



THE WILLOW, POPPY, AND VIOLET.

BY MRS. SIGOURNEY.

A child held in his hand a slight leafless bough. It was like a supple green wand. But it had been newly cut from the parent stock, and life stirred in its little heart.

He sought out a sheltered spot, and planted it in the moist earth. Often did he visit it; and when the rains of summer were withheld he watered it, at the cool sunset.

The sap, which is the blood of plants, began to flow freely through its tender vessels. A tiny root, like a thread, crept downward, and around the head was a bursting forth of faint green leaves.

Seasons passed over it, and it became a tree. Its slender branches drooped downward to the earth. The cheering sun smiled upon them; the happy birds sang to them; but they drooped still.

"Tree, why art thou always so sad and drooping? Am not I kind unto thee?" But it answered not; only, as it grew on, it drooped lower and lower; for it was a weeping willow.

The boy cast seed into the soft garden-mould. When the time of flowers came, a strong budding stalk stood there, with course serrated leaves. Soon a full red poppy came forth, glorying in its gaudy dress. At its feet grew a purple violet, which no hand had planted or cherished.

It lived lovingly with the mosses, and with the frail flowers of the grass,

not counting itself more excellent than they.

"Large poppy, why dost thou spread out thy scarlet robe so widely, and drink up all the sunbeams from my lowly violet?"

But the flaunting flower replied not to him who planted it. It even seemed to open its rich mantle still more broadly, as though it would have stifled its humble neighbour. Yet nothing hindered the fragrance of the meek violet.

The little child was troubled; and at the hour of sleep he spake to his mother of the tree that continually wept, and of the plant that overshadowed its neighbour. So she took him on her knee, and spoke so tenderly in his ear, that he remembered her words when he became a man.

"There are some who, like the willow, are weepers all their lives long, though they dwell in pleasant places, and the fair skies shine upon them in love. And there are others, who, like the poppy that thou reprovest, are proud at heart, and despise the humble, whom God regardeth.

"Be not thou not like them my gentle child; but keep ever in thy breast the sweet spirit of the lowly violet, that thou mayest come at last to that blessed place which pride cannot enter, and where the sound of weeping is unknown.

NEVER STRIKE BACK.

That is, never render evil for evil. Some boys give eye for eye, tooth for tooth, blow for blow, kick for kick.—Awful! Little boys, hark! What says Solomon? "Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringing forth strife." "Recompence to no man evil for evil; but overcome evil with good." "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you."