

OUR TABLE.

RURAL LETTERS, BY N. P. WILLIS.

N. P. WILLIS is a name which has been long before the world, as a pleasant scribbler for the press—as a magazine writer—a newspaper editor, and a “penciller by the way.” He has had a good modicum of abuse bestowed upon him, and has not been uncheered by praise. But he is, we think, less thought of and less admired than many authors who cannot boast a tithe of his talents. His sketches are frequently admirable—sometimes brilliant. He possesses a happy faculty at illustration, which few equal, and very few excel, and the quaint conceits and sparkling fancies which come at rapid intervals from his pen, are seldom unaccompanied by a rich train of earnest and impressive thought. These Rural Letters are “records of thought at leisure, written at intervals of more hurried literary labours,” and in a letter to his daughter, the author endeavors to show the contrast between the free thoughts of the untasked writer with those from the same pen, when laboring for bread, as the editor, tied to time, and bound, whether in the mood or not, must do. The figure he makes use of to illustrate what he means, is so very beautiful, that we cannot resist the temptation to transcribe it:

I scarce know how to express it, however; for, sure as I am of conveying the feeling of every man who has ever parcelled his free thoughts into “goods and groceries,” it is difficult to phrase without misconveyance of meaning. *If you have ever seen a field of broom-corn—the most careless summer—and can fancy the contrast, in its destiny, between sweeping the pure air with the wind's hand, and sweeping what it more usefully may, when tied up for handling as brooms, you can understand the difference I feel, between using my thoughts for subsistence as in my present profession. How much, and what quality, of an author, I might I mean from choice, the tone of these Letters, intend any comparative disparagement of what I have written upon compulsion. The hot needle through the eye of the goldfinch betters his singing, they say. Only separate, if with this hint you can, what I have done as mental toil, from what I might have written had I been a thoughtful free farmer, with books, country leisure, and liberty to pick, with the perspective bettering of second thought, from the brain's many-mooded vagaries.*

We are glad to find that Major Richardson intends, in pursuance of a new—or rather indeed, an old custom—to read in three consecutive evenings, the first Book of his new Indian tales, to which we made favorable allusion in our number for March.

The plot is so contrived that, although the work will eventually contain three Books, each of them so completely embraces its own immediate subject, that the appetite is awakened for more, nothing is left to be explained at the conclusion of the reading.

We have already said, on the authority of a friend, that the book now to be read is full of startling incident, graphically written—Soldiers and Indians being the chief actors—and on the whole, certainly not inferior to Wacousta.

We think Major Richardson's idea of reading his tale in manuscript, is, at this particular epoch, when the physical may be attended, with advantage, by the intellectual, a good one; yet they who have, within the last fortnight, had so much of a hard scramble without, may have an opportunity of indulging in a “Hardscramble” within.

The name, by the way, is not very attractive, but we presume there is some good reason for giving it. We have heard, indeed, that there is, at this moment, a locale so called, where occurred the startling events that form the ground-work of this first book of the “Massacre at Chicago,” which is about to be submitted in the form of a lecture.

We trust Major Richardson will not be offended at the remark, but we cannot grant him the merit, if such it be, of having originated a new phase in lighter literature. The same was done long before him, and even recently, we have had the readings of Fanny Kemble, and one or two others.

The readings, we have just learned, will take place on the evening of Saturday, the 12th, and on Monday and Tuesday evenings, at the room of the Odd Fellows' Hall, in this city.