



The Family Circle.

A LITTLE RED BOX—A SONG OF MITES.

MRS. N. O. ALGER.

This little red box in my hand
Is as empty as it can be.
It makes no noise at all, at all,
Though I shake it hard, as you see.

I wish it were full, don't you?
Of pennies, and quarters and dimes,
But wishing will not make it full,
For I've tried it so many times.

Just think how much good it would do,
If this little red box were full,
How many an ignorant child
Might be sent to a mission school?

It makes me most ready to cry,
When I hear the stories they tell
Of children who don't know at all
Of Jesus, who loves them so well.

I wish I could help them some way,
Now listen, I've thought of a plan—
I'll pass my red box 'round the room,
And ask all to give what they can.

I think you'll each give a little,
I'll get my box full I believe,
For Jesus once told the people
'Tis more blessed to give than receive.

The one who speaks this should shake the box
as mentioned in the first stanza, and if speaking
in a Church, "room" in the fifth stanza should
be changed to Church.

ABOVE HER LITTLE GRAVE.

BY H. B. MACKENZIE, GLASGOW.

Jennet Earlston walked into her husband's studio one cold morning in December, well wrapped up in furs, and with her fair, haughty face rising from among them like a white lily. By the hand she led her only child, little Tottie, the daintiest baby girl one ever set eyes upon, and the darling of her father's heart.

Earlston looked up from his easel, and let his eye rest for a moment on wife and child. They were fair possessions as ever delighted the soul of artist husband and father; yet Earlston did not look happy as his eyes dwelt on them. A heavy frown gathered on his brow, as he said—"Is it possible you are mad enough to take Tottie out on a day like this, Jennet? It is the height of folly!"

"Indeed!" Mrs. Earlston retorted in chilly tones. "I have no doubt you think so, Lawrence; I have not the slightest doubt you wish to deprive your wife of any small pleasure she may desire. But, seeing you cannot deny yourself the degrading pleasures you find at night away from your wife and child, it is possible I may refuse to deny myself my enjoyment."

The cloud on Lawrence Earlston's brow grew heavier.

"If you wish to win me from these degrading pleasures, as you call them, Jennet, you certainly do not go the right way about it. Punishing a man for his folly will never win him from it."

"Will it not?" said Jennet, with studied indifference. "If not, I am afraid you may expect any other mode of treatment in vain, Lawrence. I shall not be home for luncheon. Come Tottie." And, taking her child by the hand, Mrs. Earlston swept out of the room. Her husband looked after her with angry eyes; and no sooner had the door closed on her than he rose, went to a sideboard which stood in the studio, and taking from it a decanter, poured himself out a glass of wine, and drank it off. This was Lawrence Earlston's unfeeling comfort after a disagreement with his wife—and alas! these had been too frequent of late. Earlston had little thought when he asked beautiful Jennet Kean to be his wife how many angry words would come to be exchanged between them. He had loved her as an artist loved a thing of beauty; but he had known little of her haughty temper, her chilling manner, her forbidding and repressing coldness. So, when the novelty of his new life had worn off Earlston had taken refuge, as many another easy-principled young man has done, with the boon companions of his bachelorhood, who were all gay young fellows, frequenters

of such places as the "Earthly Paradise," and keepers of late and fast hours. Jennet was deeply wounded. She was not a total abstainer, nor had she ever given the matter a thought; but to see her husband, whom in her secret heart she had thought a very hero, degrade himself to the level of "fast" young manhood burned into her haughty spirit like fire. Once or twice Earlston had come home "the worse" of wine. Jennet had shut herself up in her cold reserve, thus taking the most effective step to drive her husband still further wrong.

Only last night—Jennet's soul seemed to go on fire yet as she thought of it—Lawrence had come home, not the worse—certainly not the better—but stupid, what Jennet in another would have called tipsy; she could not bring herself to say it of him. He was never angry at such times, only stupidly jovial and good-natured; the anger came afterwards. Jennet knew this, and made up her mind to leave him the next day to his anger alone.

She had some calls to make; she ordered the little pony-carriage, and seating herself and the child in it, rolled towards the town, for the Earlstons lived in one of the pleasantest of the suburbs of Edinburgh. It was one of these bitterly cold days so common in our northern metropolis, when the east wind seems to cut into one's very bones, and seize on the vitals with a freezing chill. Jennet felt it herself, and shivered; but she was too young a mother to think that it could do any real harm to baby Tottie, who sat with glowing cheeks, chattering in her childish way as she watched the passers by. Mrs. Earlston's last visit was to an acquaintance of her dead mother's who had always taken a deep interest in the motherless girl.

"My bairn," said Mrs. Lawrie, hastening forward to salute her visitor, "out on a day like this with Tottie. Oh, that's a foolish-like thing, Jennet! It's freezing cold outside."

"Do you think it will do her any harm?" Jennet asked, with suddenly blanching cheek.

"I hope not, lassie; but it's a risk. What made you come out to-day?—not for pleasure, I'm sure."

"No," said Mrs. Earlston with bitterness; "I came out to escape what I knew was brewing for me at home if I waited there."

"Don't speak in that way, Jennet," said the older lady. "It vexes me to hear that tone you've begun to use of late. What's the matter, lassie? Is there anything come between you and Earlston?"

"What should come between me and my husband?" retorted Jennet, haughtily. But the kindness of the elder woman overcame her at last, and the whole terrible story came out.

Mrs. Lawrie sat silent for a few minutes regarding the proud young face before her with a look of tenderness and pity. At last she said:

"Jennet, you've been making a great mistake, child. You think to punish your husband for his folly, and instead of that you're driving him further wrong with your proud obstinacy. Ah, Jennet, you little know what you're doing in raising up a barrier like this between the two that should be one heart, one flesh. Never will ye win a man from evil courses by proud indifference, lassie."

"What would you have me do?" asked Jennet, interlacing the slim fingers that rested in her lap.

"There's but one thing ye can do—go hand-in-hand with him in trying to cure him of this evil habit. Unless it has got a very strong hold on him, you're surely able, two of you, to fight it down. Do you use wine at home?"

"Yes," Mrs. Earlston answered.

"Then give it up, Jennet—I'm warning you, mind—give it up at once, and for ever. Don't think, because you are people of taste and refinement you're above putting yourselves on a level with those who find total abstinence their only safety. Believe me, my dear, it is the only safety. I've been a total abstainer these fifteen years, ever since my poor boy Willie ran into evil ways that ended, as all evil ways do, in death." The mother's voice trembled as she spoke. "Take my advice, my dear, go home to your husband and be a truer wife to him than you've been. Help him to fight his enemy, don't stand aside haughtily, and see him go down to ruin, without trying to save him. And you have done wrong in taking that child out to indulge your own wicked

temper. Take her home, Jennet, and at once."

The motherly, though not the wifely, instinct of Jennet was roused. She took Tottie home. In the hall she met Earlston going out.

"Mark my words, Jennet, you will regret this day's work," he said, "if you have hurt the child to satisfy your malice against me, you must bear the consequences. And now, I am going out—at least I do not harm others when I do so."

He went, banging the hall-door after him. Jennet, with anger and remorse burning in her heart, took the child up to the nursery.

All the afternoon the child was hot and restless and peevish, and Jennet was miserable. She put her early to bed, and went down-stairs, ostensibly to read, really to wait for her husband. She did not like the hurried breathing and flushed cheeks of the little one; but she knew nothing about children's ailments, and the nurse, a foolish young girl, was equally ignorant. If only Lawrence would return sober! But as time went on, her hopes of that grew fainter and fainter. At last she heard the familiar check-key being turned, and the next moment, flushed, excited, with unsteady step, Lawrence Earlston swung himself into the room. Jennet saw at once help for her here there was none; and miserable, remorseful, with a dull pain throbbing at her head and heart, she went upstairs to watch by her child. Just at midnight there came, what to every nurse is so terrible a sign—a hoarse, croaking sound in the little one's throat. Jennet did not know what it meant, but it alarmed her vaguely. She flew downstairs, awakened the boy who was the only male factor in the Earlston's household, and sent him at once for the doctor. Then she returned to the nursery, and the two frightened women—Jennet and the young nurse—kept watch by the child, who became every moment more choked and peevish, till the doctor came. The medical verdict was serious; it was a bad case of croup, the kind, though he did not say so, of that terrible disease of childhood which generally proves fatal. With the strong calm of desperate courage Jennet did herself all that had to be done, with her own strong white hands, forcing the medicine down the choking little throat, and adhering to the doctor's instructions as rigidly as if she knew—what indeed was the case—that life or death depended on them. And all this time Lawrence Earlston lay sleeping a drunken sleep downstairs.

The doctor went away at last, promising to return in an hour. But the hour had not expired when Jennet saw a change was coming. The child's struggles became fainter and fainter; it was no longer life struggling with death. When the doctor returned, he could only stand and look on. Suddenly a terrible struggle for breath attacked the child; she wrestled with her little hands, her chest heaving agonizingly. Then Jennet knew the end was near. She turned to the sobbing nurse.

"Go down to the dining-room and waken Mr. Earlston, Jane. Tell him Tottie is dying."

She spoke in a harsh, unnatural voice. The girl obeyed, and a few minutes after Earlston, thoroughly sobered, with a white, strange look in his face, entered. He bent over the struggling child with one terrible cry.

"Tottie! Oh, my darling! Tottie!"

Another struggle for breath, and the child lay still, the terrible red gone out of her face, leaving it snowy white. The agonized look passed away, the chest heaved with two fluttering sighs, and all was over! Peace had come upon the child—such peace as only death can bring, and in the presence of it neither father nor mother could utter a cry.

The little girl had been carried to her resting-place, and the desolation of bereavement rested on the artist's home. Husband and wife had hardly seen each other since that terrible night; they had been kept apart, each with the thought that the other was accusing him or her in heart.

Lawrence Earlston sat gloomily before his easel, a glass of strong brandy before him. It was the only thing which could strengthen his hand he thought. The door opened, and, tall and stately, like a white lily than ever in her black garments, Jennet came in. Earlston looked up at her with haggard eyes.

"Don't accuse me," he cried, irritably, as she approached. "If one of us is guilty the other has no right to throw a stone."

Jennet fell back a moment, but only a moment. The old haughty look had gone out of her face, which was strangely soft and gentle, with a new light as of peace upon it. She came near her husband, and laid her hand upon his arm.

"God knows I do not wish to accuse you, Lawrence. How can I—I, who have lost the love of husband and the guardianship of child,—her voice broke a little—"through my own mad pride and temper? Forgive me, my husband, I have sinned."

A flush crossed Earlston's haggard face. He touched her hand lightly.

"Do you mean this, Jennet?"

"This, and much more, Lawrence; let me make confession to you." She knelt down beside his chair. With a quick movement, Earlston's hand was laid on her dark head. "But for my wicked pride, Lawrence, my child, my darling, who is gone to be with the angels, would be still with us! But that is not all. Had I been more patient, more loving with you, Lawrence, you never would have come to like that accursed thing"—she pointed to the brandy—"which has come like a serpent between us to sting us both. Lawrence, since my child died, I have seen all this, and I have prayed God to forgive me, and I think he has. Will you, too, my husband?"

"I have been a brute, Jen," said Earlston, huskily, using the old pet name of long ago; "it is I who should ask forgiveness of you. But you said just now you had lost my love. No, Jen, never! Through all my madness and folly, and your coldness, I have loved you."

He drew the dark head to him, and kissed it.

"And we will begin a new life this day, Jen. Here is the beginning of it."

He caught up the glass of brandy, and emptied it into the fire. Jennet said, eagerly—

"Lawrence, I am going to take Mrs. Lawrie's advice and become a total abstainer, will you?"

"I will, and with God's help, will never be anything else, Jennet. But we must ask His help, darling."

Husband and wife knelt down in the studio, and, for the first time for many years, Lawrence Earlston prayed. I think the feeling that his little angel-child was listening to him gave him strength to do it, for it is by many and faltering footsteps that we reach the throne of God, and he is not the first whom a little child's hand has led thither.

"Our dead child will be a more precious bond between us than our living one was," said Jennet with streaming eyes, as they rose from their knees. "She has brought us closer together, and, I trust, brought us closer to God."

And so she had. From that day Lawrence Earlston became a firm total abstainer, and he has remained so ever since. More than that, both husband and wife dated from then their first real giving up of themselves to the loving God, who had taken their little one to Himself. Neither of them has ever forgotten the day when, over the memory of their child's little grave, they had "kissed again with tears."—*League Journal*.

DO MISSIONS PAY?

They pay by whatever standard you apply. Is it the commercial standard? They are the best friends of commerce. They introduce the wants, the decencies, the refinements of civilization; they multiply the customers of the trading nations of the West, and they procure security for the trader. The mission of the Sandwich Islands was a costly effort to the American Board, but two years' profit of the annual commerce would cover all the outlay, and commerce was the fruit of the mission. Mr. Whitmee estimates that every missionary sent to the Southern Seas represents civilizing influences that issue in a trade of £10,000 a year. Is it the political standard? By confession of the government of India they are a strength to our rule, and a factor that is all but indispensable to the contentment, progress, and welfare of the people; and less than a century after our missionaries were forbidden on Indian soil, official Blue-books pronounced them the greatest benefactors of the country.—*Rev. W. F. Stevenson, D.D.*