



THE GALAPAGAS TORTOISES.

SWEET WILLIAM,
OR THE CASTLE OF MOUNT ST. MICHAEL.

By Marguerite Bouvet.

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

Cruel as was Duke William, he was still human enough to feel the power of a loving and innocent child, the more so because this child was his own, and the only living being from whom he could claim any affection. There comes a time in every one's life, no matter how unloving and unlovable one may be, when there springs up in the heart a great and unexpected love that is worth more than all the hopes and ambitions of a lifetime. That time had come for Duke William. He did not feel this all at once; indeed it was many months before he realized what a strong hold Constance was taking each day upon his heart. At first he had enjoyed the childless intrepidity with which she always spoke to him, admired her quaint speeches, and been much amused by her arguments with him. No one ever argued with my lord at Mount St. Michael, or disputed his word, and he found it rather a pleasing novelty. He took especial delight in pretending to be converted to some of her views—which he found somewhat curious at times—after a long and stormy discussion, and he nearly always ended by granting her whatever she wished, no matter how eccentric or impossible her wishes might be. He was a man who loved his power more than anything else in the world, and who rarely missed a chance of showing it. He liked to think that through him a little child could rule a whole people, and in that thought he forgot that she was ruling him with the rest. It would have been a fearful thing for the people of Mount St. Michael had Constance been anything but the kind-hearted and loving child she was; for her father would as willingly have indulged her in cruel and thoughtless wishes as he did in her more amiable ones.

But a single wicked person in one family

is quite enough; and Constance seemed to have inherited none of the faults which might have been expected. She was an object of love and admiration to every one at the castle. Although she was always the "Lady Constance," and her little word was law, she had a gentle, winning way of making herself obeyed, which made everybody happy to serve her. Her good nurse, Lasette, who had been with her from her cradle, and who had striven to train her childish heart to kind and unselfish thoughts, felt, when she saw the pretty child engaged in some good work for the poor little Normans of the village, and heard her pitying their hard and unhappy lot, that her efforts had not been in vain, and that some day, perhaps, the little Constance would be the means of righting the great wrongs that were done at Mount St. Michael.

In time, Duke William found no society so agreeable to him as that of his little daughter. His visits to the castle became more frequent, and his sojourns longer. He never ceased to enjoy, and indeed to marvel at, her unrestrained and childlike fondness for him. He did not understand that some people are made to love and to be loved, and that few can resist the hidden power of such natures; that a child like Constance could see no evil in others, but could rather love and magnify the little good that was in them. As for my lady, she liked nothing so well as to sit on my lord's knee and listen to the glowing accounts of the last foray, while the great fire crackled up the tall chimney, and the blazing logs lit up the darkness of the stately hall of the castle. She always kept her love for fierce and unruly people; and as his noble lordship thought it unnecessary to inform her of all the wrong and injustice he was guilty of when off on these expeditions, she also kept her admiration for him and his great power, and grieved often that she was "only a little maid," and could never join him in all the wonderful sports.

And then my lord would sigh bitterly and think of the little boy in the tower,

and wonder why that child whom he hated should have been a boy.

"If I had a son like Constance," he would say to himself, "I should be a happy man."

But he did not deserve to be a happy man, when he was the cause of so much unhappiness to others; and he never was.

Constance did not feel the disappointment so keenly. She found much consolation in her dear Roncesvalles and the favorite hounds, and in flying her pet hawk. Whenever she could she accompanied her father in his hunts to the great forest; and indeed she had a great many more amusements than the little girls of those days were wont to have. And as she knew nothing of the little boy in the Great Tower and had never done any but kind and lovely deeds all her life, she was a very happy little girl.

It was not long before Duke William was again called away to fight for the glory of his king and his country; for in those troublous and ambitious times the noble gentlemen of Europe were seldom idle in that respect. But for some reason his lordship left Mount St. Michael this time with more reluctance than he had ever done. He did not like to confess, even to himself, that a little girl with a sweet, dimpled face and laughing blue eyes had alone been the means of keeping him at Mount St. Michael so long. Like all men with hard and unloving natures, he considered it an unmanly weakness to show love for any one. Still, he could not well help, and could scarcely account for, the strange new feeling he entertained for Constance. He excused himself, however, by saying that he was growing old, and that the pleasure of warfare was beginning to lose some of its charm for him; and that before many years more, the fireside at Mount St. Michael and Constance would be his best companions.

As he took leave of the pretty child, who clung to him, and wept with undisguised sorrow at parting from him, it suddenly came over him that, after all, she was the dearest thing in the world to him. No one had ever loved him so, nor ever trusted him as she did—not even the gentle being who had been his but a few short months. His hard heart melted for a moment. What if he fell, and should never see her again? In a burst of feeling he caught the little girl up in his arms and kissed her, and looked at her, murmuring almost fondly,—

"How fair she is, my little daughter, my Constance!"

And then, turning to the trusty Francis, he spoke in a voice that no one had ever heard before.

"My good friend," said he, "I leave the Lady Constance in your keeping. When I am hence, remember she rules Mount St. Michael and Normandy. In doing her bidding, you are doing mine."

These were strange words from his Grace the Duke of Normandy. Francis could scarcely recall having ever been spoken to before as my lord's "good friend," or having ever received such pleasing and amiable orders. But Francis was a wise man; and though he knew it would hardly be safe for him to disregard my lord's injunction, he could not help thinking, knowing Constance as well as he did, that my lady's views and her father's were vastly different on some points. But he promised, as he always did, to be her faithful servant, inwardly rejoicing that Constance had a good and loving little heart, and feeling sure that her wishes would be none but pleasant and easy ones to execute.

But here the good Francis was mistaken, as he fully realized some weeks later, when my Lady Constance asserted her power at Mount St. Michael in such a way that for a time he was greatly puzzled in his own mind as to which was the harder task—to obey my lord, or to disobey my lady.

CHAPTER V.—A CHILD'S VICTORY.

It was full midsummer. The air was sweet with the breath of the wild honeysuckle, and the fields were white and yellow with daisies. The tall trees swung softly beneath a clear blue sky; and an air of warmth and quiet, that should have made all things happy, rested upon Mount St. Michael. My Lady Constance was returning from a joyous canter among the hills with Roncesvalles. Her fresh cheeks were blooming with health and color, and her

bright eyes glowing with strange excitement.

"O dear nurse," she cried in a distressed little voice, and throwing herself into Lasette's arms, "you cannot think what a dreadful thing I have just seen! Francis, dear, good Francis, is doing such a wicked thing!"

"What is it, sweet?" asked the nurse; "what is the good Francis doing to make my little lady look so rosy?"

"I could not reach them in time, dear Lasette. Roncesvalles was lazy and slow for the first time in his life; but I saw them as they left the court-yard through the great western gate. They were going to the Left Tower, with two noble-looking gentlemen who were bound hand and foot; and there was a sweet lady with them, with a babe in her arms, who wept and called out to them. But Francis would not listen, and he closed the gates upon her. And now he is letting them take those noble gentlemen to the great black dungeon, where they must starve and die, the lady says. O nurse, you should see the sweet babe! It is cruel to take away its father; and Francis must not do it, must he? I shall tell him he must not." And the pretty child's eyes ran over with tears as she thought of this needless suffering.

"My Constance, perhaps there is some good reason why those gentlemen should be taken to the tower," said Nurse Lasette soothingly, though she herself heaved a sigh and doubted her own words.

"A good reason for making people so unhappy, good nurse! I cannot think of one."

"You are still a very little girl, dear love, and you may not understand. Tell me, how came you to know all this?"

"I saw the lady as I was crossing the court-yard, and spoke with her; and she told me that her husband and her brother were prisoners sent to Mount St. Michael to be shut up in a dungeon and die. What are prisoners, Lasette?"

"Unhappy ones who are deprived of all their freedom, and who are watched and kept in some dreary place where neither love nor comfort is."

"And must they always die?"

"Not always; though they often wish they might."

(To be Continued.)

THE GALAPAGAS TORTOISES.

If the visitor to the Central Park menagerie will pass into the house behind the lion quarters, and walking past the stalls where the graceful antelopes of South Africa, the pretty gemsbok (*Oryx Gazella*), are confined, look over the last bin on the right hand side, he will see a group of interesting objects—the Galapagos tortoises. If the temperature, the character of the day, and their own dispositions are in accord, he will find them taking some interest in their surroundings, and may be able to observe their stiff and strained attitudes, their inane, staring eyes, their gaunt, wrinkled necks, and the comical protusion of their legs. But if it is dark, or the surfeit of a late dinner has thrown them into post-prandial reflections, he will observe nothing but a bundle of dirty brown box-like humps, which are marked on their outer surface by a series of sculptured and raised ridges, while dimly seen within the gaping edges of their front and back margins, the folded limbs and withdrawn somnolent heads of their inmates are provokingly descried, motionless and torpid. These lumps of bone have, however, to the naturalist a great interest. They have been brought from that remarkable group of islands which lie some seven hundred miles from the west coast of South America, opposite Ecuador, beneath the equator, and belong to a fauna which, from its remote and insular position, has assumed an indigenous and unique character. Indeed the Galapagos Islands have received their name from these large tortoises. The name Galapagos alludes to them, which is seen more clearly in the German translation, *Schildkrotteninseln*, and in the French *Iles des Tortues*, both designations being literally the islands of the tortoises. Chas. Darwin has devoted a chapter in his "Voyage of the Beagle" to a description of these curious reptiles, and they have been made the subject of many sketches by the chance tourists or wandering visitors of this remote region. Dr. A. Gunther also