



BE GENTLE TO THY MOTHER.

BY G. W. BETHUNE.

Be gentle to thy mother; long she bore
Thine infant fretfulness and silly youth;
Nor rudely scorn the faithful voice that o'er
Thy cradle prayed, and taught thee lisping truth.
Yes, she is old; yet on thy manly brow
She looks, and claims thee as her child e'en now.

Uphold thy mother; close to her warm heart
She carried, fed thee, lulled thee to thy rest;
Then taught thy tottering limbs their untried art,
Exulting in thee fledging from her nest;
And, now her steps are feeble, be her stay,
Whose strength was thine, in thy most feeble day.

Cherish thy mother; brief perchance the time
May be that she will claim the care she gave;
Past are her hopes of youth, her harvest-prime
Of joy on earth; her friends are in the grave;
But for her children, she could lay her head
Gladly to rest among the precious dead.

Be tender to thy mother; words unkind,
Or light neglect from thee, will give a pang
To that fond bosom where thou art enshrined
In love unutterable, more than fang
Of venomous serpent. Wound not her strong trust,
As thou wouldst hope for peace when she is dust!

O mother mine! God grant I ne'er forget,
Whatever be my grief, or what my joy,
The unmeasured, unextinguishable debt
I owe thy love; but find my sweet employ,
Ever through thy remaining days, to be
To thee as faithful as thou wast to me!

THE MILK-WHITE DOVE; OR, LITTLE JACOB'S
TEMPTATION.

WILL you have a story, darling?
I know one, very old,
For when I was a little child
I used to hear it told.
It is about a little boy
And the pigeons which he sold.

His mother, she was very poor,
And kept a rich man's gate;
Until the carriages passed through,
There Jacob had to wait.

Now Jacob was a patient lad,
A loving, faithful son:
Of all the things the rich man had
He wanted only one.

A pigeon with a crested head,
And feathers soft as silk,
With crimson feet and crimson bill,
The rest as white as milk.

He had some pigeons of his own,
He loved them very well;
But then, his mother was so poor,
He reared them all to sell.

He kept them in a little shed
That sloped down from the roof:
Great trouble had he every spring
To make it water-proof.

He used to count them every day,
To see he had them all:
They knew his footstep when he came,
And answered to his call.

And one—a chocolate-colored hen—
Was prettier than the rest,
Because there was a gloss like gold
All round its throat and breast.

You know the little birds in spring
Build houses, where they dwell.
And feed, and rear their little ones,
And love each other well.

So the black pigeons Jacob had
Were mated with the gray;
And crested-crown and ring-neck made
Their nest the first of May.

For God hath made each little bird
To love and need a mate;
And so the little chocolate hen
Was very desolate.

And Jacob thought if he could get
The rich man's milk-white dove,
And keep it always for his own,—
Now, listen to me, love.

He wanted that which was not his;
That which another had;
And so, a great temptation grew
Around the little lad.

The rich man had whole flocks of birds
And Jacob reasoned so:
"If I should take this one white dove,
How can he ever know?"

"Among so many can he miss
The one which I shall take?
Among so many, many birds,
What difference can it make?"

But, darling, even while his heart
Throbbled with these wishes strong,
A something always troubled him—
He knew that it was wrong.

So time passed on, he watched the dove;
How every day it came
Nearer and nearer to the shed,
More gentle and more tame.

He watched it with a longing eye:
At last, one summer day,
He saw it settle on the roof
As if it meant to stay.

Now Jacob seemed a happy boy:
Said he, "It has a right
To choose a dwelling anywhere
Most pleasant in its sight."

And so he scattered grains of corn
And crumbs of wheaten bread,
Because he thought the dove would stay
Where it was kindly fed.

Well, time passed on—the milk-white dove,
Well-pleased with Jacob's care,
Soon learned to know him like the rest,
And seemed right happy there.

One morning he had called them all
Around him to be fed;
And on the ground he scatter'd corn,
And peas, and crumbs of bread;

When, all at once, he heard a man,
Outside the road-gate, call:
"Boy, if these pigeons are for sale,
I think I'll take them all."

All! how it smote on Jacob's ear!
"I see there are but eight;
If you will take eight shillings down,
I'll pay you at that rate."

Now, at that moment, all the birds
Were feeding in the sun,
But Jacob, in his startled heart,
Could think of only one.

And never since the milk-white dove
Had joined the chocolate hen,
Had he felt in his inmost heart
As he was feeling then.

"Come, hurry, hurry!" said the man:
"I have no time to lose;
Between the shillings and the birds
It can't be hard to choose."

Poor Jacob, having once begun
To do what was not right,
Forgetting he was standing in
His heavenly Father's sight,

And knowing how his mother had
A quarter's rent to pay,
Felt, in his heart, the sense of right
Was fading fast away;

When, from the open cottage-door,
There came a murmuring low;
It was his mother's morning hymn,
Solemn, and sweet, and slow.

He listened, and a holy fear
Was awakened in his heart,
And strength was given him that hour
To choose the better part;

And, turning to the stranger man
A frank, untroubled eye,
He said, "But seven birds are mine:
But seven you can buy."

"O," said the man, "they go in pairs,
And will not suit me then;"
So Jacob sold him only six,
And kept the chocolate hen.

And when the evening shadows came,
And dew was on the grass,
He watch'd outside the garden-gate
To see the rich man pass:

And in his hand the milk-white dove
He held with gentle care;
And many a soft caress he laid
Upon its feathers fair.

And when, at last, the rich man came,
Poor Jacob, render'd bold,
By feeling he was in the right,
His artless story told.

And, after he had owned to all
The wrong which he had done,
And the worst wrong he wished to do,
He lifted to the sun

A happy, open, fearless face,
Which won the rich man's love;
And so he bade him always keep
For his the milk-white dove.

And Jacob, once more good and true,
Stood in his mother's sight,
The struggle of temptation past,
The wrong all turned to right.

And Jacob with a heart at rest
Lay down upon his bed;
And whiter wings than his white dove's
Were round his pillow spread.

PRAYER AND PRAISE.

PRAISE and pray
Night and day,
God loves to hear what infants say;
He bows the ear
To children's prayer,
At any hour and everywhere.

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