

And flinging down his soapy dish
As though it were a childish toy,
'If I must shave to be a man,'
Quoth he, 'I'd rather be a boy!'

D. B.

WHY MABEL ALTERED HER WILL.



HE rain was streaming down the windows, the wind was whistling round the corners of the house, then moaning and sobbing as though it prayed to be let in, but the little Glynns took no notice; they were seated at a table that was littered with books and papers, so intent on

what they were at, that a stranger might have thought they were diligently preparing their lessons: they were not, but they were greatly engrossed in what they thought a much more important matter, for Mab was making her will.

It was a rule with the little Glynns that as each child became the possessor of a writing-desk she should make her will, for, as Alice said, people in books keep their wills and important papers in their desks.

Désirée, a friend of Alice's, made a faint suggestion that a desk was the place in which to keep paper, envelopes, pens, and such things.

'Any drawer will do for that,' said Alice; 'people in books keep their wills in their desks.'

This, with the Glynns, was an unanswerable argument.

Mab's godmother had lately been spending a week with Mrs. Glynn, and before she left she bought and fitted up a very pretty desk for her godchild.

This morning, at ten o'clock, when the children had got their books out ready for their lessons, Mrs. Glynn looked into the dining-room, and said, 'I cannot come to you, children, yet; Dottie has a feverish cold, and has had so little sleep, that I am very uneasy about her. I am going to put a linseed poultice on her chest, and if she is not better in an hour or so I shall send for Mr. Rodney; so you must amuse yourselves quietly till I can come to you. And, Alice, try and keep the doors from being slammed; I wish the house to be quiet, if possible.'

So saying, Mrs. Glynn left the room, and

Alice and Jessie at once exclaimed, 'What a capital opportunity, Mab, for you to make your will!'

'So it is,' said Mab, and, fetching her desk, she produced a sheet of foolscap which her father had given her, and handed it to Alice to be ruled in round hand. This done, she set herself to her important task, Alice taking up a story-book, that she might be at hand to help her, and Jessie busying herself with the illuminating of a text as a birthday present for Ruth their nurse.

But before I go on you will like to know something about the Glynns, big and little.

Mr. Glynn was a clergyman, who had a very poor and populous parish in the heart of the town. For the health of his children he had taken a house in the suburbs, where he had a good garden and a way out at the back, so that the children could easily get into the fields, and have pretty country walks.

The two eldest children, Bobbie and Charlie, went daily with some other boys to a tutor, who was preparing them for a public school. Then came Alice, Jessie, and Mabel, or Mab, as they always called her, who were their mother's pupils. Then Dottie, the two-years-old pet and plaything, who was still in the nursery. The little girls were taught in a rather uncertain fashion. Mr. Glynn was not rich; there was a great deal to be done in his very poor parish, and he could only afford to have one curate, so Mrs. Glynn helped him greatly in visiting and caring for the sick, and in many other ways which were all good and helpful for the parish, but, in some respects, unfortunate for the children, who were left too much to themselves. In some things they were more backward than many children of their age in their father's day school—in writing, spelling, and certainly in arithmetic; they had excellent books and maps, and were forward in history and geography, which they liked; of French and music they knew very little; of needlework next to nothing, and as they all disdained dolls they were not likely to gain the skill which some little girls show in dressing their babies, of wax or china; but in one thing (general knowledge) you would scarcely have found children of their years to equal them.

Mr. and Mrs. Glynn were highly educated

people with cultivated tastes, and the house overflowed with books; wherever shelves could be put up there were books, and to these all the children had access, and were great readers.

Alice, like the eldest boy Bobbie, was sweet-tempered but somewhat indolent; these two read chiefly stories, or books that were easily understood.

Charlie was studious, and excelled in whatever he studied, though he was very fond of legends or fairy-tales.

Jessie took after her father, and was devoted to natural history. Mr. Glynn thought her knowledge of geology and botany quite remarkable for a little girl.

As for Mab, she simply devoured books, biographies, travels: nothing came amiss to her; she passed over what she did not understand, but always found plenty to interest her, in travels especially. She was a strong, active child, and, when it was fine, she worked or clambered about in the garden a good deal; but on a wet day she would sit on the floor, in a favourite corner by the window, and read for hours together.

The others, taking them all in all, were very good children; but Mab was selfish, domineering, and ill-tempered, and as she grew older she seemed to be worse rather than better.

However, we will return to the dining-room, where she will speak for herself. She was left-handed, and wrote slowly and badly.

'You must begin "I give and bequeath,"' said Alice.

'Of course,' replied Mab, impatiently; 'I know that.'

There was silence for a time; then Mab asked, 'Ku for bequeath?'

'No; qu.'

Presently Mab threw down her pen on the cloth, which, to judge from its many inkspots, was quite accustomed to such usage, and exclaimed, 'There, the first part is done! "I, Mabel Glynn, give and bequeath my new shilling to my father."'

As no remark was made, Mab asked rather angrily, 'Why don't you say something?'

'I've no objection,' answered Alice, laughing.

But Jessie remarked with some hesitation, 'I like best to leave something very pretty or useful as a keepsake to my friends. Then,

when I am dead, they will use it, and be reminded of me. It seems so strange to leave a shilling as a keepsake in your will.'

'That's all you know about it!' exclaimed Mab, scornfully. 'It so happens that people make wills on purpose to say what they will have done with their property; and my shilling is *my* property—so there!'

Jessie was silent, and Mab took up her pen.

'I think I shall make one "Give and bequeath" do for all.'

'Then it won't sound a bit like a will,' observed Alice. 'In a real will, "give and bequeath" comes about every other line.'

'Oh, very well,' said Mab. 'Little or capital c for church?'

This led to a small debate, as Jessie observed a church must be as good as a town, or a river, and therefore deserved a capital.

'It doesn't matter,' remarked Mab. 'Little c is easiest, so I shall put it.'

Another silence.

'Sweet William, one word or two?'

Opinions were divided.

'I'll make one word of it,' said Mab, 'and then I shan't have to make a capital w.'

Presently Mab threw down her pen again with something very like a groan.

'What a bother making one's will is! I'm glad it only comes once in one's life. I must rest myself a little.'

Here she took up a book, and there was a long silence. At last a door was opened, and footsteps were heard upstairs.

'You had better finish your will, Mab,' said Alice, 'or perhaps mother will come before you have done.'

Mab said nothing, but took up her pen, and stopped no more till her task was ended. Presently she inquired, 'Don't you want to hear my will?'

'Oh, yes, please,' said the other two, who felt very curious, but did not venture to ask Mab to gratify their curiosity.

Mab read in a solemn voice befitting the occasion: 'I, Mabel Glynn, give and bequeath my new shilling to my father; and I give and bequeath my church-service with the silver clasp to mother; and I give and bequeath my three sweetwilliams to Bobbie; and I give and bequeath all the rest of my things to be equally divided between my sisters, Alice to choose first.'



Mab seated at her Desk.

There was a long pause; then Jessie said in a tone of dismay, 'Oh, Mab! you have forgotten Charlie!'

'No, I haven't,' said Mab. 'I don't mean to leave him anything.'

'Oh, Mab! poor dear Charlie! your own brother!'

'I can't help that!' exclaimed Mab, looking the picture of obstinacy. 'He's always vexing me, and I shan't leave him anything!'

'But, Mab,' replied Jessie, the tears starting to her eyes, 'when people are dying, if they have been ever so much vexed, they try to feel kind and forgiving, and all that.'

'When you're dying you may feel how you

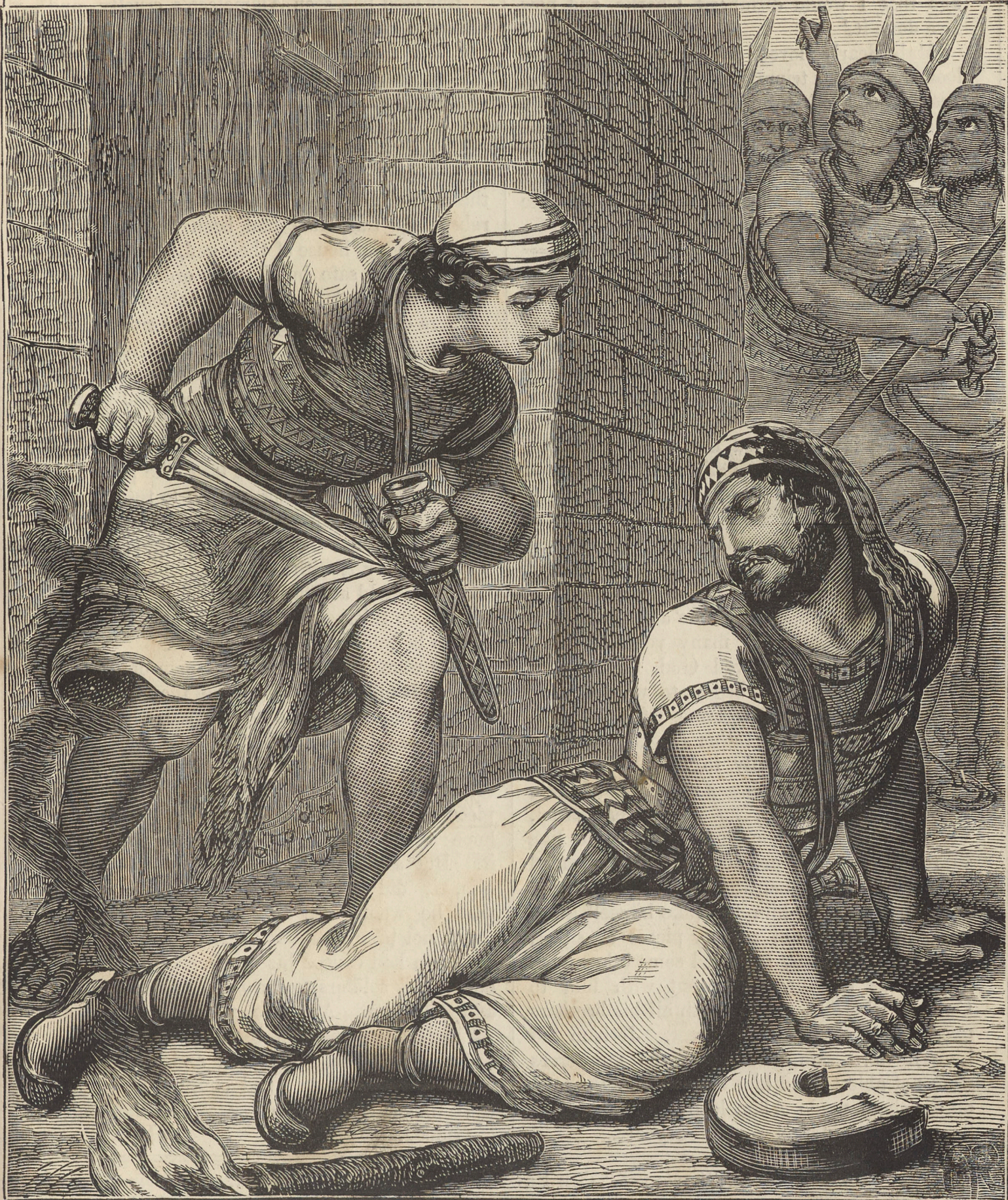
like, and when I'm dying I'll feel how I like,' said Mab, savagely.

Here Alice gave Jessie a warning kick under the table; but Jessie was too much in earnest to be silent, and went on: 'I know people are often angry when they are alive, but when they are dead—— Oh, Mab!'

'I'm not dead,' said Mab in the same tone.

'But you will be dead when your will is read, and then poor Charlie——' Tears choked her voice.

'How do you know he won't die first?' asked Mab. 'But I shan't alter it any way. When people in books want to punish their tiresome relations they disinherit them in their will, and I made up my mind ever so long



Death of Abimelech.

ago that I would disinherit Charlie, and now I've done it.'

Mab dearly loved a long word, and she looked now very triumphant and very vindictive. Jessie was about to make a last effort when a vigorous kick from Alice warned her to be silent.

Mab folded up her will, slammed rather than shut it up in her desk, and then left the room.
(*To be continued.*)

BIBLE STORIES.

THE STORY OF ABIMELECH.



GIDEON pleased the men of Israel so much by the way in which he had defeated the Midianites, that they asked him to be their king. But Gideon knew that God did not wish His people to have a king at present, so he answered, 'I will not rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you.' And

he went back to his own home at Ophrah, and lived there quietly for many years. While he lived the people served God, but as soon as he was dead they began to worship idols again; and instead of treating Gideon's children kindly for their father's sake, they behaved very ungratefully to them.


One of Gideon's sons was named Abimelech, and, as you will see, he was a very cruel, wicked man. He thought that he would like to reign over the people; so he persuaded some of his relations, who lived in the city of Shechem, to help him to make himself king. They first lent him seventy pieces of silver, and with this money he hired some other men, as bad as himself, who went with him to Ophrah, where he put to death all his brothers excepting Jotham, the youngest. Jotham hid himself in a safe place, and the murderers were not able to find him. After this the men of Shechem made Abimelech their king, and he ruled over Israel for three years.

But God had seen Abimelech's cruelty, and although He allowed him to prosper for a time, He did not forget to punish him for his wickedness. The people at last grew tired of obeying him, and a man named Gaal raised up a rebellion against him. Abimelech gathered his soldiers together, and fought with Gaal, and overcame him. And when the men of Shechem, who had encouraged the rebels, saw that Gaal had been defeated, they went into the house of their god, Berith, which was a strong, safe building, in order to escape from Abimelech. But Abimelech and his soldiers cut down boughs from the trees which grew near to the city, and laid them round the idol-house, and set fire to them, so that the house was burned, and all the men and women who had taken refuge there were burned also.

Then Abimelech went to another city called Thebez, and fought against it. The people of Thebez were not strong enough to resist him, so they fled to a great tower and shut themselves up in it. Abimelech thought that he would destroy it with fire, as he had destroyed the stronghold at Shechem; but God did not let him do this. The time had now come for him to be punished for all his sins.

The women as well as the men of Thebez were shut up in the tower, and they were able to look down from the top to see what Abimelech was doing. And when they saw that he was close to the door of the tower, preparing to set it on fire, one of the women took a large piece of stone and threw it down, in the hope that Abimelech would be killed by it. But although it fell upon him and hurt him, it did not kill him. Still, he felt that he would die in a short time, and he could not bear to think of people saying that a woman had caused his death. So he desired one of his soldiers to draw his sword at once and kill him. And the young man did as Abimelech commanded him.

So you see that Abimelech and the men of Shechem all came to a bad end, on account of their wickedness and cruelty towards the family of Gideon.
H. L. T.

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