

Such is the reply of the opponents of Cheap Literature.

Revolving these things many times in our mind, we have not as yet been able to arrive at any conclusion. Some forcible articles on the increase of crime, which lately appeared in Blackwood, would appear to favour the opinion of those who hold that it is injurious—and those articles, it will be remembered, were founded on statistical tables. But, on the other hand, it is perfectly certain that as yet no statistics have been shewn of the increase of morality—of improvement in cleanliness, in social order, and sobriety, which the spread of a wholesome literature has engendered. That thousands of such instances have occurred is certain. We must therefore hold it to be something like the question of "Whig or Tory" where a man taking either side will be wrong in many things, and right in as many more. On one point we are perfectly prepared to express our opinion. Were there no other emanations from the Cheap Literature Press than those now under consideration, we would be perfectly satisfied to see Cheap Literature abolished. We must now proceed in right earnest to our task—and a task at once so necessary and so revolting, we have not for a long time encountered.

We say *necessary*, because if it is an admitted principle that "virtue should be rewarded and crime punished," so it *should* be an admitted principle, that literary merit ought to be pointed out and lauded—literary delinquency, exposed and decried by those who assume the task of judges. This is a clear, indubitable right—admitted and freely practised in Europe—in Great Britain somewhat lost sight of, amid the jealousies of politics. But in this country we are aware that many cry out against any censorship, and say—if you do not praise and encourage everything that appears, you nip the flower in the bud. This, in these days of the universal diffusion of literary novelties, is the very height of folly. It is not *essential* to the improvement of the Canadian people that any indigenous literature should be fostered. England is the mint. It supplies us with an inexhaustible fund. But it would be a thing to boast of—a thing in which we might feel a just and natural pride—if a literature, capable of gaining a European reputation, could spring up among us. Therefore it is well to encourage a literary tendency—with this proviso, that every thing containing bad grammar or mawkish sentimentality should be crushed with remorseless severity. Else—the alternative is obvious—a literature would spring up, similar to the garbage of Mr. Maneur, and *Professor (Prophetic!) Ingraham*.

So is our task proved to be a necessary one.

As to turning up our nose at it, and calling it revolting—let the reader judge whether we are right or wrong.

The first of the three books whose titles we have given, which we shall bring to the consideration of our readers, is "*Christine!*" We are induced to give it precedence, because we have seen it noticed in an extract from the "*Commercial Advertiser*," of New York, after the following fashion. The italics are our own:—

"This *delightful* tale is by the *accomplished* author of *Henri Quatre*, or the Days of the League, which, until now, has been universally attributed to Mr. James. We are glad to find that *such a writer*, as Mr. Maneur has turned his attention to the stirring events of our *triumphant Revolution*. The scene of this tale lies in Flatbush, and the principal incidents occur about the period of the battle fought in the village by the few patriots under General Sullivan, and the Hessian mercenaries of De Heister, and the British, commanded by Sir W. Howe. The localities of Long Island, and the memorable events of the period, are described with graphic accuracy, in a style as clear as it is delightful. The great charm of fine writing is ease, and no stronger instances can be adduced than the works of *Ireing and Scott*, of whom the author of '*Christine*' strongly reminds us!!"

Now, he it remembered that this is a puff, but one that comes from a journal, considered, as a journal, highly respectable. We do not mean to say that the "*Commercial Advertiser*," has uttered any oracular sentences on literary questions—merely that it is a respectable Commercial Journal. But when a respectable Commercial Journal indulges in what the French would call a *bêtise*, and commits a most respectable mistake, it deserves a respectable castigation. Passing over the fact that no two writers whom we can recollect, except Thomas Carlyle and Southey, are more dissimilar in prose, than *Ireing* and *Scott*—and with a flat denial that the author of *Christine*, resembles either the one or the other—being too mawkish to be named in the same day with the vilest imitator of Scott, and too impure in his style, to be considered a farthing rushlight, when compared with the luminous perspicuity of *Ireing*—we proceed to endeavour to discover in Mr. Maneur's *Christine*, that great charm of fine writing—*ease!*

The "*principal incidents*"—such as they are—for we see nothing very remarkable about them, may be very briefly dismissed. There are not many of them, so we will give a brief epitome of all the incidents, fearing we might inadvertently confound some of the minor incidents with the principal ones.

The first, then, of any kind is one which occurs *before* *ten*, at the house of the heroine's father.