

LIGHT LITERATURE OF THE DAY.

The *Christian Observer* has an article upon the light literature of the day, in which the following, very just observations are made:

"The literature of a former generation shocks us by its grossness and indecency. We read it with a feeling of shame. We wonder how our forefathers could have endured the use of such language—the open expression of such filthy ideas as are to be found often in Pope, continually in Swift; and because we have now our fig-leaf propitities, and throw over what is gross the gossamer veil of a factitious refinement, we flatter ourselves that our moral sense must be greatly improved, and that we are much better than our fathers. The maxim, however, that 'vice loses half its harm when it loses all its grossness,' requires to be received with a very considerable degree of reserve. It is its antithesis, rather than its truth, that has gained its acceptance. A prurient curiosity may be excited by the very means that are affected to be used to check it. Words are nothing; it is the thought they convey that contains the danger; and if the thought be bad, yet artfully veiled, and only insinuated, it may be like latent fire. There is such a thing as dressing out our thoughts in crinoline, and exhibiting our shame-facedness, as is the fashion, by a veil that reaches only just below the eyes. We forget that our covering is the sign of our sin and our shame: to avoid fresh sin, the less attention is drawn to it the better. Our primitive nakedness is not half so dangerous to our moral sense as a tricked out and enticing pudicity. The filthiness of nineteenth-century decency may pollute more, because it offends less, than the plain-spoken honesty of our forefathers in calling things by their right names; just as there may be far more rudeness in the cutting civilities of modern politeness, than in all the strong direct terms used by a less refined generation, when they wished to describe and denounce rogues and knaves. The gentleman scoundrel, none can deny is the worst of all scoundrels. So the polished literary seducer is the worst of all seducers.

"One characteristic of the light literature of our day is thus indicated. But it is not so much this feature of it to which we wish to draw attention, as another of much more serious moment. Ours is a religious age, at least in profession. It has a taste for a seasoning of religious sentiment in everything that is written. No book or periodical will become popular that has not in it some touches of Christianity,—some respect, affected or real, for the Divine Founder of our religion. But what is the character of the religious feeling which thus provenders for the known

public taste? Has it any principle in it? Is it a religious feeling of any distinct and definite character at all? Far from it! It is rather negative than positive. It spends itself in vague general sentiment, thin as air; and has no fixed principle whatever, but that of eschewing all that is dogmatic, or, as the phrase goes, 'controversial.' While it professes to respect, it practically repudiates. It is not the kind of religion that is to be found in the Church or in the Bible it gratuitously patronizes with its uncalled-for favour; but only the floating sentiment of religion that froths up and settles on the surface of superficial society. This it extols as better than all the religion of sermons and creeds. It skims off, in fact, just that part of Christianity which suits its end, and it skims it only when the cream is gone; so that, like skimmed-milk cream, it is necessarily very thin. Such religious sentiment as this just serves the purpose of deceiving people, and nothing more.

"A positively irreligious literature, for the reason we have given, would not be endured in the present day. But there is very much that, without being irreligious, in the sense of profane or sceptical, unreligious by the absence of all religious influence or recognition from its pages. Many of our popular writers discard it upon principle. This is the next stage in the downward progress, and this is the growing sentiment of the age. These writers look upon Religion as the most mischievous of all Powers, because of the many disputes and the frequent ill-will it occasions. It is chiefly men who have addicted themselves to science, and to inquiries into material things, that lean in this direction; though many of our writers on light literature have the same tendency. Hence there is an increasing number of books published from which religion is altogether eliminated, name and thing. Even its antiseptic influence fails to pervade them. This spirit aims to create a world of its own, in which there shall be literally no God. If it alludes to religion at all, it is only under the form of a sly sncer, an insinuated doubt, or a contemptuous depreciation of its professors, as if they alone were the men that are wanting in common sense."

As lately I lay very sick, so sick that I thought I should have left this world, many cogitations and musings had I in my weakness. Ah! thought I, what may eternity be? What joys may it have? However, I know for certain, eternity is ours; through Christ it is given and prepared for us, if we can but believe. There it shall be opened and revealed; here we shall not know when a second creation of the world will be, seeing we understand not the first.—*Luther*