Richmond Dispatch.

FRIDAY MORNING.....DEC. 2, 1859.

Half an Hour at Sunnyside.

The sketch below of a half hour with Washington Irving, is furnished a Northern paper by a writer who visited Sunnyside about a week before the death of its noble old tenant. After describing the quaint old "Rip-Van Winkle" cottage on the banks of the Hudson, the writer says:

Mr. Irving is not so old-looking as one would expect, who knew his age. I fancied him as in the winter of life; I found him only in its Indian summer. He came down stairs, and walked through the hall into the back parlor, with a firm and lively step that might well have made one doubt whether he had truly attained his seventy-seventh year! He was suffering from asthma, and was muffled against the damp air with a Scotch shawl, wrapped like a great loose scarf around his neck; but as he took his seat in the old arm-chair, and, despite his hoarseness and troubled chest, began an unexpectedly vivacious conversation, he made me almost forget that I was the guest of an old man long past his "threescore years and ten."

But what should one talk about who had only half an hour with Washington Irving? I ventured the question—

"Now that you have laid aside your pen, which of your books do you look back upon with most pleasure?"

He immediately replied, "I scarcely look with full satisfaction upon any; for they do not seem what they might have been; I often wish that I could have twenty years more, to take them down from the shelf, one by one, and write them over."

He spoke of his daily habits of writing, before he had made the resolution to write no more. His usual hours for literary work were from morning till noon. But, although he had generally found his mind most vigorous in the early part of the day, he had always been subject to moods and caprices, and could never tell, when he took up the pen, how many hours would pass before he would lay it down.

"But," said he, "these capricious periods of the heat and glow of composition, have been the happiest hours of my life. I have never found, in anything outside of the four walls of my study, any enjoyment equal to sitting at my writing-desk with a clean page, a new theme, and a mind awake."

His literary employments, he remarked, had always been more like entertainments than tasks.

"Some writers," said he, "appear to have been independent of moods. Sir Walter Scott, for instance, had great power of writing, and could work almost at any time; so could Crabbe—but with this difference: Scott always, and Crabbe seldom, wrote well. I remember," said he, "taking breakfast one morning with Rogers, Moore, and Crabbe; the conversation turned on Lord Byron's poetic moods; Crabbe said that, however it might be with Lord Byron, as for himself, he could write as well at one time as another. But," said Irving, with a twinkle of humor at recalling the incident, "Crabbe has written a great deal that nobody ever can read!"

He mentioned that while living in Paris, he went a long period without being able to write. "I sat down repeatedly," said he, "with pen and ink, but could invent nothing worth putting on the paper. At length, I told my friend Tom Moore, who dropped in one morning, that now, after long waiting, I had the mood, and would hold it, and work it out as long as it would last, until I had wrung my brain dry. So I began to write shortly after breakfast, and continued, without noticing how the time was passing, until Moore came in again at four in the afternoon—when I had completely covered the table with freshly-written sheets. I kept the mood almost without interruption for six weeks."

I asked which of his books was the result of this frenzy; he replied, "Bracebridge Hall."

"None of your works," I remarked, "are more charming than the Biography of Goldsmith."

"Yet that was written," said he, "even more rapidly than the other." He then added:

"When I have been engaged on a continuous work, I have often been obliged to rise in the middle of the night, light my lamp, and write an hour or two, to relieve my mind; and now that I write no more, I am sometimes compelled to get up in the same way to read."

Sometimes, also, as the last Idlewild letter mentions, he gets up to shave!

"When I was in Spain," he remarked, "searching the old chronicles, and engaged on the Life of Columbus, I often wrote fourteen or fifteen hours out of the twenty-four."

He said that whenever he had forced his mind unwillingly to work, the product was worthless; and he invariably threw it away, and began again; "for," as he observed, "an essay or chapter that has been only *hammered out*, is seldom good for anything. An author's right time to work is when his mind is aglow—when his imagination is kindled; these are his precious moments; let him wait until they come, but when they have come, let him make the most of them."

I referred to his last and greatest work, the Life of Washington, and asked if he felt, on finishing it, any such sensation as Gibbon is said to have experienced over the last sheet of the Decline and Fall. He replied that the whole work had engrossed his mind to such a degree, that, before he was aware, he had written himself into feebleness of health; that he feared while in the midst of his labor that it would break him down before he could end it; that when at last the final pages were written, he gave the manuscript to his nephew to be conducted through the press, and threw himself back upon his red-cushioned lounge with an indescribable feeling of relief! He added that the great fatigue of mind, throughout the whole task, had resulted from the care and pains required in the construction and arrangement of materials, and not in the literary composition of the successive chapters.

But what magnificent volumes! What a work for an old man to achieve! What a fitting close to the labors of a long and busy life! They unite on one page, and will perpetuate in one memory, not only a great name, but its great namesake: the Father of the American Republic, and the Father of the American Republic of Letters!

On the parlor wall hung the engraving of Field's picture of "Scott and his Contemporaries;" I alluded to it as presenting a group of his former friends.

"Yes," said he, "I knew every man of them but three; and now they are all gone!"

"Are the portraits good?" I inquired.

"Scott's head," he replied, "is well drawn, though the expression lacks something of Scott's force; Campbell's is tolerable; Lockhart's is the worst. Lockhart," said he, was a man of very delicate organization, but he had a more manly look than in the picture."

"You should write one more book," I hinted.

"What is that?"

"Your reminiscences of those literary friends."

"Ah," he exclaimed, "it is too late now! I shall never take the pen again; I have so entirely given up anything, that even my best friends' letters lie unanswered. I must have rest. No more books now!"

He referred to the visit, a week before, by Mr. Willis, whose letter he had just been reading in the Home Journal.

"I am very glad," said he, "that Mr. Willis remembered my nieces; they are my housekeepers and nurses; they take such good care of me that really I am the most fortunate old bachelor in the world! "Yes," he repeated with a merry emphasis, "the most fortunate old bachelor in all the world!"

It was delightful to witness the animation of his manner, and the heartiness of his gratitude, as he continued to relate how they supplied all his wants—gave him his medicines at the right time, without troubling him to look at their clock for himself—called him down to breakfast—cloaked and shawled him for his morning ride—brought him his hat for his fine weather walks—and in every possible way honored him in every possible whim!

"I call them sometimes my nieces," he said, "but oftener my daughters!"

As I rose to go, he brought from the corner of the room a photograph of a little girl, exhibiting it with great enthusiasm. It was a gift from a little child who had come to see him every day during his sickness. The picture was accompanied with a note printed in large letters, with a lead-pencil, by the little correspondent who said she was too young to write! He spoke with great vivacity of his childish visitor. "Children," said the old man, "are great pets; I am very fond of the little creatures."

The author's study—into which I looked for a few moments before leaving—is a small room, almost entirely filled by the great writing-table and the lounge behind it. The walls are laden with books and pictures, which evidently are rearranged every day by some delicate hand; for none of the books were tumbled into a corner, and no papers were lying loose upon the table. The pen, too, was laid precisely parallel to the edge of the ink-stand—a nicety which only a womanly housekeeper would persevere to maintain! Besides, there was not a speck of dust upon the carpet or cushion!

I stood reverently in the little room—as if it were a sacred place! Its associations filled my mind with as much delight as if I had been breathing fragrance from hidden flowers. On leaving, I carried the picture of it vividly in my mind, and still carry it—the quiet, secluded, poetic haunt in which a great author wrote his greatest works!

As I came away, the old gentleman bundled his shawl about him, and stood a few moments on the steps. A momentary burst of sunshine fell on him through the breaking clouds. In that full light he looked still less like an old man than in the dark parlor by the shaded window. His form was slightly bent, but the quiet humor of the early portraits was still lingering in his face. He was the same genial, generous, merry-eyed man at seventy-seven as Jarvis had painted him nearly fifty years before. I wish always to remember him as I saw him at that last moment.

The Rev. B. L. Hoskins, of Wilmington, N. C., is dead.

PARIS EXPOSITION.—The Emperor and Empress of the French left the Tuileries at half past 11 o'clock on the morning of the 15th, for the Palais de l'Industrie, where the Exposition of the works of art of all nations was to be opened. The imperial cortège passed through the Champs Elysées, the Place de la Concorde, the Place Vendôme, the Place des Victoires, the Place de la Bourse, the Place de la Madeleine, the Boulevards, the Place Louvois, the Place Richelieu, the Place du Palais Royal, the Place du Louvre, the Place Napoleon, the Place Delaborde, the Place Jean Jacques Rousseau, the Place Malesherbes, the Place Saint Augustin, the Place Saint Philippe du Roule, the Place Beauvau, the Place Chateaubriand, the Place Lamartine, the Place Lafayette