

THE LITTLE FOLK.

THE BLUE BIRD.

A glint of blue flits 'neath the sky,
Amid the merry May-time;
A living gem, light-winged and shy,
Enjoying its brief play-time.

Now perched upon an alder spray
That bends beneath its lightness,
It gives unto the dowy day
A soft and sudden brightness.

And from its little throbbing throat,
Comes "Twitter, twitter, twitter!"
A sweet, a swift, a slender note,
But never one that's bitter.

A cheery voice that tells of Spring,
At rosy dawn and after;
The busy Blue bird carolling
A song of love and laughter.

—[A. T. Schuman in May St. Nicholas.]

JOASH.

Among all the stories that we read in the Bible about the Kings of Judah and Israel, there are few more interesting than the story of how little Joash was made king when he was but seven years old.

Poor little fellow! he had a wicked grandfather, Jehoram, who married a daughter of Ahab, King of Israel, and, helped by his bad wife, "wrought that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," and a wicked father, Ahaziah.

Now when Ahaziah was dead, his mother Athaliah determined to rule the kingdom. She worshipped the false god Baal, and she knew that Jehu had killed a great number of his priests and worshippers in Israel, so that unless she could have matters her own way in Judah, very soon there would be no idolaters left. So this wicked woman gave orders that all Ahaziah's sons and nephews should be put to death, in order that there might be none to claim the throne. So for six years she ruled the land, and openly worshipped Baal.

But she did not know that when all the other princes were killed, a little baby son of Ahaziah's had been saved alive. This little child, only a year old, had a brave aunt, Jehoshabeath his father's half-sister, who took him and his nurse and hid him in the bed-chamber. Not in a bedroom such as you sleep in every night, but a room in which the beds were kept. In the East people sleep chiefly on mattresses laid on the floor, which by day are rolled up and put away in a special room. It was among these rolls of bedding that this kind, good woman hid the poor little baby and his nurse.

Jehoshabeath was the wife of Jehoiada, the high priest, and as soon as it was safe she carried little Joash into the Temple, and kept him hidden there. No one but herself and her husband seem to have known who the baby was, and there he was brought up quietly till he was seven years old. Those must have been six sad years for the faithful worshippers of God, for "that wicked woman," Athaliah, as the Bible calls her, had set up a temple to Baal not far off, and her sons had even broken down part of the Temple, and taken sacred things from it for their idol-worship.

But we may gather from the story that the people of Jerusalem did not love Athaliah, and when little Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada thought the time had come to make him king. This good priest got the chief captains of the army to take his side, and he sent for all the Levites from all the cities of Judah, and gathered them together at Jerusalem.

Then he brought out the little king in the sight of them all, and set a crown upon his head, and the Book of the Law in his hand, and anointed him, and cried, "God save the king!"

Does it not remind you of how our own Queen was crowned and anointed, and a Bible given into her hand, while the people shouted in Westminster Abbey? After all these hundreds of years we crown

our kings still, you see, as the Jewish kings were crowned of old. They too are God's anointed.

You can imagine how delighted the people were to see the little king, and how they came running to the Temple, shouting and crying! There was such an uproar that Athaliah herself heard it, and came to see what had happened.

Up to the Temple came that proud, wicked woman, and there, set on a platform in the vast open space, she saw her little grandson, whom she thought was dead, with his crown of gold. And all round him were the soldiers with their flashing weapons, and the white-robed priests, and the trumpeters, and all the people of the land rejoicing and singing.

Then she rent her clothes in despair, and cried, "Treason! Treason!" for she felt her reign was over. And the soldiers would have killed her then and there, but the priest would have no one slain in the house of the Lord, so they dragged her away to the gate of her own palace, and there they killed her as she had caused so many others to be killed.

You would think, would you not, that Joash would never forget that great day, and the kind priest who had sheltered him so long, and given him back his kingdom. But alas! though Joash did what was right as long as Jehoiada lived, after the old man died he fell into the evil ways of his forefathers, and worshipped idols again. And when the son of Jehoiada rebuked the people, and threatened them with punishment from God, they grew furious with him, and the king was furious too. "In the court of the house of the Lord," the very place where Jehoiada the priest had proclaimed Joash king in his boyhood, they stoned Zechariah the son of Jehoiada to death by that very king's command.

Wicked and ungrateful, was it not?

And yet, children, have we not all been made heirs to a kingdom far greater than that of Joash? And how much gratitude do we often show to the Elder Brother who laid down His life that ours might be saved?

DO AS YOU ARE BID.

"Do as you are bid." Do you remember mother or nurse saying these words to you when you were quite a little child? And you perhaps feeling that you did not want to do the thing, why should you—why, why?

A little child cannot always understand the why of obedience, and indeed it is best that it should learn to do as it is bid without asking "why," since it is a plain duty that children should do as they are told. When they grow older they will see the answer to that Why, and realize that it is all for their good that they should do exactly what their parents or their nurse tell them. A little boy I will tell you of would have lost his life if he had not learned to be obedient to his father's first word.

His name was Tommy, and one winter's day his father, Mr. Fraser Tytler, took him and his brother Sandy to skate on the lake in Regent's Park. The ice broke, and Tommy and his father fell through into deep water, Sandy was snatched away by another gentleman just in time. As he sank in the cold water little Tommy caught hold of his father, who told him not to cry, nor to struggle, but just quietly to hold on to his sleeve. This Tommy did, while the icemen on the pond ran a long ladder near the hole, and presently got Tommy and his father out. He was carried home, put in a warm bath, and then wrapped in hot blankets, so that he took no harm.

His father wrote in a letter soon after, "Certainly nothing could be better than Tommy's behaviour. The little man implicitly obeyed me, not shedding a tear or uttering a sound, which the people who saw his diminutive size seemed much astonished at, one gentleman calling him 'a little hero.'"

If Tommy had not learned to be obedient on dry land, he never would have been able to keep quiet in the cold water, as his father bid him, and if he had screamed or struggled he would probably have been drowned.