

LITERATURE.

THE NEEDLE, PEN, AND SWORD.

BY MRS. L. H. SIGOURNEY.

What hast thou seen, with thy shining eye,
Thou Needle, so subtle and keen?

have lent to Beauty new power to reign
At bridal and courtly hall;
Or, wedded to Fashion, have helped to bind
Those gossamer links that the strongest mind
Have sometimes held in thrall.

have drawn a drop, so round and red,
From the finger so small and white,
Of the startled child, as she strove with care
Her doll to deck with some gewgaw rare,
But wept at my puncture bright.

I have gazed on the mother's patient brow,
As my utmost speed she plied,
To shield from Winter her children dear,
And the knell of midnight smite her ear,
While they slumbered at her side.

I have heard, in the hut of the pining poor,
The shivering inmates' sigh,
When faded the warmth of the last faint brand,
As slow from her cold and clammy hand,
She let me drop—to die!

What dost thou know, thou grey goose Quill?
And methought, with a spasm of pride,
It sprang from the inkstand, and flutter'd in vain,
Its nib to free from the ebon stain,
As it fervently replied:

What do I know!—Let the lover tell,
When into his secret scroll
He poureth the breath of a magic lyre,
And traceth those mystical lines of fire,
That move the maiden's soul.

What do I know!—The wife can say,
As the leaden seasons move,
And over the ocean's wildest sway
A blessed mission doth wend its way,
Inspired by a husband's love.

Do ye doubt my power? Of the statesman ask,
Who buffets Ambition's blast;
Of the convict who shrinks in his cell of care;
A flourish of mine hath sent him there,
And locked his fetters fast;

And a flourish of mine can his prison ope,
From the gallows its victim save;
Break off the treaty that kings have bound,
Make the oath of a nation an empty sound,
And to liberty lead the slave.

Say, what were History, so wise and old,
And Science, that reads the sky,
Or how could Music its sweetness store,
Or Fancy and Fiction their treasures pour,
What were Poetry's heaven-taught lore,
Should the Pen its aid deny?

Or doubt, if ye will, that the rose is fair,
That the planets pursue their way;
Go, question the fires of the noontide sun,
Or the countless streams that to oceans run,
But ask no more what the Pen hath done,
And it scornfully turned away.

What are thy deeds, thou fearful thing
By the lordly warrior's side?
And the Sword answered, stern and slow,
The hearthstone lone, and the orphan know,
And the pale and widowed bride.

The shriek and the shroud of the battle-crowd,
And the field that doth rock below;
The wolf that laps where the gash is red,
And the vulture that tears ere life hath fled,
And the prowling robber that strips the dead,
And the foul hyæna, know.

The rusted plough, and the seed unsown,
And the grass that doth rankly grow
O'er the rolling limb, and the blood-pool dark,
Gaunt Famine, that quenches life's lingering spark,
And the black-winged Pestilence, know.

Death, with the rush of his harpy brood,
Sad Earth, in her pang and throes,
Demons that riot in slaughter and crime,
And the throng of the souls sent before their time
To the bar of the Judgment, know.

Then the terrible Sword to its sheath returned,
While the Needle sped on in peace;
But the Pen traced out, from a Book sublime,
The promise and pledge of that better time
When the warfare of earth shall cease.

THE WILL.

BY ANNA MARIA SARGEANT.

ABOUT the middle of the eighteenth century, Oakwood Hall became by purchase, the property of a gentleman named Willoughby. To the former owner—the last representative of an ancient family, who had dissipated a large fortune in extravagance—the new proprietor was a complete contrast, being parsimonious in the extreme. The halls which had once resounded with merriment were now deserted, except by the swallows and martins, which built their nests in the recesses of the richly-painted windows, and flew at pleasure through the many apertures which were suffered to remain unrepaired.—Instead of the almost princely train of attendants the young marquis had in waiting, the new occupant hired but three domestics—an elderly woman, who performed the duties of housekeeper to the meagre establishment; a man who filled the several offices of butler, footman, and gardener; and his wife, who acted both cook and housemaid. Mr. Willoughby was a bachelor and a valetudinarian, and he had chosen this spot on account of its retirement and the salubrity of the air. The principal part of his life had been spent in India, where he had amassed considerable wealth, but his declining state of health had obliged him to return to his native land. He was one of those characters who may be said to be spoiled by prosperity. Having met unusual success in his own undertakings, he had become ungenerous in his opinions of those to whom fortune had been less kind; and towards his dependents he was exacting, tyrannical, and overbearing. The chief aim of his existence had been to accumulate wealth, but this accomplished, he was incapable of enjoying the blessings it might have purchased. The constant companion of this miserable old man was an orphan niece, the daughter of a deceased brother; and the adoption of this child was the only benevolent act he was ever known to perform. Some gleam of natural affection had warmed his sordid nature when his dying relative had entreated him to succour his friendless and portionless girl; but his subsequent conduct towards her proved that the protection he had for so many years afforded her was purely selfish. When he became the subject of a debilitating disease, no one else would endure his impatience and fretfulness, more especially as domestics were but ill requited for the services they rendered him.—The patience with which this gentle creature endured the ill-humour of her invalid uncle was by many attributed to interested views, it being generally supposed that she was to become his heiress; but such persons wrongly estimated the character of Gertrude Willoughby: her unremitting attentions and meek forbearance sprung from a deep sense of gratitude. Her aged relative had, she said, been a father to her in her utmost need, and she deemed it her duty to repay the debt by fulfilling a daughter's part.

Mr. Willoughby was a bigoted professor of religion, though lamentably deficient in practical piety; and the Rev. Mr. Vivian, the rector of the parish, was the only person who was ever received as a guest at the inhospitable mansion. The young churchman was handsome, talented and accomplished: it was therefore no matter of surprise that he should make an impression on the warm and susceptible heart, of its fair inmate. From the hour when she was bereft of her natural protector, she had never till now met with a congenial mind.—The attachment was mutual; and she was too little versed in the cold policy of the world, to take at once into consideration that her uncle might object to the union. Though Mr. Vivian was without personal property, he thought that as his family was unexceptionable, and were likely to gain him permanent, there could be no reasonable objections to the match. He calculated also on the favour with which the old man had hitherto regarded him. But love and the sanguine spirit of youth had deceived him; for no sooner did he propose himself as a suitor for the young lady, than her uncle, in a fit of ungovernable rage, peremptorily ordered him to quit the house, and never more to enter it.—To the sordid heart of Willoughby all appeal was useless. It was his determination that if his niece ever married, it should be some wealthy person; and he was, moreover, too dependent upon her for his daily comforts, to make a sacrifice for her happiness. The unfortunate girl had therefore to endure an augmentation of spleen for what he termed the rector's temerity and her ingratitude.

Gertrude now found her position almost insupportable. A sense of duty had hitherto, chained her to the sick couch of her relative; but now that he had acted so unkind a part, she began to question if any moral obligation really bound her to devote her life to his service. Her lover, meanwhile, importunately urged his suit by letters sent through the medium of one of the domestics. He could not but be aware that any step taken by Miss Willoughby against the wishes of her uncle would probably deprive her of his fortune; but he was too sincerely attached to her to allow any mercenary considerations to influence his conduct. He pleaded that his living was sufficient to provide them with all the comforts of life: its luxuries, he said, neither of them desired. The result of this correspondence was, that after a brief period of hesitation, Gertrude voluntarily left the Hall to become the wife of the young churchman, and mistress of the humble parsonage.—The rage of the old man at the desertion of his niece knew no bounds, and operated so powerfully upon his

health, that he became a more confirmed invalid than before.

I must now introduce a new, but not unimportant personage, to the reader: this was Mary, or, as she was usually termed, Molly Hawkins, the housekeeper at the Hall. Strange stories were whispered in the cottages concerning this woman's early history; but all that was really known of her was, that she came with her daughter, then a young woman of two or three-and-twenty, to reside in the village, a few months prior to the purchase of the estate by Mr. Willoughby, and that she was immediately engaged in his establishment.—The powerful influence she appeared to have over a man who would permit no one else to oppose his wishes, was a matter of surprise. That influence had not been exerted to promote the interests of her master's protégé; and now that she had given him some grounds of complaint, she failed not to do her utmost to aggravate her young mistress's offence. So completely did her plan of separating the uncle and niece succeed, that the old man positively refused every solicitation made by Gertrude to be admitted again to his presence, though she had afterwards reason to believe that the letters containing these appeals had been intercepted by the wily attendant, who, now that Willoughby was wholly confined to his chamber, seldom quitted his side for an hour.

The continued displeasure of her relative was the only barrier to the young wife's happiness: for she entered on her new duties with delight, and fulfilled them in a manner which reflected the highest credit upon her character. Hers were the quiet unobtrusive virtues which shine most conspicuously within the hallowed circle of home; but as mistress of the rectory, she had a far wider sphere of usefulness than when the humble dependent of the niggardly master of the Hall. Her liberal hand was now open to relieve the temporal wants of her husband's poor parishioners, and she was no less willing to co-operate in administering to their spiritual necessities. How much good may be accomplished through the instrumentality of a pious and amiable woman, who devotes her days to offices of charity, the records of eternity will alone unfold!

Many years glided on thus tranquilly, when an incident occurred which effected an unlooked-for change in the rector's family.

The parsonage-house was situated on an eminence commanding an extensive view of the surrounding country; the Hall was, however, only discernible from the window of one of the chambers. When Gertrude first became an inmate of the dwelling, she was wont to visit this apartment, that she might cast a glance towards her late abode. Long association had made her uncle more dear to her than she had herself deemed possible; but as year after year passed, and he took not the slightest notice of her, all hopes of a reconciliation ceased. It was the evening of the seventh anniversary of her wedding-day; she was now the mother of a little fairy, who made her home even more happy than heretofore. She felt, however, on this occasion some renewed yearnings of affection towards the protector of her helpless youth, and she escaped from her cheerful fireside, and the more than usually gay circle which were gathered there, to spend a few minutes in meditation at the little casement. The night was dark, and she could not discern the mansion, but she fixed her eyes in the direction, and called down a blessing on the head of its occupant. A sudden blaze of light here attracted her attention, and curiosity was changed to alarm when she observed that it increased in magnitude. 'The Hall is on fire!—the Hall is on fire!' she shrieked forth; and her cry brought her husband and children to the spot. Her surmise was too true: some combustible matter had by accident ignited in the servants' offices, and the left wing of the building was enveloped in flame and smoke.

Unpopular as Mr. Willoughby's parsimonious spirit had made him amongst the villagers, they, for the sake of his amiable niece, were not slow in rendering assistance. The man-servant came running to solicit it just as Mr. Vivian was summoning them to the duty. The devastating element in the meantime destroyed nearly the whole of the wing; and the miserable old man, who was lying totally helpless in one of the chambers, was with difficulty conveyed by his two female domestics to a cottage in the vicinity. Here Gertrude and her husband found him in a state of terror which had almost bereft him of reason. The meeting was affecting in the extreme. Seven years had elapsed since they had seen each other, and those years had wrought a great change in the aspect of the invalid. He appeared more like some ghastly spectre than a living being. He survived the shock but a few days, and the only sane sentences he was heard to utter were violent self-accusations for having wronged his innocent niece.

These observations naturally led Mrs. Vivian to suppose that the property had been willed away from her. Great, therefore, was her surprise, when, in a deed-box which had escaped the fire, a will, duly signed and sealed, was found, making her his sole heiress. This document bore the date of the year in which the testator had taken up his residence at the Hall.

It is here necessary to state, that after assisting her fellow-servant in conveying her master from the flaming mansion, Molly Hawkins had been seized with a fit of paralysis, which deprived her of speech and consciousness. She lay for some weeks in the cottage of her daughter, who was now married to a labourer, and still