NICK OF THE WOODS;
Or the Jibbenainosay. A Tale of Kentucky. By the Author of "Calavar," "the In...
end, to afford opportunities for illustrating the super-human endowments of the redoubtable Jibbenainosay. But the reader easily works the equation by extinguishing thesesuperhuman opposing quantities, and feels that all that is essential to the story has happened just as it ought, and, except as before excepted, just as it well might happen.

But while we consider Dr. Bird as decidedly superior to Mr. Cooper in these particulars, we think the latter much more successful in the style of his narrative, and in the sprightliness and piquancy of his dialogue. Yet this must be taken with some allowance. Dr. Bird tells his story with less grace, and less dramatic effect, but he tells it with more simplicity and directness. There is no studied mystification, no prosing, no interruption of the narrative, no attempt to excite the interest of the reader by harassing him with purpose delays. He is not brought within a sentence of the close of some stirring episode, and then required to wait patiently for the event, while the writer takes up some other branch of his story. On the contrary, the occurrences of the tale are brought before the reader in the order of time, in which they happened; and causes are made to precede their consequences, instead of being so inverted as to make the whole a series of puzzles and enigmas.

As to the dialogue, it is, as we have said, less piquant than Mr. Cooper's, but it is more natural. We have no examples of a clown who in general tells nonsense and murders the King's English, suddenly bursting into a strain of eloquence, when the writer has something pretty to say, and no other mouth to put it into. Dr. Bird rather falls into the opposite extreme, and is so careful to keep the dramatic personae from talking out of character, that he sometimes annoys his hearers with their vulgarity. We recollect nothing witty, nothing striking, nothing to stir the blood from the lips of any speaker, but we are fully requited by the perfect fitness of the language of each to his own proper character.

If there were more dialogue than there is, this would be a hard fight, but there is none but what is necessary to the story, and this moves along with too much rapidity to allow the reader leisure to be weary. But it is time we should give an abridgment of the story.

Major Roland Forrester was a soldier of merit in Braddock's war. He was the eldest son and heir at law, of a man of large fortune, who also left two younger sons. On the breaking out of the Revolution the elder brother sided with the crown, while his particular younger brothers took the part of the colonies, much to the annoyance of the Major, who, though a childless bachelor, determined to disinherit them. In this mood he made a will leaving his vast estates to his steward and factotum Richard Braxley, in trust, for a natural daughter, who had been obscurely placed with foster-parents among the mountains. Not long afterwards, the younger brothers were both killed in battle, the one leaving a son, named after his uncle the Major, and the other a daughter named Edith. These are our hero and heroine.

The death of his brothers softened the old man's heart. He took their children home and made a will in their favor. This he did the more readily, because he had not long before learned that the estate of Atkinson, the peasant, who had the care of his natural daughter, was burned to the ground, and that she (a little girl) had perished in the flames. But soon after, young Roland, who had attained the age of seventeen, left his uncle's house and took up arms in defense of the colonies. This step renewed the old man's wrath so far as even to abate his kindness to his unoffending niece. But still there was no reason to fear that he would carry his displeasure so far as to disinherit her. But his death, which happened about the close of the war, when Roland was twenty-two years of age and Edith seventeen, threw her upon the world a penniless orphan. It then appeared that his last will had been destroyed, leaving the other in full force. This, indeed, seemed to be of no consequence, as his daughter was supposed to be dead. Braxley, however, entered on the estate as trustee, declaring that it had been lately ascertained that the girl was alive, having been carried off to Kentucky by her foster father. As he was not without the means of convincing young Roland of the truth of this story, his authority over the property was not disputed. In this destitute condition poor Edith was left without a friend in the world, except an aunt who was residing at the falls of Ohio, where Louisville now stands. In her house a refuge was offered to the unfortunate girl, and thither she determined to go, accompanied by her cousin, who determined to push his fortune in the same country.

The action of the story commences on their arrival at a place called Bruce's Station, on the waters of Salt River, and not far south of Kentucky River. Here the caravan which they accompanied, and especially Roland and his cousin, were received with great kindness by the commodant of the post, who had been a soldier in Braddock's war under the old Major. Their purpose was to continue their journey next morning to the falls of Ohio, but this was prevented by an accident which detained the young people until noon, and several hours after their party had gone. They then set out and fell into the hands of a party of Shawnees, Roland is rescued the same night by the Jibbenainosay, and the other party taken prisoner and carried off. But pursuit is made, and they are on the point of being rescued, when the whites, seized with a sudden panic, take to their heels, and leave them to their fate. A portion of the spoil and prisoners now takes place, and the young man is allotted to an old Piankeshaw chief, who with two followers makes a party of the hostile band. By these, he is carried off in one direction, while his cousin is borne away in another by a party of Shawnees. Roland is rescued the next night by the Jibbenainosay, and the two set out in pursuit of the other party. They trace them to an Indian village beyond the Ohio, where they find the whole population engaged in a debauch to celebrate the return of the war-party. Taking advantage of this circumstance, our adventurers attempt to steal away the girl, and, when nearly successful, are baffled, and taken prisoners. Their doom now appears to be sealed, and all things are made ready for burning them at the stake, when a strong party, under the command of George Rogers Clarke, storms the village, rescues the captives, and destroys the inhabitants. The lovers rush into each other's arms, and all is well.

While this is going on, Roland discovers that his misfortune had been brought about by the machinations of Braxley. It appears that Atkinson, who was his creature and tool, had been, by his means, involved
in criminal causes in Virginia, had fled the country, and taken refuge among the Indians, among whom he had become a chief. Having changed his name, his whereabouts did not come to light until after the death of Braxley. This worthy had sought him out, with a view of making him the instrument of a deep laid scheme, in which he had already been his agent with- out knowing his purposes. The daughter of the Major had been转弯 with Atkinson's cousin. The confusion and his disappearance had been so managed by Braxley, as to induce his patrons to suspect that both had been the work of his brothers. By this means be had no doubts of preventing any reconciliation, and procuring a will in his favor, as the only other available means of making himself acquainted with the movements, ascertained the commencement of Atkinson, and could he identified by him at any time. To place her in the wilderness of obscurity and poverty, was to make himself sure of her hand after her father's death, so that by marrying her he might make the plan a success.

But this scheme had been baffled by the death of the girl, who did not long survive her removal to the wilderness. The old gentleman too, though much incensed with his nephew, had never been totally ex- tricated, and did not receive the will made in favor of him and Edith. This determined Braxley to change his battery and offer his hand to that young lady. In case of success he had nothing to do but to produce the child of Atkinson, and could be identified by him at any time. To place her in the wilderness in obscurity and poverty, was to make himself sure of her hand after her father's death, so that by marrying her he might make the plan a success.

But this scheme had been baffled by the death of the commandant, who had no idea of any enemy in his neighborhood. But they were near enough to know precisely all that passed, so that, in a few hours after the departure of the young people from the fort, they fell into the hands of their enemies.

It is hardly necessary to tell the reader that Braxley was a man possessing many fine points of character. Originally generous and upright, as well as brave and manly, he had been partly led and partly driven into courses which had, in the end, sent him forth a pre- scribed outlaw, and could be identified by him at any time. To place her in the wilderness in obscurity and poverty, was to make himself sure of her hand after her father's death, so that by marrying her he might make the plan a success.

So for he had been successful, having managed to get her into the hands of Colonel Bruce, the kind-hearted com- mandant of the station that bore his name. Here she had grown up, distinguished for her amiable qualities, and displaying an intellect worthy of more improve- ment than the rude society around her afforded. Of her, her father was devotedly fond and enthusiastically proud. He had seen her in the pauses of war, and learned to love her, and to reanimate his love for virtue by the contemplation of it as exhibited in her. But his only child was lost, and from these occasional glimpses of the happiness he had forfeited, he returned to his savage associates, more and more embittered against the society from which he had been banished. In this mood Braxley found him, hating every thing that wore a white skin, and, most of all, hating his seducer and betrayer, and loving no- thing but his daughter. The villain's proposal was therefore promptly and fiercely rejected. But Braxley was not a man to be baffled in the pursuit of his object as long as any road to it was open. Ferile in expedi- ence, and ingenious in wickedness, he now suggests a new scheme more congenial to the character and temper of his old associate, over whom, detected as he was, he still retained much of his power. Such is the effect of habit and intellectual superiority.

By a large bribe, partly paid and partly promised, be engages Atkinson to make a war party of the most ferocious and restless among the several tribes of sav- ages, and at the head of a band of outlaws even from barbarism, to attack the party of Roland on their revi- val. So for he had been successful, having managed to get her into the hands of the outlaw Braxley the suppression of the Indian country the suppressed will, and where to show it to Atkinson? he must be more acute than we profess to be, if he can find an answer to the question. Doctor Bird himself seems sensible of this difficulty, and endeavors, as we think, lamely, to ac- count for it.

So it is, the document is there. Atkinson luckily gets possession of it. His destruction of Braxley, his love for his daughter, and his respect for Roland, who had so conducted himself as to awaken the admiration even of his savage foes, suggest to him a new plan. He hies away to the young man, whom he finds bound and awaiting the return of that day which was to be his last. To his amazement, the proposal is rejected, and the savage rage of the "white Indian" is awakened by the supposed insult. He accordingly leaves the captive to his fate, which is avenged, as we have said, by the un- expected attack of the Kentucky volunteers. In the melee Atkinson is struck down, and an attempt to save
him is made by Roland, which is so far successful that
the assaults of his enemies are arrested. But it is too
late. The fatal blow had been struck, but the unfor-
tunate renegade had retained sufficient consciousness
to be aware of the generous interferences of his late
victim, and finds comfort, in his last moments, in doing
him an act of justice, and giving up the suppressed will.

In our abstract of this story, we find that we have
unconsciously divided it into two parts, which may be
distinguished as the physical and the moral action of the
piece.

The first, of course, has the usual and indispensable
accompaniments of war and blood and slaughter,—
enough, from the nature of the case, to satisfy a taste
which we have outlived by some twenty years or more.
But as it was once our own, we know that it exists,
and can make no objection to its indulgence by others.

The writer who spreads a feast for the public, is bound
to supply something palatable to all his guests, and, so
long as we find what we like, we have no right to com-
plain that others are accommodated too. We are bound
too to admit, that his desire to gratify that class of
readers has not led him (always excepting the exploits
of his “nothing spirit”) into any of the extravagances,
which so often catch the applause of the vulgar. The
battle between the Indians and their pursuers on the
bank of Salt River, which ends in the defeat of the
latter, is more graphic, more distinct, more true to the
life, than any thing of the sort that we remember to
have seen. Other occurrences of the same sort are not
so well managed, but still much better than is common.

If the work is in this respect less amusing to those who
enjoy in “gun, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thun-
der,” we can assure them it is far more instructive,
than those pictures of savage warfare which are gar-
nished with more of the “circumstance”—which pro-
perly belongs to combats of a different character.

But we think the reader will agree with us that the
merit of this tale is in its moral. We venture to re-
mind him of our expressed belief, that this cannot be so
told as not to be deeply interesting, and we are willing
that this opinion shall be judged by the impression
made by the perusal of our hasty and insufficient sketch.
If it does not abide this test, we stand condemned.

But there is a merit in this part of the work, of which
that sketch conveys no idea. The characters are true
to nature, and, although not elaborately wrought, are exhi-
bited with that distinctness and individuality which is
the most indispensable merit of all painting, whether
the eye or mind. Roland and Edith are but given in
outline, but they remind us of Retch’s outlines, in
which distinctness and accuracy of drawing stimulate
the imagination to supply all that is wanting of relief
and coloring. The remorseless villany of Braxley, and
the more than Indian savageness of his renegade ac-
complices, blended with the recollection of virtuous prin-
ciples, and the remains of good feelings in the latter,
are so displayed as to fill the reader with embittered
animosity against the one, and to awaken a strange
sort of sympathy and good will for the other. We
breathe more freely when we hear of the death of Brax-
ley. That of Adkinson is witnessed with sorrow and
pain.

The great excellence of Doctor Bird’s sketches of
character is displayed in his representation of the wild
Indian, and the frontier settler, hardly less wild. Fic-
tion has invested these with a sort of poetry, which
has been harped upon, until it is stale and disgusting.
At first there was something quite imposing in the wild
forms of rude virtue and savage dignity, which were
exhibited as pictures drawn from the life. But they
were copied, and the copies of copies have been so mul-
tiplied, that we are as familiar with them as with the
picture of the dusty, the exquisite, the laurel, the real
gentleman, the drapery miss, the humble friend,
the starched maid, the good aunt, or even the lady
herself. We are tired of them, and turn with
pleasure to the more sober and truthful painting of
Doctor Bird, in which these characters are exhibited
with little of the picturesque, and nothing of the grand
or beautiful. He gives them credit for courage, address,
resource, sagacity and craft. But they are neither wise,
philosophers, nor orators. When kind, they are not po-
lite wily, and when resentful, they are fierce and
savage. They make no sage speeches, and utter no
sentiments; and upon the whole, they are dull company,
as any body will find who tries them. Doctor Bird,
accordingly, instead of making them the vehicles for
the expression of his own opinions on all sorts of sub-
jects, gives us no more of their conversation than is
necessary to his story. For this forbearance he has
our approbation and our thanks.

Upon the whole, we think well of this work, and
highly of the writer’s powers. But we cannot leave
him without a slight admonition, which we trust he will
take as from a friend. We speak unwillingly of faults
which time and his own good sense must mend. We
make no doubt that he will soon decide for himself that
“remorseless” is a stronger and more euphonious word
than “unremorseful;” besides being English, which
the other is not. We mention this word as an exam-
ple.

It will point his attention to others of the same
class.

The next time Dr. Bird visits the western country,
he will probably discover that he has somewhat mis-
taken the dialect of the inhabitants. He doubts if he
ever heard, or will hear any man there, say “how-
soever.” Common as this is said to be in England, it
has no place among the Buckskins. “However” is
their word. In general too, their dialect is rather cari-
catured, than truly represented by Doctor Bird; and as
this is the only point in which there is any exaggeration
about the picture, we should wish to see it corrected
in any sketches of the same people which he may
hereafter present to the public.

We think too that there are some incongruities in
the narrative, which the author will himself detect when
he sees them in print. At page 153, of the second
volume, near the bottom, he will see a curious instance
of this. These are faults of haste, which the change
of a word would often correct.

We have but one word to add. We never can con-
sent that any writer of prose, who has got over his
first love fit, by marriage or otherwise, shall call water
“the liquid element!” This again, we give as a specimen;
and respectfully pray that Doctor Bird will leave all
such nick-naming of God’s creatures;* to men, whose
ideas are so common-place as to require to be named
with fantastical language.