



A LITTLE lass with golden hair,
A little lass with brown,
A little lass with raven locks,
Went tripping into town.
"I like the golden hair the best!"
"And I prefer the brown!"
"And I the black!"
Three sparrows said—
Three sparrows
Of the town.

Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! an old owl cried,
From the belfry in the town;
"Glad-hearted lassies need not mind
If locks be gold, black, brown!
Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! So fast so fast
The sands of life run down,
And soon, so soon, three white-haired dames
Will totter thro' the town—
Gone then for aye the raven locks,
The golden hair, the brown;
And she will fairest be whose face
Has never worn a frown!"

SWEET WILLIAM,
OR THE CASTLE OF MOUNT ST. MICHAEL.
By Margaret Bowet.

CHAPTER I. (Continued.)

After these pretty speeches, the two young men became fast friends, and really loved each other very much. And how hardly did this go with poor William, who had been years striving to obtain the favor which the King had given to Geoffrey in a single look! His old envy was all alive again in a moment.

"It was always so with that worthless stripling," he thought, his heart full of bitterness. "I shall have no peace while he lives. Let the saints that gave him his womanish graces look to him; he will have need of them if he stand in William of Normandy's way."

It is dreadful to think of all the wicked thoughts that will come into the minds of envious and jealous people. If they could but know how much the indulgence of these vices serves to defeat their own ends, what endless trouble and sorrow and remorse they might spare themselves! But in those days, perhaps even more than now, the world was full of just such men as Duke William—men who cared nothing for the rights of their fellow-creatures when these stood in the way of their ambitions, and in whose eyes even the ties of blood and kinship seemed to have no sacredness.

Geoffrey grew more popular every day, not only with the king, but with all who knew him; for he showed himself as brave in battle as he was gallant at court. Whenever a great victory was won, they had a way of celebrating it by giving splendid banquets, at which the noblemen

drank quantities of wine and sang one another's praises. At these no name was cheered more repeatedly or more lovingly than Geoffrey's, even by the king himself, who took the greatest pride in the valor of his faithful young vassal. And strangely enough, Geoffrey was never spoiled by his good fortune, as men are often apt to be. On the contrary, he grew more and more lovable to every one, except to his brother William, who hated him and envied him his prosperity; and when William heard the king vow once to make Geoffrey the greatest man in all his kingdom, he felt that his brother was his bitterest enemy.

Strange destiny that rules even the will of kings! The young monarch was never called upon to keep his promise. Some months later Geoffrey was slain in battle. In the fulness of youth and vigor he fell, and with only Heaven to witness, by the hand of his own brother.

On that very day, in the old castle on Mount St. Michael, a little child was born to each of the brothers. Two sweet, innocent babes, all unconscious of this great trouble, saw for the first time the light of the big world, and came to take their share of its sorrows and its joys. These were Sweet William and the little Lady Constance

CHAPTER II.—CRUEL COWARDICE.

Dear children, do you ever wonder how there can be so much sin and wrong and suffering in God's world? It is a question that millions of men have pondered. We even ask how, being so infinitely good himself, God can have any knowledge or consciousness of what is so unlike him. But one thing at least we know, and that is that sin is its own destroyer—that it must kill joy and peace and rest before itself

and the people all sorrowing over their beloved Geoffrey, and for his sweet young wife, who would not be comforted, not even with the tender little one in her arms! It seemed as if all the sunshine in the world was for ever hidden behind the dark cloud that now hung over Mount St. Michael.

At last when Duke William had worn himself out with cursing his wretched lot, he roused himself, and called for his trusty servant Francis—a good and faithful man, who knew his master's hard ways and did not approve of them.

"My brother has left a child?" asked the duke, with a wicked light in his eye.

"Yes, my lord," returned Francis.

"That child," muttered Duke William between his teeth—"that child must not grow up before me, do your hear?"

"And I pray, sir, what is your wish?" asked the good servant with fear.

"My wish? You treacherous knave! how dare you ask? Am I like to have that villain's child ever before me burning my very eyes out of their sockets?"

"My lord, my lord," exclaimed Francis, "your brain is maddened with grief. What fear need you have of a weakly babe, scarce out of its mother's arms?"

"I have no fear of the child, fool! I hate it," cried the duke fiercely—"I hate it! To the Tower with it, and let me never look upon its face! In the Tower it shall live, if live it must. Go, and come not again before me till this is done!"

can die; that men must pay for every wrong of heart or brain or hand by cruel and yet merciful suffering, for this is the law of a just Creator.

Duke William met with a share of his punishment, some weeks later, when he returned to Mount St. Michael. His beautiful young wife, of whom he was so proud, and in whom he had cherished so many hopes had died, leaving her little child in the arms of strange women. This dreadful blow Duke William had never dreamed of. He could not believe that he was left alone once more—that the fair young creature, the only being who had ever appealed to his love had been rudely snatched from him by a power greater and stronger than himself. It was a judgment upon him, but it did not bring him to repentance. He had done too many secret wicked things to grow suddenly submissive. On the contrary, his rebellious heart was wild with anger and disappointment, and he raged furiously for several days, so that no one dared go near him; and his servants, who had seen him behave in this way before, knew that some dark trouble was brooding, and they almost hoped that he would starve or fret himself to death. But he did not. Vicious people usually stay to be a plague to every one in this world; but we trust they are left in order to reap some day the fruit of all their misdeeds.

helpless babe. That little child might wear its father's face, might look at him with its father's eyes, might some day know and avenge its father's wrong. He wished it dead; but he could not take its life without exposing himself and his wickedness, and thus drawing suspicion and trouble down upon his own head. He wished the child out of his sight, and yet he dared not let it go beyond his power, lest some time the opportunity might come for doing away with it, and the victim would not be there. There was nothing left him but the Tower, the great dungeon-tower at the farthest point of Mount St. Michael, where more dangerous enemies had languished and at last perished; and he could find no rest till he knew that his brother's child was there, safely out of his way.

And so the sorrowful news was carried to the weeping young mother, not only that her beloved lord was slain, but that her little one—all that she had left of him to love—was to be taken from her and cast into a dungeon.

"And what has my little child done to offend my lord!" cried the poor lady. "O good Mathilde, good Lasette," she said to her women around her, "I do entreat you beg the duke, my brother, to spare me! Take me to him, that I may plead with him, and stay his displeasure!"

But Mathilde, the good nurse who had lived at the castle all her life, and who knew that Duke William never spared or pardoned any one, told her lady how fruitless her efforts would be—that the duke was a hard man; that something must have gone wrong between the two brothers, although no one seemed to know what; and that William was taking his revenge, as he never failed to do. Then she implored the young mother to flee from the duke's anger to leave the castle and return to her own people in France. She promised to love and guard the tender babe, and to watch over it as if it were her own, until help could be brought to them. For the love they all bore Geoffrey, the little one would be saved from harm and made happy by the good castle-folk. And after many tearful promises, the gentle lady was taken away by some faithful Normans, to await in their humble dwelling the ship that would bear her from Mount St. Michael and Normandy for ever.

What the great trouble was no one knew and no one dared to ask; but the news went flying swiftly through the castle that Duke William was very angry with his dead brother, and that Geoffrey's little child was to bear the burden of my lord's wrath. They had loved Geoffrey so much that their brave hearts rebelled at this cowardly deed. They would gladly have disobeyed William, had they dared; but that would have been a dangerous thing, and so they could only hate him more than they had ever done.

And Francis' heart was very heavy that day when he went to the great dungeon, to make ready for the innocent little captive.

"My lord is a cruel master," said he to old Guilbert the tower-keeper. "I would as lief serve the Evil One himself as Duke William in this thing."

"I would rather think of turning the bolts on my own mother than on my lord Geoffrey's helpless babe," returned Guilbert with a sigh.

"The blackest villain could not look upon the tender little lamb without feeling his stony heart melt with love and pity," said Francis. "Would to Heaven the cruel duke had fallen in battle instead of his brother!"

"Do not grieve yourself too much for the babe, Francis. My lord never visits the Great Tower, as you know; and I will see to it that the little one fares as well here as any one at the castle," returned the good Guilbert. "A little plant needs but little water; but it shall have that, if my old bones go to pay for it."

"You're a brave fellow, Guilbert. The Holy Father keep your old bones a little longer! A dungeon is a sorry place for a babe; but it might have fared worse for a keeper."

"Ay, ay," exclaimed Guilbert; "I've known even babes, the greater pity, to fare worse than this one shall."

(To be Continued.)

BEFORE ANY MAN can draw on God for help he must be willing to help others.