

The  
Evolution Of The  
English Novel



Francis Hovey Stoddard

Isb1.07K  
E20085

THE EVOLUTION OF THE  
ENGLISH NOVEL

BY

FRANCIS HOVEY STODDARD

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN NEW YORK  
UNIVERSITY

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

LONDON: MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.

1902

*All rights reserved*

COPYRIGHT, 1900,  
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

---

Set up and electrotyped March, 1900. Reprinted July,  
1902.

Notusob Press  
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith  
Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

### **Publishing Statement:**

This important reprint was made from an old and scarce book.

Therefore, it may have defects such as missing pages, erroneous pagination, blurred pages, missing text, poor pictures, markings, marginalia and other issues beyond our control.

Because this is such an important and rare work, we believe it is best to reproduce this book regardless of its original condition.

Thank you for your understanding and enjoy this unique book!

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
THE EVOLUTION OF THE NOVEL . . . . .	1
CHAPTER II	
THE GROWTH OF PERSONALITY IN FICTION . . . . .	43
CHAPTER III	
THE HISTORICAL NOVEL . . . . .	84
CHAPTER IV	
THE ROMANTIC NOVEL . . . . .	120
CHAPTER V	
THE NOVEL OF PURPOSE . . . . .	153
CHAPTER VI	
THE MODERN NOVEL AND ITS MISSION . . . . .	195
—————	
INDEX . . . . .	289

# THE EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

## CHAPTER I

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE NOVEL

IN every discussion of tendencies the term *evolution* claims a place with almost the insistence of a prescriptive right. No other term localizes the phenomena so definitely, and conveys so promptly the notion of progress in a general line of tendency. Nevertheless, I think most of us would, if we could, rather avoid the term than insist upon it in literary discussion. For the use of the word *evolution* seems to involve a very elaborate theory. In the title of this chapter—The Evolution of the Novel—the idea suggested indicates that we can name the earlier forms out of which the true novel has been evolved ; can arrange

## 2      EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

the novels in existence to illustrate the later development; and can trace the steps of the progress. It is with some reluctance that I have used such a demanding title. Development in literature, easy to suggest as a probable law, easy to infer in respect to particular forms, is extremely difficult of demonstration when the great movements are under consideration. Literature as a whole does not exhibit the regular and sequential development which a theory of literary evolution would imply. It is quite true that in minor matters, especially in tracing the growth of literary ideas, one easily reaches suggestive results. For example, we may find in the "Divine Comedy" of Dante the completed form of a literary method common in the Middle Ages. In the "Inferno" we have a Vision; we can look back and find the "Vision of St. Paul" and other visions to which this one of Dante may be said to be a legitimate sequel. Dante visits Hell under guidance, and views it from a bridge. In an earlier vision Ferseus visits Hell, led by an angel; and in the "St. Patrick's Purgatory"

Tundale visits Hell, has a guide, and views the lake and valley from a bridge. We have an example of the development of a method. So if we consider Milton's "Paradise Lost," we can go back and find legendary additions to the Scripture, then Avitus, then Cædmon, then Andreini, then Milton. Undoubtedly we have in Milton a developed presentation of some of the external scenic accessories found in these earlier works; and perhaps we have a development of the main thought sufficiently connected to make an historical study of these preceding works, with a provisional theory of evolution in mind, valuable for the study of Milton's "Paradise Lost." So with Bunyan. We read the "Pilgrim's Progress," as a completed form; we go back and find the allegorical journeys of Raoul de Houdan in the thirteenth century; we find the *Pèlerinage de l'âme* of Guillaume de Deguilleville in the fourteenth century; we find the English translation—"The Pylgremage of the Sowle"—in the next century; and illustrations of the development seem to be quite at hand. Yet the very enumeration of these suggestive cases



#### 4      EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

brings to our minds rather the difficulty than the satisfactoriness of a theory of evolution in literature. For certainly there is something vastly greater, more complete, in the "Pilgrim's Progress" than in the earlier "Pilgrimage of the Soul"; there is something greater in Milton's "Paradise Lost" than in Avitus, in Cædmon, in Andreini combined; and there is something greater, perhaps we may say something entirely new, inexplicably more important, in Dante's "Inferno" than in the "St. Patrick's Purgatory," or the "Vision of Ferseus," or the "Vision of St. Paul." The theory of an evolution, even with such excellent examples as these to illustrate it, seems less than satisfactory.

With much more emphasis we can say that any theory of evolution suggests difficulties if we apply it to larger matters than single works. In poetry one would perhaps expect that the early poems recorded in history would be weak, formless, vague, a chaos of ideas in a mist of expression, without form and void. Yet we go back to the earliest Hebraic work in poetry, and it is the Book of Job, as

complete and universal in its application, as correct in its form, as if it had been written in this nineteenth century; we go back to very early Greek literature, and we have the poems of Homer. We should have some difficulty in establishing a theory of the development of poetry, if we undertook to trace it in an ascending series from the works of the great poets of Greece up to the works of the crowned, or even of the uncrowned, poet laureates of to-day. Even if we take a specific form of poetry, such as an epic, can we establish a proposition of the evolution of the epic from a vague, formless, chaotic Iliad, an Odyssey, or an Æneid, up to a complete nineteenth century epic? If we extend our theory and say that the epic has developed out of its completed form into a new and larger form of poetic expression, what is that expression? Can we say that the epic was a stage in poetic evolution preparatory for and leading to a greater method?

We may have a theory of an evolution of the drama. Possibly such a theory of development would suggest that the drama should begin with simple domestic portrayals, such

as "She Stoops to Conquer," "The Rivals," or "Rip Van Winkle"; should go on to more complex and more intense presentations; and finally should, in Titanic manner, present the great problems of life and death in the drama of this evolved and later age. But in fact *Æschylus* stands first, grander than our theory, nobler than our conception. Suppose, still further, that we accept *Æschylus* as a beginning of a drama and look thence down the ages for an evolution of the drama. What do we find? Five hundred years later than *Æschylus* we have a weak imitation of the Titanic drama of Greece; a thousand years later than these we have the Miracle Plays of England and France, the very crude, formless, simple dramatic work that we should have expected to have stood fifteen hundred years before; and a few hundreds of years later than these we have Shakespeare, with no dramatic past in England, no dramatic evolution, no literary history, — simply Shakespeare, outside, apparently, of any completed scheme of literary development.

✓ Still again, consider the poet, the seer, the far-eyed man. If literary evolution be easy to set

forth, where shall we find this revealing poet? At the end? In the later years, shall we not? But in fact he comes before the day of literary history. He is Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. I do not present these things as in any sense an argument against the possibility of a setting forth of any theory of development, of evolution; least of all do I say these things as a denial that such a theory of evolution is probable, or that the discovery of its law is beyond our power. I say them to encourage a certain modesty in the consideration of this question, and to suggest to myself a certain lack of dogmatic utterance in the promulgation of any theory of evolution of the novel, and the exploitation of the steps of its development. The things of the mind are not easy to set down in scientific and logical order. We at best but search for the underlying law and get such hints as we can toward its statement.

In these chapters I do not undertake to show that the novel has grown out of any preceding form of literature with such preciseness that the traces of its growth can be shown. It is extremely doubtful if we can yet work out

a perfect statement of the development of the novel out of any other form of literature ; it is doubtful if we can work out any chronological sequence even within the period—the one hundred and fifty years—of the novel's life in English literature to the present day. We cannot say that the novels of 1740 legitimately developed into the novels of 1780 ; that the novels of 1780 logically developed into the novels of 1820 ; that the novels of 1820 legitimately and regularly developed into the novel of 1850. As with poetry, with literature, with the drama, with the epic, we find ourselves confronted with the operation of the human mind expressing itself in forms antedating, or postdating the theoretical stages ; expressing itself often in forms greater, expressing itself sometimes in forms much less in importance than any theory would demand.

Nevertheless, we have to do in the English novel with a kind of literature separate in method and in extent from other sorts. It belongs to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It has a character of its own ; it is limited in extent ; it is specific in its selection

of subject and in its method of treatment. In such a limited field the study of a development, if possible anywhere, may be carried on with reasonable prospects of success. Granting the difficulty, it is yet more than probable that we can find, if we take up this limited division of literary expression, and if we study it with something of regularity and system, that certain indications of what may be properly, though not too technically, called a development may be shown; and that the examination of these indications, of these apparent stages of growth, may be useful. In this work I undertake the study of five specific kinds of expression in fiction: the novel of personality, the novel of history, the novel of romance, the novel of purpose, and the novel of problem. I take these five divisions in the order in which I have named them, for the reason that it is somewhat the order in which these specific kinds of expression in novel form appeared. The novel of personal life, of individual, separate, domestic life, is the basal form. A novel is a record of emotion; the story of a human life touched

## 10 EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

with emotion; the story of two human lives under stress of emotional arousalment; the story of domestic life with emotion pervading it; the story of a great historical character in his day of aroused emotional activity; or the story of the romantic adventures of some person seeking strange regions under stress of emotional desire. So that the novel of personal life is really the basal form of the novel, and one may say that all novels become novels only when each is the story of some life stirred by some emotion. The earliest and the latest novel will come under this main division, to the discussion of whose characteristics the second chapter is given. The historical and the romantic novel, which are the subjects of the third and fourth chapters, developed later as a special form; and the novel of purpose later than either. In treating these in successive chapters I am, then, following somewhat a law of chronological appearance; but I by no means suggest that the novel of the domestic life, of the individual life, developed into the historical novel, and that again into the romantic novel,

and that again into the novel of purpose, and that again into the problem novel. One must look farther than to this rough and general classification if he seeks to frame a law of the development of fiction.

We have seen that it is not easy to set forth in detail any order of succession of literary forms of expression. Yet I think he is but a superficial student of the literature of recorded time who does not note one tendency of later work, of later method, of later procedure, of later life, as compared with earlier work, earlier method, earlier procedure, and earlier life which seems to imply an underlying law. If there be such an underlying law, it is the purpose of this chapter to suggest it and to apply it with some exactness to the history of the novel form. This law of tendency is, in general, that the depiction of the external, objective, carnal, precedes, in every form of expression of which we can have records, the consideration of the internal, the subjective, the spiritual. We go from shapes, and forms, and bulk, and externals, to the presentation of



## 12 EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

the life within. To illustrate this law, I may call attention to a step in the development of art significant of the evolution of the idea of inner personality as opposed to outward symbol, which seemed to show itself in the last years of the Mediæval Ages, and the first years of the Reformation era. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in the day of Cimabue, of Quintin Massys, of Van Eyck, the typical presentation of the Madonna was that of a vague face, without expression, shone upon by a light from without, illumined and dignified by an external halo. The Madonna of the later time, of the greater time, was a human face, with human expression, illumined and glorified by a light from within. The halo, the external sign, had gone; the inner life, the expression of the divinely aroused human emotion, had come in its place. This seems to be in accordance with a law that the progress of evolution is from external embellishment to inner life. It is this law that I propose in this work to apply to the novel.

The theory of development that I set forth is that progress, in speech, in literature, in