

THE PROVINCIAL.

HALIFAX, N. S., DECEMBER, 1853.

A GOSSIP ABOUT LITERATURE.

GOING on with the humourists of the nineteenth century, and glancing at them in their different degrees of merit, our countryman, Judge Haliburton, comes in for a first notice. We will look at him as he appeared to the public when he first came before them in 'the Clockmaker,' under the cognomen of 'Sam Slick.' For originality of idea and quaint comicality of style, few have ever surpassed the learned judge. Deep insight into human nature, keen sense of the ludicrous, and a merciless touch for the foibles and weaknesses of his kind, are the ruling characteristics of this Colonial humourist. We have never been quite sure whether he wrote for a good end or merely to indulge his own love for the ridiculous. Sometimes it would seem as if like the surgeon he probed for the purpose of healing, but so often he aims a shaft when there is no possible chance of a good result being effected, that his real motives are veiled in mystery. Those well acquainted with the Yankee character pronounce the Judge a truthful limner, and all who know anything of human nature throughout the whole world, will give the same testimony to the general truthfulness of this broad but correct caricaturist. Sometimes, however, he oversteps the limits of his vocation, as when he depicts his favourite character of 'Bluenose.' To have a fling at his countrymen, he often forgets justice as well as mercy, and those who would judge of the character of Nova Scotians generally from those given in the graphic sketches of 'Sam Slick,' will do our slow-going but right-thinking and worthy people injustice. Judge Haliburton in one respect differs much from his brother humourists—he has no genius for the pathetic. Now and then he attempts a scene of a boarding school girl or a lonely wife, yet all he can do is but to make us feel we are reading the truth. The eyes are tearless that bend over Haliburton's greatest efforts, but they flow freely on many pages of Hood, Thackeray, or Dickens. Pathos ever seems to be connected with humour, and the best writers in the latter department have been most conspicuous for their power over feeling and pity. But Haliburton is merely comical—a caricaturist of the broadest style, whom we laugh at but have little sympathy with. Possessing more shrewdness than genius,