

Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXVIII. No. 30

MONTREAL, JULY 24, 1903.

30 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid

A Supplemented Offering

(Jane Ellis Joy, in 'American Messenger'.)

'Isn't this prayer-meeting night, dear?'

'O yes, mother,' answered Freda, with a forlorn look. 'I hadn't forgotten it, only —' There was a little bitterness in the young girl's smile—a missionary from China is to speak, and there will be a collection taken up for him. Is it worth while for me to walk eight squares there and eight squares back to give a penny—one mean little penny?'

'Yes, I think it is worth while, Freda,' said Mrs. Conig, who, by reason of a painful lameness was confined indoors herself. 'It isn't the amount you give that counts in the Lord's sight, you know; it's the love-spirit of the giving.'

'Yes, mother; I'm afraid I forget that sometimes, especially when I see Rose Powers putting a half-dollar on the collection plate. To-night I'll try to think of the widow's two mites, and what a blessed thing it is that the Saviour is still the same. Yes, I'm going.'

Freda felt inspired by her own brave words, which seemed to take an even stronger hold on her after they had been uttered. Quickly she made a few changes in her simple summer toilet, and was soon out on the street walking with that light-heartedness that comes to people who rise triumphant over obstacles. She had been tempted by her poverty to remain at home; but she had overcome.

'How I would have moped at home all evening, and worried poor mamma with my discontent,' she thought. 'Now I'll hear all about what's going on in the mission fields, and I can give my one cent with a prayer for God's blessing. Besides, as papa says, one's very presence at such gatherings is a help. The Lord can be served in other ways than by giving money to good causes; so, as I haven't money to give, I will just give what I have.'

It was still daylight. As Freda approached one of the little cross streets a little, bent, elderly woman carrying a large bundle stepped feebly on in front of her.

'I'll give what I have,' again thought Freda. 'I have strength;' and directly she was saying in her pleasant, cheery voice, 'Let me help you carry the bundle. It looks heavy for one.'

'Tis middlin' heavy, but I don't like to bother you, miss,' replied the old woman, her wrinkled face kindling with a smile.

'Helping won't bother me at all,' said Freda, adjusting the big bundle. She took hold of one end by a string, and the two walked along the street, the old woman being warmed by the friendly act into becoming communicative.

'I do a bit of washin' sometimes,' she said, 'and thankful I am to git it; for the folks I live with needs a sight of helpin'.' There was no hint of complaint in the tone; but rather a note of hope and cheerfulness that struck Freda strangely.

'Helping? Are you helping people?' she asked, trying not to show surprise.



NOW I LAY ME.

'Well, yes,' said the old woman with a little apology. 'They ain't always needin'; but they be needin' now, because he's out of work, and she's got too many little children to leave at home, and then she ain't well, either. They've always been good to me, and I've lived with them for ten years.'

Prompted by sympathy rather than curiosity, Freda asked more questions, and the answers to them revealed the painful particulars of a case of great poverty and suffering. There was a cause for it, which the old woman in her story touched tenderly. The husband of the woman who was ill had lost his position through drinking, and not being able to find work elsewhere, he was becoming despondent.

'He's a good man when he lets liquor alone,' continued the old woman, returning to her habitual cheerfulness when the worst was told. 'He was well raised and used to be a church member. If only he could be kep' from drink! Do pray for him, dear. I've been a prayin' woman all my life time. Only for that I don't believe I'd a kep' up.'

'I will. I'll pray for you all,' said Freda, as they parted. Nor did she forget the promise.

When the meeting was over, and the collection plate handed to her, she placed her cent on top of the dollar bill that Rose Powers, sitting beside her, donated. But this evening Freda did not feel poor, or

ashamed of her gift. She was praying: 'Dear Lord, please accept this small offering and also my other little service done in thy name. And please bless me by blessing that poor family and by helping the husband and father to reform.' After the service she reported the case to one of the deaconesses of the church.

As the days passed Freda often thought of this family—the old woman so bravely taking the place of responsibility. What devotion! What faithfulness! What self-forgetfulness! And to be cheerful and hopeful in the midst of the shocking discouragements, and with the hard labor. Yes, it was easy to believe that she had been a 'praying woman all her life.'

The next prayer-meeting night a man rose at the close of the service in response to an invitation to express a desire for prayers, and said:

'If anyone ever needed help, human and divine, I do. I ask especially to be delivered from the temptation of drink.' As the man, apparently a stranger who had dropped in, proceeded to talk of his great desire to do better, Freda, sitting in a front seat, was struck with the similarity of his story to the one she had heard the week before. A glance back at the speaker convinced her of the man's identity, for there beside him sat the smiling old woman whose burden she had helped to carry.

Freda's heart bounded, and her eyes suffused with glad, grateful tears, as she