

Choice Literature.

Aunt Jessie.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

The young girl kept her own counsel, and said not a word of how she had guessed the secret for herself, and how her heart had often beat, to watch the precious sight growing dimmer day by day.

For they both knew what blindness meant in this case: not simply deprivation of sight—one of God's choicest blessings—but the means of earning a livelihood, scanty though that might have been, taken away, and nothing save deepest poverty, almost starvation, staring the elder one in the face, or, that greatest dread and fear of the poor, the workhouse.

She had only lately obtained this, her first situation, in Mr. Webbe's shop; and for the next two or three years she was to receive nothing, but to give her services in return for learning the business.

When Esther had been old enough to leave school, Mr. Lang, thinking it would be a good thing for her niece, and might enable them hereafter to keep a little home together, had embraced an opportunity which offered itself of apprenticing her to a dressmaker who at that time was living in the same house, and, according to appearances, had a tolerably good business.

The shop for which she worked had employed her for years, and she had received a constant supply, sufficient to keep her always occupied. But it was miserable pay—only enough, with all her industry, to provide them with the bare necessities of life, without which they must have perished, and making no compensation for the perpetual weary toiling of back, and head, and eyes, which such close unremitting application entailed.

At length, when Esther's term of apprenticeship was beginning to draw to a close, and she was indulging hopes of being able in time to earn something, and thus be no longer a burden to her aunt, Miss Cooper's affairs suddenly appeared to be in inextricable confusion, she hastily threw up her business, quitted the place, and Esther was cast upon her own resources.

Nothing had offered, save this situation at Mr. Webbe's—a linen-draper's shop, in one of the busiest and most crowded of the narrow streets of the old city. Esther had engaged herself, as they were honest respectable people, and, in time, there was the promise of a salary, though for the present her hopes of helping her aunt were disappointed.

She had hard work at her new post—had to be there early in the morning and late at night, with scarcely a minute's breathing-space through the day, and the additional fatigue of her long walk to and fro. And she was naturally delicate, and ill fitted to stand such a life.

No wonder that the utterance of that short sentence—"I am getting blind!"—had struck with a chill sense of sorrow upon the young heart, confirming the fears which she had been struggling to put from her; whilst even to the other the sound of her own words seemed to place the fact beyond all doubt and question.

Esther took the rejected shirts—for there was no longer cause for concealment; she need no longer pretend not to see that the sight of the other was failing; and, trying to force back the tears which filled her eyes, she bent over her work for some time without speaking.

"It's all quite right, Esther," said the quiet voice of her aunt, at length—"we are sure of that, aren't we?"

"No reply, save a sort of stifled sob."

"And if we should have to part for a time, and I seek a shelter somewhere else, it would still all be right and kind—we should be certain of that, shouldn't we?"

"Oh, Aunt Jessie! it seems so hard!" "That's because we can't see aright, Esther. But whatever we do, don't let us doubt the loving-kindness of our Father. I have been faithful, I know; I've sat wondering and thinking what I've become of us, and prayed the Lord to spare me my sight until you were able to be earning something; because I know your loving heart, Esther, and that you'd be glad to give me a share of anything you had."

Esther glanced up with a sort of veneration at the sweet face before her, marvelling at its patience and calmness; and as she looked, she inwardly acknowledged that she had still much to learn before she could yield up her will in such submission.

CHAPTER III.

Esther had been struggling with a severe cold ever since that tempestuous night when she had come in so wet, and had been so anxious to hide from her aunt's eyes the state of her boots, knowing that there was nothing forthcoming towards the purchase of a new pair, and that it would only vex and grieve her to find how much they were needed.

Mr. and Mrs. Webbe were kind, and sent what help they could. But it was a hard struggle to pull through that time; and many a little possession which she had kept and clung to all these years was Mrs. Lang forced to part with to meet the daily needs. Her overtaken strength, and sleepless watchful nights, moreover, told upon the feeble remnant of sight that was yet left; and by the time Esther began to recover her aunt saw clearly what was the only course left to her. But to gratify her niece, who wished it so earnestly, she would once more pay a visit to the oculist, and hear his opinion.

It was a bright spring day, warm and pleasant, and the doctor's house being at no great distance, and the way so familiar, she decided to go alone, though Esther tried to persuade her to find some companion to guide her. But she said she could see sufficiently in the bright sunlight not to mistake her way; and so she departed, leaving Esther sitting up, for the first time, that afternoon.

The oculist's verdict was—"No hope, no cure; it must end in total blindness." And the patient heard bowed to receive it meekly. With a simple "Thank you, sir," she turned to grope her way home again.

She had to pass over the bridge across the river; and feeling tired—for this was the first time she had been out of doors, save to the little general shop, since Esther's illness began—she stood a while leaning against the stone parapet, and looking down upon the flowing waters, which she could only dimly make out. But she knew well what their appearance was; she had so often stood there looking down when her sight was still good.

Though it was a bustling part of the city, and busy life seemed ever streaming and thronging across that bridge, she soon grew too much engrossed in her meditations to notice what went on around her. Even in that crowded part a fresh breeze fanned her cheeks, brought by the river, as it seemed to her fancy, from the sweet fields and meadows and open country through which its course lay before it flowed past the great city on its way to the sea.

One peaceful spot upon its banks she knew well; and as she stood looking down with almost sightless eyes, a vivid picture rose up before her mental vision. It was a picture of a substantial farm-house, long and low, with drooping creepers and sunny lawn in front, and meadows stretching down to the river's bank, whilst fruitful orchards lay on either side, and well-built hay-ricks and corn-stacks nestled behind—all combining to give an air of plenty and comfort. She saw a group of children playing about—girls mostly, with only one boy amongst them, and he the youngest of the party. They romped and were merry; but the games were always chosen by him, and it was his rickings, not theirs, which always seemed to be consulted. And watching them at their sports, looking on calmly and smilingly, were the figures of a white-haired couple, who glanced continually with fond pride towards the bright comely lad.

But after a time those aged figures disappeared from view, and the laughing group of merry children was exchanged for one of sober women, whose faces often wore a look of care, which they seemed to share together, and which deepened as the days passed by, being always deepest when the brother's name was mentioned.

Then the scene changed again: that band of sisters was broken up and dispersed, having sacrificed their all—and each had had a moderate portion left her by the father—to save the brother from exposure and disgrace. They had gone to seek their fortunes, impoverished by the one on whom they had lavished their affection, whom they had made their idol, and the old home knew them no more. It had passed into other hands, after having been in their family for generations; and strangers would sit in the rooms, and walk in the garden, where every nook and corner had some association with happy bygone days in the minds of these sorrowful sisters.

And of all that band their now remained only the almost sightless woman who stood seeing those pictures in the deep waters.

Then rose up another vision of a few brief years of happy married life with the sailor husband; the settling into a snug little home which he had prepared for her; the way in which she used to stand on that bridge where she now stood, and fancy the flowing waters as they hastened to the sea were rushing to meet him on his homeward way, would kiss the vessel which bore him, and, lapping against its sides, would murmur their welcome to the brave sturdy seaman.

She had waited long for that day—she

was waiting still—but come it assuredly would; and meantime she could wait. Then, still looking back, she saw herself sitting in her sorrow and desolation, and a heart-broken young creature, with a sweet infant, coming in to throw herself upon her for sympathy and protection. It was the brother's wife, whom he had married thinking she had money, and then, finding how miserably small was the portion compared with the greatness of the pressing claims upon him, he had deserted her and her helpless infant, going off secretly to Australia, as he could no longer remain in England.

The little that the sister had was freely shared with the brother's wife. But the latter did not linger long; she passed away to that region above where all sounds of weeping are stilled, and broken hearts are healed, leaving her little Esther to the care of the widowed child's one, who had accepted the sacred trust, and faithfully discharged it. But that (her own part in the matter) was not what she saw; she was looking at the ray of sunlight which had been a golden thread running through the picture which would otherwise have appeared sombre in its colouring—the love and clinging devotion of the blue-eyed child, who was now approaching womanhood, and from whom, for the first time in all these years, she was about to be called to part. She must let her go out alone to face the world which might have temptations enough in store for one so young and pretty and inexperienced, and from which she would gladly have sheltered her a little longer.

But what was she thinking? Why was she fearing? Would not He who never slumbereth or sleepeth be keeping guard over her? What need, then, for her to trouble and fret—as if she could take better care of her child than her own heavenly Father! Surely she could leave her to Him, and have not a single anxious doubt!

When she entered the little room, on her return, Esther looked up into her face with a glance which showed how many Lopes and fears were hanging upon the result of this visit. Though Mrs. Lang could not see the expression on the countenance, or the half-impelling look in the eyes, as though they were beseeching her to say there was hope, she knew by instinct the question the girl longed to put, and replied to it at once by a gentle shake of her head. That was enough. Then she sat down in her chair.

Neither of them spoke; but Esther rose, and coming across, knelt down beside her aunt, and putting her arms round her neck, clung to her in a close embrace. Then she laid her head down upon the shoulder of the elder woman, who silently stole an arm round her waist, and thus they remained for some moments. No need of language to speak their sorrow, which was more for each other than for themselves; no occasion to express in words the sympathy, and love, and tender unselfish affection, which each bore the other. They knew it all without words; but had they not done so, that mute embrace would have told more than the most eloquent phrases.

(To be Continued.)

The Thorn in the Flesh—A Sermon in Disguise.

In the range of our common history we cannot fail to see the presence of this thorn in the greatest and noblest lives. It may be a thing, like Byron's club-foot; it shall torment, as if there were no greater misfortunes possible to man than to go halting all his days; or it may be as great a thing as Dante's worship of Beatrice, as he appears in the picture, with that face and beyond expression, looking up to the beautiful saint whose "soul was like a star and dwelt apart."

Or it may be a great vice, like that which seized and held Coleridge and DeQuincy and put them down in the dungeon of despair. Or it may be like the dyspepsia that darkens the whole vision of Carlyle, turning his afternoons into a grim and lurid sunset.

In Luther it was a blackness of darkness that would come, defying both physicians and philosophy, and beating down the soaring soul as a great hailstone beats down a bird.

With one man it is every now and then a black day, like those that came to Luther; with another it is the bitter memory of a great sin, or a great wrong, or a great mistake. It is a pain in the citadel of life with another, which cannot be removed, in spite of all that the doctors can do.

With men like Edward Irving and Robert Hall, and Jonathan Swift it is the fine edge, as sharp as that over which the Mussulman dreams he will pass into Paradise, dividing transcendent genius from its saddest ruins. There is a man, whose name will stand high in our history, of whom it might be said, "he must be one of the happiest of men." But there is a pain which follows him like a shadow; not a bodily but a mental pain, which he will carry with him to his grave.

Nothing can reveal a more beautiful manliness or womanliness than quietness and steadiness through intense physical or mental pain. To see the patient face on which sorrow has graven its lines, reflecting an unconquered soul, is a royalty, to which the purple robe and acclamation are a vain show.

The strong argument for the truth of Christianity is the true Christian; the man filled with the spirit of Christ. The best proof of Christ's resurrection is a living church, which itself is walking in a new life, and drawing life from Him who hath overcame death. Before such arguments, ancient Rome herself, the mightiest empire of the world, and the most hostile to Christianity, could not stand.—Christlieb.

Men and maidens (servants) in a house, are often better off than their masters and mistresses; for they have no house-hold cares—have only to do their work; and when this is done, it is done, and they can eat, and drink, and sing. My WOLF and ORTIX (DOROTIKA), my maid and my cook, are better off than my KATIE and I, for married life and the ordering of a household bring with them their trials and the holy cross.—Luther.

The Mystery of Iniquity. The New York Observer tells the following story:

"King Victor Emmanuel finds it somewhat dangerous to sleep in a house that was once the dwelling-place of Popes and the seat of Popery. When he went to Rome he took lodgings at the Quirinal. According to Signor Ferruccio, he had not been long in that palace before he discovered a trap door in his bedroom. It communicated with a vast gallery, in which the King and his attendants waited for twenty minutes without finding an outlet. It is so made, however, to lead toward the Castle of St. Angelo. His Majesty declined to investigate, and ordered the trap-door to be bricked up. Soon afterwards he discovered a secret door in the wall, which communicated with a narrow staircase leading up to the roof. It too was bricked up, but since this second discovery, whenever his Majesty sleeps at the Quirinal, two huge black dogs also sleep at the foot of the royal bed. These faithful servitors obey no one but the King, never bark, and would strangle without any parleying the first person who entered the room.

"They who are acquainted with the outs and ins of a house in which the Mystery of Iniquity has had its chief seat of power, will understand that these subterranean passages—in one of which a man may walk twenty minutes without finding any end—are parts of those arrangements by which what was called the temporal power of the Pope was made to serve the spiritual. As these secret passages were of use for egress, so they may now be employed for ingress, and as the 'ways that are dark' are known in all their ramifications only to the spiritual powers, it is not safe for the King to sleep where he may be at any time of the night suddenly visited by emissaries from 'the unseen world' of Papal hate and cunning. Therefore, as a wise man, though he is no coward, he prefers to lodge out, and when he stays at home he has the company of a pet dog or two to guard his life."

Sunlight and Health.

Many of our people seem to have the idea that sunlight is their greatest enemy. They carefully exclude its beams from their rooms, close the blinds and curtain the windows. It fades their carpets and stuffs furniture, and is a general destroyer of delicate and fashionable things. They, too, sunlight tans the face and hands, and it is a great misfortune to suffer that, for it is fashionable to be pale and delicate. The young damsels of the household must preserve the delicacy and whiteness of their complexions, let it cost what it will, for they are in the market to secure a future husband, and it would be a pity to spoil their chances of getting a foppish, senseless, and worthless vagabond, which, by the way, are rather good matches—that is, in regard to the real worth of the parties; generally one is about as worthless as the other. Sensible young men, however, are getting their eyes open, and are seeing that those pale, delicate girls, who are so plentiful in the market, make capital invalids for life, but very poor helpmates. They are perceiving that the brown-cheeked, healthy girls are really the true metal after all, and these are raised in the sunlight, and work for a living.

But weak-minded mothers will go on for some time yet, excluding the sunshine from their homes, and rearing pale and sickly children. This exclusion of light is also a protection against the flies, and this is much esteemed. To be sure, flies will not live in a darkened room, and they seize the first opportunity to escape; thus showing the superiority of their instinct over the deluded reason of human beings.

A Bill of Fare for Breakfast.

"What shall we have for breakfast?" is a question which often perplexes the lady of the house. The magazines urge French breakfast upon the Americans; but if we are to begin the day with the single roll and cup of coffee which those who have been abroad recommend, all our business habits will have to undergo reconstruction. It is not convenient for most men to return to their home for a substantial meal in the course of the morning, and so the breakfast must be sufficiently palatable and nutritious to last till the noon hour of luncheon or dinner.

The good manager can use for breakfast dishes made from yesterday's dinner; and in spite of the prejudices entertained by some against food warmed over, in the hands of a competent cook the most appetizing preparations can come from cold meats or vegetables. The second using is often better than the first.

Potatoes are susceptible of great variety of treatment. New potatoes are very nice cooked as follows: Boil them and then drop into very hot lard, browning them all over. They look like little brown balls, and taste as good as they look. Cold bread is of course taken for granted at every breakfast. On the days when it is fresh, no other form of it is required. Coffee or English breakfast tea are also necessary parts of the morning meal.

Monday.—Omelette, fried hominy, cold sliced ham, toast. Tuesday.—Hash, stewed potatoes, sliced tomatoes, oatmeal porridge, lunfins. Wednesday.—Boiled lamb chops, fried potatoes, corn-bread, baked apples. Thursday.—Smoked mackerel, new potatoes fried whole, melons, wheaten grits. Friday.—Blue fish fried, baked potatoes, biscuits, hominy. Saturday.—Ham and eggs, sliced cucumbers, porridge, rolls. Sunday.—Fish-balls, milk toast, sliced tomatoes.

THE really cheerful man is a blessing in every community. He not only has a life of joy himself, but he is diffusing brightness all around him, and many a dreary soul is lighted up with his pleasant sympathy. There is no technical school in which cheerfulness is taught, but every soul may learn it from the bright world in which we live, and especially from the Gospel of the Master, who, though he was a man of sorrows, yet came to relieve humanity of its grief. —United Presbyterian.

Scientific and Useful.

EXCELLENT SPONGE CAKE.

Four eggs, two cups of sugar, two cups of flour, three quarters of a cup of hot water, one teaspoonful of soda, two teaspoonfuls cream of tartar, one-half teaspoonful of vanilla.

FROSTED FEET.

To relieve the intense itching of frosted feet, dissolve a lump of alum in a little water, and bathe the part with it, at the same time, warming the part affected before the fire; one or two applications are sure to give relief.

A WHOLESOME DINNER.

A piece of nicely roasted mutton (no made gravy) some roasted or well-boiled potatoes, a dish of ripe tomatoes, sliced, and with the addition of a baked corn starch or batter pudding, you will have a strengthening meal for yourself and children.

GREEN TOMATO SAUCE.

Take full-grown green tomatoes; take out the stems and stew them till soft; rub them through a sieve; put the pulp on the fire, seasoned with pepper, salt, and spices; add some garlic, and stew altogether till thick. It keeps well, and is excellent for seasoning gravies.

PEACH JAM.

Take ripe peaches and peel and stone them; put them in a pan over the fire and mash them until hot, then rub them through a sieve, and to each pound of fruit allow a pound of white sugar, and half an ounce of bitter almonds blanched and pounded; let it boil fifteen minutes, stir and skim it well.

PORK ROYAL.

Take a piece of shoulder of fresh pork, fill with grated bread and the crust soaked, pepper, salt, onions, sage, and thyme, a bit of butter and lard, rub on a little pepper and salt, place in the pan with some water; when about done, place round it some large apples; when done place your pork on a dish, with the apples round it, put flour and water in your pan, (best flour browned), some thyme and sage; boil, strain through a very small colander over your pork and apples.

TO PREVENT GLUE FROM CRACKING.

Glue frequently cracks because of the dryness of the air in rooms warmed by stoves. An Austrian contemporary recommends the addition of a little chloride of calcium to glue to prevent this disagreeable property of cracking. Chloride of calcium is such a deliquescent salt that it attracts enough moisture to prevent the glue from cracking. Glue thus prepared will adhere to glass, metal, &c., and can be used for putting on labels without danger of their dropping off.

FRUIT AND DELICATE CAKE.

Two and a-half teaspoonfuls of sugar; four and a-half teaspoonfuls of sifted flour; one teaspoonful of butter; one teaspoonful of sour milk; one teaspoonful of soda, not heaping, and four eggs. Flavor with lemon. Take enough out of this to fill three jelly tins, then to the remainder add one cupful of chopped raisins; one cupful of currants; half cupful of citron; two tablespoonfuls of molasses; one tablespoonful of brandy; one tablespoonful of cinnamon; half tablespoonful of cloves, and the same of mace or allspice. Bake this also in jelly tins, and when they are all done, spread any kind of jelly between the cakes, which must be put together, first a dark one, then a light, and so on; then frost handsomely. It is delicious.

BAKED TOMATOES.

Select well-ripened fruit of a nearly uniform size, say two or three inches in diameter, and arrange them on an earthen pie dish. Baking them on tin injures them in taste, colour, and wholesomeness. Place the small ones in the middle, and bake in quite a hot oven, until tender. If the juice should dry out add a little water. Make them soft and tender but do not let them burn. Serve warm or cold.

EFFECT OF IMPURE ICE.

It is generally believed that when water freezes all impurities are left behind. This is partially but not absolutely true. The State Board of Health of Massachusetts have recently called attention to an outbreak of intestinal disorder, clearly attributable to the contamination of impure ice. The pond from which the ice had been taken had become obstructed so that the water was rendered stagnant and a large mass of putrescent matter had accumulated in it. An analysis of the ice showed that it was charged with these impurities.

BUYING PROVISIONS.

With regard to butcher meat, I would say, try to vary the food you buy; buy enough, and of good quality, but not too much, and so soon as it reaches your home, have all put away securely from the rays of cats, rats, and flies. Do not buy different kinds of meat lie one upon another—it is almost as bad as cooking in the same pan at the same time. Be careful to remove fish as soon as possible, and your vegetables will be sure to be fresh with the meat, put them in cold water aside, and, if possible, wash them. Be guided by the size of your purchase, and the quantity you purchase. Do not buy too much of any one thing, especially green peas, or a peck of French beans, for two people, because you may not have a cent cheaper. Vegetables are very perishable, and it is better to buy just enough at a fair price, than to buy a "fool's bargain," which usually considered expensive, but which will deal depends upon the quantity you purchase. Experience alone will tell you. Fowls are the cheapest, but they are not safe things for you to buy. Game is dear, but it will pay over it, for I have often seen it very economical, and not dear at 85 or 40. —New Dominion Monthly.