

OUR TABLE.

RUSSEL; A TALE OF THE REIGN OF CHARLES
II.—BY G. P. R. JAMES.

THERE is something so poisonous in the very atmosphere of vice, especially that of a sensual character, that we can hardly breathe in it without contamination. The delineation of it in all its odious and disgusting particulars, although accompanied with a detail of the ruinous consequences to which it inevitably leads, has a natural tendency to produce an effect the very opposite to that which the generality of the novel writers of the old school, and not a few of the present day, seem to have anticipated.

When we took up the work before us and commenced reading it, we were afraid we should be compelled to place it in the same category as those we have so unequivocally denounced. We did not duly consider the time and place—the age to which it referred, and the all but universal corruption which then prevailed. We did not reflect that the reign of that shameless Monarch constitutes the darkest and most humiliating portion of our History, and that an historical novel, like the one before us, although not professedly such, referring to that period, could hardly be expected to pursue its course without touching the predominating vices of the day, and thereby rendering its justly celebrated author liable to the imputation we felt disposed to fasten upon his character. But he touches upon them so lightly, and with so much delicacy, that we could not but forgive him, the more especially as he transforms, with that magic power he so eminently possesses, the victim of seduction, into the faithful, and self and soul devoted wife.

We are here treading upon dangerous ground, we know—we feel we are. And yet we think, the matter is so well and delicately managed, that we are not quite beguiled into a compromise of our principles, when we recommend the work to the favourable notice of our readers. This we do, however, not without some little compunction and mental reservation: but the tale is so well told, and such a deep, and continuous, and thrilling interest is excited and sustained throughout the whole length of it, that we cannot withhold our recommendation, and so little of evil is inter-

mingled—or rather we should say of vice, and so much of all that is high and holy, and honorable and virtuous, that if we have erred in thus recommending the work, we may hope to participate in the Syrian soldier's prayer, for permission to bow with his master to an idol god, without offence.

We have not, however, yet done with our author—we wish we had, for he is a great favorite with us, and what we have further to say, tends somewhat, we are sorry to say, to lower him in our estimation.

We think we have caught him in a gross and flagrant art of plagiarism. It may be accidental, but we can hardly believe it.

In a recent work of Lever's—"The Nevilles of Garretstown"—the brother of the rightful heir to the family property, assumes it on the pretence that he is dead. He has been suspected of treason, in consequence of his supposed adherence to the cause of the pretender James the III. He flees his territory, and nothing is heard of him for years.

A magician and conjurer comes into the neighbourhood, and the usurper applies to him, under some remorseful misgivings as to the precarious position with regard to the tenure by which he holds the property. Some fearful disclosures are made by this magician, which induces him to give it up to the rightful owner, the magician himself, who is the father of the hero of the story. In James' tale, the work before us, one of the principal characters is placed in precisely the same predicament. A usurper takes possession of the family estates and title, on the supposition that the real heir, who had fled his country in consequence of being accused of high treason, had been drowned at sea. This, however, was not the case. The heir returns in the character of a magician and conjurer, when the very same scene is enacted over again.

The similarity is too striking to have been accidental; and unless George Prince Regent James can find out other means than any we can devise for him, to wipe off the stain from his literary character, he must submit to the imputation of unpardonable plagiarism.