

# THE PROVINCIAL.

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## A GOSSIP ABOUT LITERATURE.

LITERATURE, like all other things on this changeful globe, has its seasons and its aspects. Time, which brings the moss to the tree and the furrow to the brow, though it does not bring a shade or a weariness to that ever green plant of imagination and reason, yecept literature, yet bestows upon it in passing a shadow as it were of the age in which it exists, and colours and changes it to suit the period and the customs around it. It is not that literature is of such impressible nature, that habit or improvement can tincture it with their own hues or novelty, but as it is the production of men's minds, and the food for our highest capabilities, so, like the new moon, it has its changes and its phases, enduring only in a steady aspect for a season, and leaving more surely than aught else in our changeful world, unbroken reflection of a past state of society, the moveable mirror in which the thoughts and feelings, with the tastes and prejudices of a bygone generation, are daguerreotyped for all time. But like the fashions in manner or dress, which reign for a time and then are laid upon the shelf, only to be revived after all who once approved and adopted them have long been low in the dust, so a certain style of literature is admired and pursued by a multitude, until the fashion again changes and another novelty in style or sentiment usurps the place of the former. This, with another, and still another, follow in succession, and have their day, until when the world is an age or two older, a class of men prefer rather to study the literature of the past than that of their own day, and consequently are tinctured with the spirit of the works they peruse, until admiration is succeeded by action, and they set to work in the same spirit, and transfer for their own age in their own words, copies of the original which so delighted a past generation. And thus while the world apparently goes forward in wisdom and improvement, we find that though our higher and deeper faculties are developed and exercised, our tastes are essentially the same as were our forefathers, that we have only parted with the coarseness and absurdity which disfigured their productions, but that we are no more keenly alive to the spirit of genius and wit than they were. Our humour may be less broad, our senti-