

days of Margaret of Navarre; and obviously what the Typical English Novelist had always aimed at—if he had aimed at any Form at all—and what the Typical English Critic looked for—if ever he condescended to look at a Novel—was a series of short stories with linked characters and possibly a culmination. Indeed, that conception of the Novel has been forced upon the English Novelist by the commercial exigencies of hundreds of years. The Romances of Shakespeare, novels written for ranted recitation and admirable in the technique of that Form, were moulded by the necessity for concurrent action in varying places: the curtain had to be used. So you had the Strong Situation in order that the psychological stages of Othello should be firm in the hearer's mind whilst Desdemona was alone before the audience. The Novels of Fielding, of Dickens, and of Thackeray were written for publication in Parts: at the end of every part must come the Strong Situation, to keep the Plot in the reader's head until the First of Next Month. So with the eminent contemporaries of ours in the 'nineties of last century: if the writer was to make a living wage he must aim at Serialisation: for that once again you must have a Strong Scene before you write "To be continued," or the reader would not hanker for the next number of the magazine you served. But you do not need to go to Commercial Fiction to find the origin of the tendency: if the reader has ever lain awake in a long school dormitory or a well-peopled children's bedroom, listening to or telling long, long tales that went on from day to day or from week to week, he will have known, or will have observed, the necessity to retain the story in the hearer's mind, and to introduce, just