

OUR TABLE.

THE WORKS OF WASHINGTON IRVING.

A NEW edition of the works of this justly celebrated, and universally admired author, is in course of publication in New York. It will be got up in a style corresponding with the excellence of the works. Our object, however, in calling attention to the publication, at the present moment, is less to speak of the works of "Geoffrey Crayon,"—which are almost as generally known and admired as the language in which they are written—than to introduce to the readers of the *Garland*, a new preface, furnished by the author, for the new edition of "The Sketch Book."

At the commencement of his career, Irving, being in England, and having met with some reverses of fortune, was in rather embarrassed circumstances, and this, combined with other causes, induced him to think of publishing in that country; another inducement being, that his books would have the advantage of his own supervision. He therefore sent some printed numbers, to the celebrated publisher, Murray, informing him that, if he approved of them, enough of new matter had been prepared for a second volume. The reply, although written in a tone of kindness, was of a nature to do anything rather than elevate the hopes of the young aspirant, and although he thought of seeking another publisher, he determined first to submit his productions to the critical judgment of Sir Walter Scott, by whom he had been cordially received, some years before. The remainder of the history we give in the words of the author, being satisfied that all who read it will join us in thinking it well worthy of a place in any publication, which desires to see literature and literary men fostered and encouraged:—

"The parcel containing my work went by coach to Scott's address in Edinburgh; the letter went by mail to his residence in the country. By the very first post I received a reply, before he had seen my work.

"I was down at Kelso," said he, "when your letter reached Abbotsford. I am now on my way to town, and will converse with Constable, and do all in my power to forward your views—I assure you nothing will give more pleasure."

"The hint, however, about a reverse of fortune had struck the quick apprehension of Scott, and with that

practical and efficient good will which belonged to his nature, he had already devised a way of aiding me. A weekly periodical, he went on to inform me, was about to be set up in Edinburgh, supported by the most respectable talents, and amply furnished with all the necessary information. The appointment of the editor, for which ample funds were provided, would be five hundred pounds sterling a year, with the reasonable prospect of further advantages. This situation, being apparently at his disposal, he frankly offered to me. The work, however, he intimated, was to have somewhat of a political bearing, and he expressed an apprehension that the tone it was desired to adopt might not suit me. 'Yet I risk the question,' added he, 'because I know no man so well qualified for this important task, and perhaps because it will necessarily bring you to Edinburgh. If my proposal does not suit, you need only keep the matter secret and there is no harm done. 'And for my love I pray you wrong me not.' If on the contrary you think it could be made to suit you, let me know as soon as possible, addressing Castle-street, Edinburgh.'

"In a postscript, written from Edinburgh, he adds: 'I have just come here, and have glanced over the *Sketch Book*. It is positively beautiful, and increases my desire to crimp you, if it be possible. Some difficulties there always are in managing such a matter, especially at the outset; but we will obviate them as much as we possibly can.'

"The following is from an imperfect draught of my reply, which underwent some modifications in the copy sent.

"I cannot express how much I am gratified by your letter. I had begun to feel as if I had taken an unwarrantable liberty; but, somehow or other, there is a genial sunshine about you that warms every creeping thing into heart and confidence. Your literary proposal both surprises and flatters me, as it evinces a much higher opinion of my talents than I have myself.'

"I then went on to explain that I found myself peculiarly unfitted for the situation offered to me, not merely by my political opinions, but by the very constitution and habits of my mind. 'My whole course of life,' I observed, 'has been desultory, and I am unfitted for any periodically recurring task, or any stipulated labour of body or mind. I have no command of my talents, such as they are, and have to watch the varyings of my mind as I would those of the weather-cock. Practice and training may bring me more into rule; but at present I am as useless for regular service as one of my own country Indians, or a Don Cossack.'

"I must, therefore, keep on pretty much as I have begun; writing when I can, not when I would. I shall occasionally shift my residence, and write whatever is suggested by objects before me, or whatever rises in my imagination; and hope to write better and more copiously by and by.

"I am playing the egotist, but I know no better way of answering your proposal than by showing what a very