have set this lady an example in this particular, which she has followed with singular ability. Her book will enchain the attention of the novel reader who is the most addicted to romance, as it will command that of the amateur of police reports and *causes célèbres*. The plot will not bear minute examination, to which indeed it is absurd to subject a story of detected crime, in which the author must, in justification of his catastrophe, prepare a flaw. Like its celebrated prototype, "The Woman in White," this story has one weak point in addition to the necessary blunder which prepares the way for detection. There is an utter contradiction between the character assigned to the person who unravels the mystery and the mental qualities which alone could have inspired him with so wild and improbable a suspicion. The one link wanting in the completeness and harmony of Miss Braddon's book is the link which connects Robert Audley, "my lady's" Nemesis, with my lady's guilt. No doubt to the preoccupied mind of the writer the discrepancy is not apparent, but it strikes the reader at once. It makes all the greater impression on him, because this Robert Audley is so admirably drawn because the author succeeds where so many female novelists fail, in realising the character, pursuits, ideas, and "ways" of a man. Robert Audley is an eccentric creation, but he is perfectly true to nature, and the verisimilitude of the portraiture exaggerates the importance of the discrepancy. The story is unredeemed by any touch of the higher sentiments of human nature, and in this lies the grave defect of the author. She has more than sufficient talent to enable her to dispense with vulgar material for attraction, and while her book must produce genuine admiration of her ability, it must evoke regret that she has worked with coarse tools. "Lady Audley's Secret" is deficient in some of the graces which are appropriate to a lady's writings, and it is also wanting in some of the beauties which are to be found in a masculine style. A woman clever enough to have written such a book ought to have been too clever to leave so hopelessly bad an impression of all the characters whom she introduces; and if it had been written by a man he would hardly have pitched the key of the *morale* so low in the case of the model man of the story. George Talboys, the betrayed, the murdered husband (so far as intention went) of Lady Audley, who is invested with a good deal of interest during his brief appearance on the scene, is in reality scarcely less an offender against moral and social laws than the guilty woman who is a lower class of criminal than Mr. Sala's wonderful phantom fiend, Florence Armytage. This fine, heroic, soft-hearted young man returns from Australia, whither he has gone to make a fortune for the beautiful, silly, selfish girl he has been so foolish as to marry; he finds her grave in the churchyard at Ventnor, whither he goes, guided by a paragraph in the *Times'* obituary. The identity of Helen Talboys and Lucy, Lady Audley is apparent at once to the reader; but he supposes that this fact is the secret of the guilty woman. It is not so, but it is the mainspring of the story. George Talboys discovers the truth—knows that the woman he has loved and mourned has deliberately condemned him to such misery as he has endured for a title, a fine house, and money, and he confronts the blue-eyed girlish beauty, strong enough and of sufficient courage to deceive two men so basely. From the moment that interview takes place he disappears, and the story concerns itself with the search made for him by Robert Audley, the nephew of Sir Michael Audley, his guilty wife's supposed husband. His wife believes herself his murderess, and Audley believes her so too, and the reader shares the delusion until the conclusion of the story, when he learns that George Talboys, rescued from the attempted murder (which is an extremely clumsy device), has left the country, abandoning his child, and leaving the triumphant monster, whose least crime is bigamy, in tranquil possession of rank and splendour, to persist in the wrong she is doing to a worthy and honourable man, who is, moreover, the uncle and best friend of his best best friend, Robert Audley. Here is wholesale condonation of wholesale crime. Again, Robert Audley, when he has tracked and run down the miserable woman who has wronged and murdered his friend, wronged and broken the heart of his uncle, involved them all in nameless ruin and disgrace, makes arrangements by which he imprisons her in a lunatic asylum for life, with the assistance of an eminently respectable physician skilled in the treatment of insanity, who knows she is not mad, and believes her guilty of murder. There is a warp in the *morale* of this book which is to be regretted, for things as good as they are great are within the reach of its gifted author. Her minor mistakes are few; she need not indeed make Lady Audley sell her jewels, in order to appease the rapacity of her maid's husband, in whose power she is, and the stealing of the letters from George Talboys' portmanteau at Robert Audley's chambers is a clumsy blunder; but, after all, these are venal errors, and such as could not have militated seriously against the merit of such a book. The graver mistake lies in the distorted view of duty and heroism which allows the writer to advance connivance with and concealment of crime as consonant with the one, and the endurance of injuries in which others are equally involved, without setting them right at any cost of shame and suffering, as indicative of the other. The smaller blemishes are all lost sight of in these grave and fundamental errors.

As to the character of Lady Audley, there is but one judgment possible. It is simply superb in its horrible fascination. Had Lucretia remained in Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's storehouse of imagination, and never shed her baleful blandishments abroad on a fascinated world; had Mrs. Armytage never shaken the deadly perfume of her golden ringlets upon the air, and exercised the spell of her sinful charms upon the imagination of the reader, Miss Braddon might claim for her heroine a solitary pre-eminence in beautiful, unparalleled, innocent-seeming, charming, bewitching, devilish wickedness. And even though these two prototypes dispute with her hellish heroine the palm of originality, it is only by the fact of their existence, for they do not interfere with her individuality; they only reconcile the reader, by the precedent they afford, to such a portraiture of mingled beauty and guilt. Lady Audley has not the long-cherished provocation, the warped and betrayed nature of the former, and she has not the wide-spread knowledge of the world, the reckless, gambling experience of the latter. She is a creation which stands alone in the boldness and in the depth of its depravity. Miss Braddon yields to the fashion so far that she endows this lovely devil with the golden curls, the ivory skin, the slight, graceful figure, the childish vivacity, and the sensuous temperament which are of late considered the fittest, because (a reason in this age of paradoxes) they are the most contradictory concomitants of glaring and audacious crime. To this woman she lends every fascination of manner, style, accomplishment—all but intellect; she represents her always as frivolous, vain, and silly, never as endowed with any higher intellectual endowments than unscrupulousness, cunning, and presence of mind. This portrait is a masterpiece—a triumph of skill. The profound heartlessness, the entire callousness, the absolute selfishness of this woman—a selfishness contenting itself with grovelling in a condition of sensuous ease, in an atmosphere of light and colour, in conditions of luxurious meat, drink, and raiment—a selfishness so deep and entire that its depths are never stirred by the troubled breath of passion, which with its fevered pleasure must bring unrest—is an unsurpassed picture. It is not a pleasant one; it is, indeed, painful; by its very power and intensity it forces one to feel that the mind which conceived it must have been phantom-ridden, fever-haunted for the time. If there were any greatness in the woman the conception would be less perfect and less painful. No exaggeration of incident, no small blunder takes away from the extraordinary merit of this creation of a fancy which is wondrously powerful, though not healthy. When all is over, when the game is up, when the silken-clad, gem-decked, blue-eyed, golden-tressed murderess and adulteress, the woman who never sinned through love but through hate and the thirst for luxury, has told out her story, and Lady Audley's secret is made known, then the author affords convincing proof of her consummate ability in the treatment of this one character. She yields to no heroics, she does not falsify by one act of even mistaken grandeur or perverted repentance the marvellous smallness and meanness of the nature to which accident had supplied the opportunity for great crimes:—

"My lady slept. Through that long winter night she slept soundly. Criminals have often so slept their last sleep upon earth, and have been found in the grey morning slumbering peacefully by the gaoler who came to wake them. The game had been played and lost. I do not think that my lady had thrown away a card, or missed the making of a trick which she might by any possibility have made. But her opponent's hand had been too powerful for her, and he had won. She was more at peace now than she had ever been since that day, so soon after her second marriage, on which she had seen the announcement of the return of George Talboys from the gold-fields of Australia. She might rest now, for they now knew the worst of her. There were no new discoveries to be made. She had flung the horrible burthen of an almost unendurable secret off her shoulders, and her selfish, sensuous nature resumed its mastery of her. She slept peacefully, nestled in her downy bed, under the soft mountain of silken coverlet, and in the sombre shade of the green velvet curtains. She had ordered her maid to sleep on a low couch in the same room, and she had also ordered that a lamp should be kept burning all night. Not that I think she had any fear of shadowy visitations in the still hours of the night. She was too thoroughly selfish to care very much for anything that could not hurt her; and she had never heard of a ghost doing any actual and palpable harm. She had feared Robert Audley, but she feared him no longer. He had done his worst, she knew that he could do no more without bringing everlasting disgrace upon the name he venerated. 'They will put me away somewhere, I suppose,' my lady thought, 'that is the worst they can do for me.' She looked upon herself as a species of state prisoner who would have to be taken good care of; a second Iron Mask who would have to be provided for in some comfortable place of confinement. She abandoned herself to a dull indifference; she had lived a hundred lives within the space of the last few days of her existence, and she had worn out her capacity for suffering for a time at least. She took a cup of strong tea and a few delicate fragments of toast the next morning, with the air of quiet relish common to condemned creatures who eat their last

"LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET." Morning Post, 17 Oct. 1862, p. 6. British Library Newspapers, link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3212074968/GDCS?u=warwick&sid=bookmark-GDCS. Accessed 6 Apr. 2023.