

The Sweetest Songs.

BY CORA C. BASS.

The sweetest songs are left unstrung
The sweetest themes unread;
The sweetest chords are left unstrung,
The sweetest words unsaid.
How strange it is, and yet how true,
Surpassing mortal ken,
We still can catch a blessed view
Of thought and times and men.

Though brightest paths remain unknown,
And few the heights we tread;
Though we must struggle on alone,
With deepest tears unshed;
Although our hearts are anguish-wrung,
And every effort pain,
If we can keep another young,
We have not lived in vain.

'Tis said the fairest buds decay;
Perhaps they do, and yet,
Upon the darkest, duldest way,
How many flowers are met!
The happy hours so quickly flee,
We sigh to see them go,
When out upon life's troubled sea,
The moments move so slow.

Shall sweetest songs be left unstrung?
The sweetest themes unread?
The sweetest chords be left unstrung?
The sweetest words unsaid?
When we have but to do our best,
The very best we can,
To have the future richly blest
Of God and truth and man.

—New York Observer.

IN THE CUIRASS.

HOW GLADSTONE'S FIGHTING ANCESTORS
FIRST WENT TO WAR.

I.

"When I was a boy," said William Ewart Gladstone in one of his speeches, "I was particularly proud of a certain youthful ancestor of mine, who ran away from home to fight at the battle of Neville's Cross. The manner in which he eluded parental vigilance and escaped to the wars does as much credit to his ingenuity as to his courage." (Speech of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone to the pupils, Chester schools, 1886.)

The writer has been at some pains to discover who this particular ancestor was, and has finally succeeded in identifying him as William Gledstones (such was the ancient form of the Gladstone family name), who dwelt at Manitowe on the Scottish borders, where his father held lands from the first Earl of Douglas. No book has ever been published on the former William Gladstone, but through the courtesy of Miss Florence Gladstone and of Sir William Fraser, author of "The Douglas Book," enough family and local tradition has been gathered to make plain the story of this remarkable boy.

For Will Gledstones was only a boy when in 1346 his father, Gledstones of Manitowe, was called upon by their overlord, Earl Douglas, to march against the English.

Now little Will was very anxious to go forth by his father's side and fight in the Scottish army; but, as the boy was of small size and slender stature, the old laird of Manitowe decided that it was far better for him to wait a while before exposing himself to the English spears. Battle to a knight's son in those days meant very much the same as a successful entry into college does to a boy in our time. So Will Gledstones was bitterly disappointed when his rough but loving parent said that it was better for him to postpone his entry into the ranks of war.

But little Will, like his illustrious descendant, the ex-Premier of England, was not of the kind that can easily be turned aside. In his lonely little room, high up in one of the turrets of Manitowe Peel, he set about thinking of some way in which he could elude his father's vigilance and go to the wars in spite of all. But for a long time no idea occurred to him, and it seemed as though he must remain behind after all, when the Gledstones forces marched across the border.

II.

Now it happened that King David II. of Scotland, desiring to conciliate Earl Douglas, had commissioned Gledstones of Manitowe to present to that famous warrior a superb cuirass of polished Miknese armour. This gorgeous piece of ironwork arrived at Manitowe on the day before Gledstones' troop began its march.

Little Will Gledstones was eager to examine this cuirass, and during the night preceding the departure of his father he crept down the winding stair of the castle and stole on tiptoe into the

armoury. There in the moonlight lay the armour. It was an enormous cuirass—for the Douglas was a giant in size, so large indeed that a small boy like Will Gledstones would have no difficulty in bestowing himself comfortably in its leather-lined interior.

Hearing his father's steps on the stairs, Will hastily crawled into the cuirass to escape the parental displeasure. Hardly was he esconced in this novel hiding place when the old laird sounded his bugle, and bade his merry men make ready. Warned by a dream, he had resolved to set out under cover of darkness instead of waiting until morning.

Afraid to stir, Will Gledstones heard the men-at-arms bustling about the armoury, and presently a horse-hide was wrapped about the cuirass intended for Earl Douglas, and the king's gift (with the boy still crouched inside) was lifted from its place and deposited in one of the waggons which was to accompany the forces. Little Will, finding himself thus trapped, felt rather pleased than otherwise. To cry out at that juncture would brand him as a coward, and (so he argued) his father, while he might pardon him for disobedience in going to the wars, would never forgive him for crying craven.

Drawing his dagger from his belt, the boy succeeded in cutting a deep gash in the horse-hide. By this means he admitted sufficient air into the interior of the cuirass to save himself from suffocation.

III.

When the laird of Manitowe reached his over-lord's camp, near Hawick, he



"IN THIS GRACELESS BRAT YOU BEHOLD MY OWN SON."

ordered the horse-hide removed from King David's splendid present. What was the astonishment of Earl Douglas, the entire army, and of the laird in particular, when there stepped out of the armour a small boy—no other, indeed, than young Will Gledstones.

"My lord," cried Will's father to the Douglas, who stood smiling at this strange scene, "in this graceless brat you behold my own son. For weeks he has pestered me for leave to come to the wars, but I have ever said him nay."

"And now," put in the Earl, "he hath cleverly outwitted you and come in spite of your prohibition."

"But he shall instantly be sent back—"

"Nay, nay, old friend. You cannot send him back. Surely you forget that this cuirass and all its contents have just been presented to me in the king's name. I claim this lad as I claim the cuirass. Let him be my page and fight by my side."

The laird threw up his mailed hands in mock despair.

"Have your way, my lord," he exclaimed. "Let the young scamp fight the English, since he came in Douglas' cuirass to do so."

So Will Gledstones fought at Neville's Cross after all, and a stout little warrior he proved.

People who know the stout-hearted "grand old man" of England will find it easy to trace in this historic episode the source of the strength of character and purpose which has made William Ewart Gladstone a leader among men and a controlling power in the great nation of which he is so influential a member. But how much greater was the Grand Old Man, who never swung a sword, than his fighting ancestor!

THE FOURTH SWORD.

At the coronation of Edward VI. of England, when the three swords for the three kingdoms were brought to be borne before him, the king observed that one thing was yet wanting, and he called for the Bible. "That," he said, "is the sword of the Spirit, and ought, in all right, to govern us, who use these for the people's safety by God's appointment. Without that sword we are nothing; we can do nothing. From that we are what we are to this day . . . we receive whatsoever it is that we at this present do assume. Under that we ought to live, to fight, to govern the people, and to perform all our affairs. From that alone we obtain all power, virtue, grace, salvation, and whatsoever we have of Divine strength."

GRACE, GRIT AND GUMPTION.

"I think he has grace," said a father concerning a son who was sitting for the ministry; "whether he has grit and gumption remains to be proved." That was a wise and witty father, at all events, whatever the son may prove to be, for he hit at once upon the three most important requisites of a successful minister, or, for that matter, the most important elements of success in any other walk in life.

That is about the order in which the triumvirate should stand. At least, grace should come first. That gives us the Christian gentleman, the honest man of business, the faithful friend. Then, if grit is added, we have persistence, "stick-to-itiveness," that will secure good scholarship, and, in time, success

in business and triumph over difficulties in the end, while, if "gumption," or, in other words, tact combined with good judgment, is added, little is left to be desired. Many a man fails for lack of grit and still more woefully for lack of gumption. The young man who has a fair share of all three is well equipped, even though genius and talent were both left out of his make-up. If it did not savour of current slang we should say of such a young man, "He's all right." With these three qualities of mind and heart he cannot fail of success.

BLACK BREAD.

"Sometimes my people, who are mostly from Western Russia," writes a Lutheran pastor, "tell me that they looked healthier, felt better, and were able to resist cold weather more readily and to work harder in Germany, where they had meat perhaps two or three times a week, than they can in this country, where they have meat in abundance. I tell them they had better bread."

"Better bread! Why, it was coarse and dark," they say.

"Yes," I answer, "that is why it was better. Life had not been rolled and bolted out of it."

The "black" or "rye" bread used by peasants in foreign countries, and of which we sometimes speak disparagingly, seems to be much more nourishing than our fine white flour, and hence the puffed peasant has rather the advantage of rich folks in palaces, who have to live on what Dr. Cutler, of Harvard University, calls "the white and foolishly fashionable flour," from which the

"life-sustaining value" has been almost entirely removed, for the sake of whiteness and powdery fineness, a "pretty complexion," as it were. Scientific investigation has demonstrated that life can be indefinitely sustained on the coarse, dark bread of the Italian peasantry, while a dog would starve in forty days on bread made of ordinary white flour.

A BEAUTIFUL CUSTOM.

A private letter from a lady who is spending a year among the peasants of Tyrol says:

"The morning of our arrival we were awakened by the sound of a violin and flutes under the window, and hurrying down we found the little house adorned as for a feast—garlands over the door and wreathing a high chair which was set in state.

"The table was already covered with gifts brought by the young people, whose music we had heard. The whole neighbourhood were kinsfolk, and these gifts came from uncles and cousins in every far-off degree. They were very simple, for the donors are poor—knitted gloves, a shawl, a basket of flowers, jars of fruit, loaves of bread; but upon all some little message of love was planned.

"Is there a bride in this house?" I asked of my landlord.

"Ach, nein!" he said. "We do not make such a pother about our young people. It is the grandmother's birthday."

"The grandmother, in her spectacles, white apron and high velvet cap, was a heroine all day, sitting in state to receive visits, and dealing out slices from sweet loaf to each who came. I could not but remember certain grandmothers at home, just as much loved as she, probably, but whose dull, sad lives were never brightened by any such pleasure as this; and I thought we could learn much from these poor mountaineers."

The Solace, a beautiful boat of the Morgan line, has been fitted up with 500 spring beds and several hundred hammocks, medical and surgical stores, delicate food especially prepared for the sick and wounded, with a lot of surgeons and nurses on board, and will accompany the flying squadron as an angel of mercy. She is painted white and green, the most conspicuous colours, and stands high out of the water, so that she can be seen at a long distance, while at her mastheads float the flags of the Red Cross, which will protect her from all civilized enemies. This is a new idea in warfare. It was never adopted before. In the midst of a battle she will stand by out of danger, but within signalling distance, and when the fighting is over the other ships will deliver to her the wounded to be cared for and the dead to be prepared for burial. If a ship of the enemy is captured or sunk she will offer her merciful hospitality to its officers and crew. The steamer La Grande Duchesse, of the Plant line at Newport News, is to be equipped in a similar manner as rapidly as possible.

THE FARMER'S DOG.

A true story of a farmer's dog, which had been found guilty of obtaining goods under false pretences, was told recently. The animal is extremely fond of biscuits and has been taught by his owner to go after them for himself, carrying a written order in his mouth. Day after day he appeared at the chandler's shop, bringing his master's order; and by-and-bye the shopman became careless about reading the document.

Finally, when settlement day came, the farmer complained that he was charged with more biscuits than he had ordered. The chandler was surprised, and the next time the dog came in with a slip of paper between his teeth he took the trouble to look at it. The paper was blank, and further investigation showed that, whenever the dog felt a craving for a biscuit he looked around for a piece of paper and trotted off to the shop.

Any dishonest contractor, whose wealth accumulates while his work decays, ought to read, with a blush of shame, of a new bridge across the Danube. Pillars of a bridge built at the same place by the Emperor Trajan are to form a part of the structure. The engineers attest the strength of the Roman work under an emperor whose reign began exactly eighteen hundred years ago. To do as the Romans did may sometimes mean a descent to the lowest vices, but it may also signify a noble integrity in building as in being.