

Choice Literature.

Aunt Jessie.

CHAPTER I.

In a small back room in a narrow street of one of our large overcrowded manufacturing cities, a woman sat alone at work one wet February afternoon.

But darkness seemed to be coming on apace, the heavy clouds—which had stretched themselves like a curtain over the city that afternoon, and had been persistently discharging themselves in torrents of rain for hours without even now showing any sign of cessation—having helped to shut out daylight almost an hour before the usual time.

After further vain endeavors to thread her needle and set a few more stitches in the shirt she was making, the lonely worker gave up the attempt as hopeless; and suffering the garment to fall from her hands, she pressed them over her eyes, as if the latter ached and smarted.

It was a sweet face that was turned away from the darkening room, where the corners were already in shadow, towards the few remaining rays of light which yet came struggling through the thickly-falling rain-drops. It was a face which, if not strictly beautiful—as the features were worn and thin, whilst the eyes were hollow, and the hair fast becoming grey and scanty—was strangely attractive and expressive.

She sat on for some time, seemingly lost in deep thought; for though the clock struck once or twice she heeded it not.

At length, however, she roused herself from her reverie, and rising, groped her way to the chimney-piece. Striking a match, she lighted a small candle, and then, still groping, brought out her little tea-pot, and made some tea. But she only allowed herself one cup, and reserving the rest, put the pot on the hob to keep warm.

The rain came against the window, driven by the wind, which howled and moaned, and swept up the street as though it would carry everything before it.

But even as she said this to herself a light tread might have been heard on the stairs. Then the door opened, and a young girl of about seventeen or eighteen years of age entered the room.

The worn face which had been watching for her broke into a bright smile of welcome. "Come at last, Esther!" she exclaimed, as if the time had seemed long.

"Oh, I got on very well, Aunt Jessie. It isn't as bad out of doors, perhaps, as it sounds to you here."

When she came nearer the light, she displayed a smiling face—something like her aunt's might have been in youth—with a blooming colour which battling with the wind had called into her usually pale cheeks.

"Come near, and let me feel if you are very wet. You must take off your damp things, Esther."

"Yes, aunt, I'll do it at once, and then I can come and sit down by you," replied the girl, retreating, meantime, rather than advancing, as though she did not wish too close an inspection of her state to be made.

Still keeping at a distance, she stooped, and drew from her feet a pair of boots, limp from the rain which had soaked through them, and with signs of holes in them which appeared more unmistakable than ever to-night.

"Let me have your boots, Esther, to put by the fire to dry."

"I can put them down, thank you, aunt dear. There! they'll be all right there," said Esther, placing them as far from the other as possible, as though she wished them to escape observation. Then, kneeling on the floor at her aunt's feet, she laid her arms on her lap, and looking up with her own bright eyes into the faded tired ones of the older woman, she said, coaxingly, "Do put by your work for to-night, auntie. I'm sure you've done enough for to-day: for it has been so wet I don't expect you've been out at all, but have just sat stitching, stitching all the time."

"Ah what, indeed!" and a shadow seemed to dim the young eyes for a moment. "But I'll go on with your work now," and she tried to take the shirt from her aunt.

The latter resisted. "No dear; you must dry yourself first. And, see, I've kept a cup of tea for you; so drink it off, and I hope it will help to keep out the cold."

"Yes; we are always so busy I can't be spared any sooner. But now, aunt, let me have the work."

"No; it's time for you to go to bed, dear; after your long day at the shop, standing all the time, you must be tired enough, my child."

"Not so tired that I want to go to bed yet, auntie, for I'm getting used to the standing now; it's only at first people feel it, they say."

Neither gained her point; and whilst her busy fingers stitched she chatted cheerfully, relating all the little events of the day, until the careworn expression gradually passed away from the elder woman's face as she gazed lovingly upon the features of the other—gazed with a wistful, fixed look, as if she foresaw a time coming when she would no longer be able to study them, and so was trying before hand to impress them upon her mind's eye. But the other appeared unconsciously of the gaze, as she worked on without lifting her head. At length, however, Mrs. Lang insisted that it was time to put up.

Esther made but a short night of it. Long before daylight, in the cold chilliness of the winter's morning, she was up, though moving cautiously and quietly so as not to disturb her aunt; of whose waking, however, she had not much fear, as she knew she was apt to be sleepless for a good while in the earlier part of the night, and then, towards dawn, worn out, she would drop off into a sounder slumber.

She lighted the candle, and then—as though it were a thing she was accustomed to do—she took out the shirt at which her aunt had been working on the previous day, and began hastily unpicking the greater part of what had been done before she came in—at the least every stitch that the other had set after dusk or by candle-light. The young face wore a grave sad look the while, but the busy fingers never paused; and just as she had accomplished the task of going again what she had undone, and had put it by, her aunt awaking and the clock striking simultaneously, told her that it was time to light the fire and prepare the breakfast, and then get ready to set forth to her daily employment.

CHAPTER II.

A few evenings afterwards, when Esther came home as usual, her quick eyes perceived in a moment that something was amiss with her aunt. It was not only that the patient face looked even paler than its wont, but there was a deeper shade of sadness on it—so deep that even the smile of welcome with which she always greeted the returning one could not entirely chase it away.

"What is it, Aunt Jessie?" said the young girl, coming across and taking up her favourite position on her knees in front of the little fire, and close beside her aunt's chair. "Has anything been vexing you?"

"I'm afraid I've been vexing myself, dear, and fretting a great deal more than I ought, when I've so many blessings left me."

"But what have you to fret about, aunt?—I mean, what new thing?" and Esther looked up with that searching inquiring gaze with which she so often lately had scanned her aunt's face.

"I took the shirts back to-day, Esther, to Mr. Jones."

"Did you?" exclaimed the girl, with a start, as she thought upon the heavy sleep which had prevented her awaking the last two or three mornings, until so late that there was not a minute for work. "I thought they weren't finished," she added.

"Yes; I finished them this afternoon, and went with them directly, because, you know, Mr. Jones was in such a hurry for them. But Esther—"

"What Aunt Jessie?"

"He says he can't give me any more to do. The last words were spoken in a sad tone, and brought tears into the eyes of the young girl. She tried to blink them away unperceived, looking earnestly into the fire meantime; and then, in as quiet and calm a voice as she could assume, asked, "Why won't he give you any more, auntie?"

"Because"—and the speaker paused, as though reluctant to bring out the words—"because, he says, they are so badly done—some of them, at least—that he could never sell them with such work in them. He said he couldn't afford to pay me for simply spoiling the goods."

"Oh, Aunt Jessie!"

"So I had to come away without any more. Only he picked out two or three, and said I must do them over again, and put better work in them."

"Oh, auntie, how could he!"

"It was quite natural, dear, if they were badly done."

"But you've worked for him so many years; and I'm sure you need to put beautiful work—nobody could have done better."

"Used to, perhaps; but I don't now, I'm afraid. Mr. Jones has found fault several times lately; and at last he says he can't employ me any more."

There was a moment's pause, during which time Esther remained motionless, with her head resting on her aunt's lap, and her face hidden from view.

"Can you guess why the work is so badly done, Esther, dear?" and the elder woman's hand was laid gently upon the bowed head before her.

Another pause; and then all Esther said was the one word—"Why?"

"Because, my child—and it's no use to try to hide it from you any longer—your aunt is getting old, and her sight isn't what it used to be. In fact, Esther, I—I am getting blind!"

The girl started up, and threw her arms impulsively round the other's neck.

"Oh, auntie, surely, surely it cannot be true!"

"It is, my darling, I'm afraid, too true! But perhaps it may get better again. Perhaps, if you were to go to some doctor, he might be able to do you some good. You haven't tried that yet."

"Yes, I have, dear. I've been to Dr. Middleton, who is considered so clever with the eyes. I went at the time he sees people free; and he looked at me, and said he feared there was no hope."

"You never told me, said Esther, in tones of gentle reproach.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

THE CEREMONY OF LAYING THE CORNER-STONE.

At four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, 4th Oct., the corner-stone of the Central Presbyterian Church was laid with the usual ceremonies in the presence of a large assembly of clergy and laymen, the former representing nearly all the denominations in the city. This building, the plans of which have been already described in THE PRESBYTERIAN, is being erected on the corner of St. Vincent and Grosvenor streets, the site of the old Knox College. The congregation of this church have, since its formation (in June, 1875), been worshipping in Shaftesbury Hall where they will continue to hold services till the new church is completed. As already stated, there were a large number present to witness the ceremony, and among those on the platform were the Revs. Alex. Topp, D.D., R. Monteith, James Carmichael, J. H. Castle, D.D., S. N. Jackson, M.B., B. B. Usher, Principal Caven, D.D., Dr. Barclay, Fraser, (Bondhead), Mitchell, (late of Milton), John Smith, (Bay street), Breckenridge, Ewing, Matheson, (from Liverpool, England), etc.

After an invocation by the Rev. I. Topp, and other devotional exercises, Mr. John E. Mitchell, secretary of the Building Committee, then read the scroll and list of documents deposited in the corner-stone as follows:—

The church now being erected on the site of the old Knox College, that is to take the place of the building which was successively occupied as the Governor's residence, and as a hall of theological learning in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and which is henceforth to be known as the Central Presbyterian Church, is hereby dedicated to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Divine God.

On Wednesday, the fourth of October, in the year of our Lord, 1876, and in the fortieth year of the reign of the Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, and in the fifty-eighth year of her age; and while the Right Honourable the Earl of Dufferin was Governor-General of the Dominion of Canada; the Hon. D. A. Macdonald the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Ontario; and Angus Morrison, Mayor of the City of Toronto, this corner-stone of the Central Presbyterian Church, Toronto, was laid by the Rev. David Mitchell, Minister of the Church.

In the year of our Lord, 1875, and on the 22nd day of June, fifty-one members of the Bay Street Presbyterian Church, Toronto, with two from Springburn, Glasgow, Scotland, two from Barrie, Ont., and one from Gould Street Presbyterian Church, Toronto, were organized by the Rev. John M. King, by the authority of the Presbytery of Toronto, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, into a congregation in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada to be known as the Central Presbyterian Church of this city.

The congregation of the Central Presbyterian Church, thus composed of the most part of members of Bay Street Presbyterian Church, now record on this document the warm regard and deep attachment in which they held their beloved pastor, the Rev. John Jennings, D.D., who presided over the Bay Street Presbyterian Church for the long period of nearly forty years. Dr. Jennings was ordained in 1838, and the year following was inducted as pastor of the first Secession Church in Toronto. He died in February of this year, highly respected by the entire community amongst whom he had spent the greater part of his long and active life.

Following immediately the organization of the church the congregation extended a unanimous call to the Rev. David Mitchell, pastor of the Canal Street Presbyterian Church, New York City, and on the 19th of July, 1875, he was inducted as first pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church by the Presbytery of Toronto.

The congregation, with the exception of a few weeks, have worshipped regularly in Shaftesbury Hall. During the current year they negotiated for the purchase of a large portion of the site of old Knox College, and now that they are permitted in the Providence of God to lay this corner-stone, they look forward hopefully to the day when they will formally dedicate the house, now being erected to the Lord, and when they will be allowed to sit in peace under their own vine and fig-tree.

The works in connection with this building commenced on Tuesday, the 19th day of September, of this year.

The present office-bearers of the church are as follows:— Elders—Alexander Duff, Joseph Stephens, Thomas Drysdale, and John McMichael. Managers—James Russell, Chairman; John E. Mitchell, Secretary and Treasurer; David Walker, John Shields, Robert G. Patton, Neil Currie, James Currie, Duncan Macfarlane, Robert Swan, Stewart Wells, Henry B. Gordon, Robert O. Jennings.

Trustees of Church Property—John McMichael, Joseph Stephens, James Russell, Alexander Duff, John E. Mitchell.

Building Committee—David Walker, Chairman; John E. Mitchell, Secretary; Robert O. Jennings, Treasurer; Rev. David Mitchell, Alexander Duff, Joseph Stephens, Thomas Drysdale, John McMichael, John Shields, James Russell, Thomas Gordon, Robert G. Patton, Duncan Macfarlane, Neil Currie, James Currie, Robert Swan.

Architect—Henry B. Gordon.

Then the following names of the contractors for the work, etc. There are also copies of the following reports:— Acts and Proceedings of the Sixth General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church, held in Montreal, from June 8th to 15th, 1875.

Acts and Proceedings of the First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, held in Montreal, from 16th to 17th of June, 1876.

Act and Proceedings of the Second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, held at Toronto, from June 8th to 28th, 1876.

Annual Calendar of Knox College, Toronto, for the session of 1876-77.

Presbyterian Record for the Dominion of Canada, October, 1876.

Presbyterian Year-Book and Almanac for the Dominion of Canada and Newfoundland, for the year 1876.

Mail, Globe, Leader, Evening Telegram, BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Silver coins 50, 25, and 5 cent pieces; also one penny and one cent copper coins. After the reading of the above documents, Mr. David Walker, Chairman of the Building Committee, presented to the pastor of the church, Rev. David Mitchell, a beautiful engraved silver trowel, to be used in the laying of the corner-stone. The trowel bore the following inscription:—"This trowel, used in the laying of the corner-stone of the Central Presbyterian Church, Toronto, on Wednesday, 4th October, 1876, was presented by the congregation to the Rev. David Mitchell, the first pastor of the church."

Rev. David Mitchell then laid the stone in the usual form common on such occasions, after which he led in prayer. The 28th psalm was then sung, and was followed by the following address by the rev. gentleman:—

REV. MR. MITCHELL'S ADDRESS.

To the congregation over which I have the honour to preside as pastor, the laying of this corner-stone is an event of no ordinary interest. It is safe for me to say that there is not any honour of my life that I value more highly than this which has fallen to my lot this day. To be the pastor of a Christian congregation is an honour which I esteem second to none in the world; but to be the minister of a congregation when they are engaged in the great undertaking of building a house to the honour of God's name is still more a position of trust and responsibility that cannot be over-estimated as to its importance and far-reaching consequences. The event of this day has a human as well as a Divine side in which we may regard it. In the one aspect we have to think of the congregation, with one heart and mind, occupying themselves in a grand enterprise. The laying of this corner-stone is an emblem which, when rightly interpreted, signifies the spirit and motives which move and animate the congregation who hope to occupy, ere long, the building whose walls we now see rising before us, as a place of worship. An ennobling self-sacrifice is needed to carry such a work to completion. While already we have received kindly favours from Christians outside our own particular communion, and while we confidently expect to be aided in our undertaking by the prayers and gifts of many friends and well-wishers, who have the cause of Christ at heart, it is evident that the burden and responsibility of building this church must rest mainly with ourselves. That this congregation have willingly and cheerfully accepted the situation; that its members have been of one mind in the matter of erecting a suitable place of worship; that as far as they have been canvassed they have contributed liberally of their substance to the end in view, is a ground of much gratification to myself, and I am sure, to all who listen to my words, and who by their presence and countenance on this occasion show the deep interest they take in our movements. But besides this is a pleasing reflection that the undertaking in which we are engaged will be the means of making a valuable addition to the public buildings of this city. From a merely human point of view, the construction of a church has an important bearing on the well-being of the community. It supplies a new centre of influence for good. It is charged with forces that will fall upon the moral and intellectual condition of the people. It is a constant and abiding emblem of the civilization that is growing in our midst. We are providing a house, in which work of benevolence will be uninterruptedly and diligently carried on, and from which influences will continually go out that are antagonistic to vice and crime in every form. We are also, we believe, according to our ability adding to the architectural beauty of a city which is already proverbially distinguished in this way, and whose renown in that respect is destined to grow with the increase of her population and wealth, and with the development of the tastes of her people. Within the last year alone we have seen the completion of two magnificent buildings—the Jarvis street Baptist church, of which Dr. Castle is the esteemed pastor, and the St. Andrew's church, over which our friend Mr. Macdonnell presides. These, with the Episcopal cathedral on the one side, and the Knox Presbyterian church on the other, whose pastor, Dr. Topp, while occupying the highest honour our Church has to bestow as Moderator of the General Assembly, so gracefully presides over the present gathering, and with the Metropolitan Church in the centre; these, and others we have not time to specify, were sufficient to confer upon Toronto the soubriquet of the City of Beautiful Churches. And now, in adding our humble quota to all this architectural wealth, we feel we are doing something to augment, if possible, her fair name and reputation. But, while valuing the erection of this church on these and other grounds, we have still more reason for congratulation and rejoicing when we consider this matter on its Divine side. The laying of this corner-stone is a virtual dedication of the building that is being erected here to the honour of God's name and to his worship. In this respect we trust we are imbued with the very highest motive that can enter into human breast. This church has for its object, in common with the other churches in the city, the perpetuation of the system of truth which is contained in the Word of God. It will speak to men of the duty of worshipping the Omnipresent Spirit, in spirit and in truth. It will 'e'il of sin an its dreadful consequences. It will point to the cross and passion of Christ, and ever sound forth the tender message of the divine wisdom and mercy. It will proclaim the mighty working of God's Spirit in human souls by which they are delivered from the bondage of the Evil One and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The corner-stone points to Christ, the chief corner-stone of the Temple not made with hands. These foundations speak to us of "the City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." These walls, rising from the earth, tell us of the human souls which, as living stones make up the walls of the New Jerusalem. And when the building shall at length be

covered in, it will be emblematical of the finished work of Christ, when He will present to His Father the glorious temple of His body, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. It is surely a profitable reflection that we are thus made instrumental by God in erecting a house in which He will be honoured, and in which the truths of His inspired Word shall be proclaimed and taught. Long after our tongues are silenced in the grave, the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of Zion will be heard within these walls. Here the Gospel of salvation shall be preached. On this site many a voice will grow eloquent with the message of God's love. The Book of Books will occupy an honoured place in this building; it will be its light and inspiration. And, Oh comforting thought, how many souls will be born in this place, and in connection with God's house! Of this man and that man it will be said, he was born here. There will be joy in the presence of the angels of God over those repentant ones who learn within these walls to lip the Redeemer's name. And what cause of rejoicing to think that we are to-day laying the foundation of an institution in which the young and rising generation of centuries, it may be, shall be trained in the grand truths of God's Word and be educated for eternity! What may be the influence of this church upon Home and Foreign Missions and upon the advancement of Christ's kingdom, who can tell? It is known only to God, and it will be revealed to us on that great day when the Lord comes and makes up His jewels. Seeing, then, we are now engaged in a work which, as a human institution, will tell directly upon the interests of this great and growing community, we may surely expect to receive the best wishes and substantial aid of our fellow citizens. But, above all, as we are employed in a work that has in view the glory of God, and the proclamation of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, we may as confidently look for the Divine blessing upon our efforts. With these combined influences, surely we may go forward courageously to our task, believing that in the good providence of God the enterprise we begin this day will eventually be crowned with success. And next to these considerations, it is to me of great interest to think that the Central Presbyterian church is being erected on historical ground—on ground so well known as that on which once stood the residence of the Governor of this Province, and ground therefore that is emblematical of the just laws and good government of our Dominion and nation. It is also suggestive that this church is being erected on a site for so many years 'honoured as a college of training for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. The soil on which we stand this day thus speaks to us of loyalty in a double aspect—not only of loyalty to our Queen and country, but of the greater loyalty we owe to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to that system of truth which has been so faithfully, and with such ability, taught in this very place in the past. Our motto is, *Nec tamen consumebatur*. The truth must prevail. The work of God shall go on.

Mr. Mitchell's address was followed by brief congratulatory speeches by the Revs. Dr. Castle, S. N. Jackson, B. B. Usher, Principal Caven, D.D., Alexander Topp, D.D., after which the 122nd Psalm was sung, and Dr. Topp pronounced the benediction.

India: Zenana Work.

This department of labor is gradually growing, as the following resume will show: At Allahabad, Miss Seward, M.D., has visited many Zenanas "of high-caste Hindus or the better class of Mohammedans." Miss Wilson has visited regularly in thirty-one houses, in which were 55 women and girls; 42 others came to hear the Bible lessons in these homes, while a number would be present at times as listeners. Mrs. Holcomb taught about 40 women in the houses she visited. Mr. Brown and Miss Blunt report 40 houses open in Farrukhabad and 28 in Futehgurh—an increase of 20 zenanas. "The prejudice among the natives here against having wives and daughters taught is gradually and steadily giving way." These ladies, with Mrs. Lucas and Mrs. Tracy, visited and taught in the numerous girl's schools in the city and villages. A large number of families in Mynpurie, and in the contiguous villages, have been visited by Mrs. Johnson, assisted by two Bible women. Miss Belz, of Etawah, besides visiting 95 zenanas, has spoken to women of the great salvation at 14 melas, in the streets and lanes of Etawah 75 times, and 254 times in the villages, within a radius of 45 miles. Zenana work has been constantly carried on at Saharanpur, chiefly in connection with the girl's schools. "This work is limited only by the strength of those engaged in it. There are very few, if any, of the zenanas in the city into which Mrs. Calderwood would not be most cordially welcomed." In Lahore, 86 zenanas and 108 pupils are under the care of Miss Thiede. She says: "A number of our scholars were married during the year and went to their husbands' homes, but took their books with them, and we have had the joy to hear that the husbands were much pleased to find that their wives could read, and that they read with them. One of these was found by her husband kneeling down and pouring out her heart to the Lord Jesus, and she felt afraid when her husband came, but he told her she need not be afraid for he loved the Lord Jesus himself." At Rawal Pindi and other stations, more or less of such labor it expended, and the results will soon begin to be seen.—Annual Report, 1876.

The Scripture gives four names to Christians, taken from the four cardinal points so essential to man's salvation: Saints, for their holiness; believers, for their faith; brethren, for their love; disciples, for their knowledge.

"If we live a life of faith on the Son of God, then we shall assuredly live a life of holiness. I do not say we ought to do so, but we shall as a matter of necessary consequence. But in as far as we do not lead a life of faith, in so far we shall live a life of unholiness. It is through faith that God purifies the heart, and there is no other way."—M'Cheyne.

(To be Continued.)