

THE SAILOR'S RETURN.

(Translated from Mme. Desbordes-Valmore.)

"Ho! Children have your piercing eyes
Between the billows and the skies
Marked a white sail that neared the land?
Is cloth was woven by my hand;
And, if the truth from dreams I learn,
Ere winter comes, it will return."

"Yes! while we watched the tempest's shock
But lately from a barren rock,
We marked a sail, bereft of mast,
Hurl'd thither by the angry blast."

"Ho! sailors' bairns," the maiden cried,
"Whose fathers on the ocean ride.
Shout, for your cries may pierce the gale,
And reach the pilot of some sail:
When the red lightning lit the sky,
Saw ye our tricolor on high?"

"No! from yon foreland bleak and bare,
Our eyes distinguish'd in the glare
A wreck that plunged across the seas,
With one who prayed upon his knees."

"Faithful and true, 'tis he! 'tis he!
Thus in my dreams he seem'd to be,
Run, children, quickly to the shore,
Make sure 'tis he, come back once more.
Blinded with tears, I fear mine eyes
Will see him—only in the skies."

"Alas! the thunderbolt that crushed,
His body on the rocks has dash'd;
Perchance, it still retains some breath,
Come! let us soothe the hour of death."

The children sped—but strove in vain
To wake the corpse to life again.
'Twas he: they call'd his promised bride:
She, kneeling by her lover's side,
Kiss'd on his hand, now stiff and cold,
Her gift, their bond, a ring of gold.

How calmly now they sleep at last,
Serenely shelter'd from the blast!
No storms hereafter they will brave,
Dead—but united in the grave.

GEO. MURRAY.

Contributions.

THE LITERATURE OF THE DAY.

The man is dead who said, "Let me make the songs of a country, and I care not who makes its laws." Had he lived now he would assuredly have thought we were in a bad way. There is plenty of law. Over-legislation is gradually eating away those "glorious charters" to the key-note of which so many national songs were pitched. We are all in danger of falling into gross hypocrisy and a condition of immorality, the usual result of strenuous efforts to make mankind virtuous by Act of Parliament. And our songs? It is best to say at once that we have none that take the place of what were once known as ballads. If we once acknowledge that there is anything to take their place, we should bow our heads in shame before

the window of every music publisher. There still remain on the barrels of a few street-organs primitive tunes, which suggest to some of us words which, if their rhythm was faulty, still had a patriotic flash; or, if their poetry was defective, at least, expressed a tender sentiment. They have been superseded by utterly vulgar inanity, where there is not the slightest effort to observe more than even the poorest semblance of rhyme, while the meaning is confined to a jargon of slang.

If we turn to the current fictional literature, we find conditions not altogether dissimilar. There is no abatement in the publication of novels, intended to supply the increasing demand of languid readers for a new sensation. The supply is almost boundless. Idle women, who hear of great successes, and think they have some faculty for story-telling, are suddenly touched with ambition to make a reputation. They have stored their minds with most of the previous romances of bigamy, adultery, cruelty, and secret murder, which are likely to furnish hints for a new plot, (which means bigamy, adultery, cruelty, and secret murder, in rather different relations), and straightway they dash into a volume, with a determination not to stand particular about composition, or to trouble themselves unduly with parts of speech. If the authoress belongs to the "superior class," or is a lady by right, she often affects a story about her humbler fellow-creatures, and revels in depicting scenes of low-life, of which she is as ignorant as she is of the domestic economy of Timbuctoo. Should she belong to the middle-class, or to that section of the middle-class, which is on the edge of "Society," and always appears painfully anxious to shuffle a little further into the enchanted ground, she will have nothing to do (except incidentally) with any character below a curate, but gives us a picture of the aristocracy in all its enviable infamy. There are shoals of such books published every year.

Amidst such a stupendous issue of trash, it cannot be wondered at that sound and healthy fiction, the result of patient work and conscientious study, is often unnoticed. All depends upon the accidental companionship of a new book. Some of our few good modern novels have fallen almost dead, blighted by the feverish demand for a story of the foul or fleshly school of fiction which has been issued at the same time, or for the subtle animalism which distinguishes the books of certain popular authoresses, of whom it is most charitable to think that they are unable, even faintly, to realize the full meaning of their licentious suggestions and their bold indulgence in the language of lust. There is no need to specify even the latest examples of this "fleshly school," which is more dangerous, because more insidious, than the coarser animalism and more obvious vice-painting of the novels of the Georgian era. Every family which reads indiscriminately the "new novels," must have had many volumes which any decently sensitive father would be shocked to place in his daughter's hands, which any delicate-minded husband would send out of the reach of a young and modest wife, which no gentleman should suffer to contaminate a lady in whose mental purity he thoroughly believed.