

MRS. BRUSH'S VISIT TO THE BRANCH TREASURER.

BY MRS. M. A. MILLER.

"There's a caller fur ye in the parlor, ma'am, but she didn't give me her name nor her ticket, an' she wants to see yer leddyship at once," was the message brought by Bridget one morning to my room as I had seated myself to the answering of the accumulated correspondence of four or five days. The desire not to be disturbed must have shown itself in my face, for Bridget, as if to compensate for the interruption, quickly added, "I think, ma'am, she must be one of them mission'ry women that comes here sometimes, fur while I was a stirrin' of the fire an' a tellin' her to warm herself, fur the poor body's most a froze, she brung out of her bag one o' them boxes ye keeps on the mantle, an' she axed me if you wasn't the woman who takes the money fur the heathen. She ain't one of the fashionable sort as ye'll see fur yerself, ma'am."

With this volunteered information I descended to the parlor, and saw a quaint figure seated in the rocker which was drawn close to the grate, her ungloved hand extended to the warmth, and a glance at her costume proved the correctness of Bridget's remark. Evidently,

my caller was one who obeyed the Scripture in not being conformed to the fashions of this world; but the face that turned to me and looked out from the neat quilted hood as I bade her a cheerful "good morning," was enough to win my heart at once.

The hearty clasp of her hand betokened a warm heart, and without further preliminary she introduced her errand by saying, "I've been a readin' in that paper the Woman's Board publishes, an' I see your name as the treasurer woman, an' I thought I'd come an' give you some money I've been a savin';" and saying this she reseated herself and again extended her hands to the glowing grate.

To my inquiry as to her name and how far she had come, she replied, "I'm jist gittin' thawed out fur its terrible cold this mornin'. I've come twenty mile or more, me an' Jared, that's my old man; 'Squire Brush,' they call him to home—I left him at the Blue Corners an' I came here on the train alone. Jared didn't want me to come this cold mornin', but you see I had this nite box," holding up as she spoke, what was to me a familiar looking box, "an' I have a bag in here, with some mission'ry money," lifting a neat satin bag which lay on her lap.

"Jared said he'd send you the money by mail, but I didn't b'lieve in no such doin's seein' as I had set my heart on comin' an' havin' a talk with you, an' as its most eleven months since I commenced a savin' of this money I thought it was nigh time I was givin' it to you so that it could be a circulatin'; so when I heerd Jared

a plannin' to come to town with a load of farm truck, thinks I to myself, that's my chance to go an' see that treasurer woman an' give her this money for the heathen, an' here I am; an' if it won't be a takin' too much of your time I'd like to tell you 'bout this mite box, an' this 'Penitence Bag,' I call it," and she drew from her satin bag a small blue chintz one.

"Its a long story," said she, "but I'll hurry through it an' tell you only the pints in it."

On my assuring her that it would give me great pleasure to hear it she resumed: "You see, I was once dreadfully set forninst furrin missions—Jared an' me both. We didn't know much 'bout 'em, fur good old Brother White that was our preacher nigh unto five year', he never said any thing 'bout 'em, 'cept to bring 'em in in his prayers occasionally, but the truth is we had no money to send to 'em, least ways, 'twas as much as we could do to pay our preacher's sal'ry, an' we didn't give him a livin' sal'ry either, an' I s'pect he thought if we'd send money away we couldn't pay him, an' he got so precious little, you know. Dear soul, I don't wonder at him. But, after a while, conference sent us a new man, an' he was all alive 'bout furrin missions, an' he kep' a tellin' us our duty 'bout givin', an' every quarter he'd preach a mission'ry sermon, an' he had the childer givin' in the Sunday-school fur edecatin' a girl in Japan, an' all that, but when I knew afore hand that a mission'ry sermon was a 'comin' I kep' clear of the church that Sunday, an' Jared he was a'most worse nor me, an' fairly hated the words 'furrin missions;'

but the preacher, he kep' a talkin' an' a tellin' us we ought to *give*, an' it was givin' an' givin' all the time, an' he said we wasn't honest if we didn't give the Lord a tenth.

"I see now that he was right, but at that time I didn't an' I thought he needn't be a medlin' with our money affairs; howsomever, Jared got affronted at the preacher's plain way o' talkin' 'bout heapin' up riches, fur you see Jared is pretty well to do in the world, an' it looked like he was a preachin' all that to us, an' so we staid to home; an' then from stayin' to home an' bein' kind of set agin the preacher, we got to thinkin' hard things of him, an' sayin' hard things, an' we forgot what the Scripture says 'bout speakin' 'gainst the Lord's anointed.

"But you see, while we was a doin' all this, we didn't think how 'twas affectin' our boy Jack. He was a dear, good lad, our Jack was," and here the old lady's voice faltered, and she brushed away a tear at the mention of her boy's name, "but he got keerless too, an' could talk agin' the preacher as well as his father nor me, an' of a Sunday instid of goin' to church as he was allus used to, he'd hitch up an' go to the Corners, an' so it went on—Jack got into bad company; an' when after two year', Brother Tim, another new preacher come, an' we wanted Jack to go to church with us, he wouldn't go. Then Jared, he's pretty strong-headed an' he put his foot down an' said if Jack wouldn't go to church he shouldn't have a horse off the farm to go galivantin' round the country on the Sabbath day; so it came to hard words atween them, an' then when

I took Jack's part, fur Jack was a good lad, his father was furninst me—*me* that had never a hard word with him afore.

"An' so Jack got tired of the farm an' the scoldin's, fur you know one thing brings on another; an' one mornin' when I called him to his breakfast, no Jack was there, an' when I went to his room, I found he hadn't been in bed at all; an' there was a note on his table, a tellin' me not to worry fur him but that he was gone to sea.

"Well, the days was purty dull after Jack went; the home seemed as if a death had been in it. We didn't have no letters from him, an' in my many lonely hours I could only think, an' think, an' I couldn't stop thinkin'; It seemed to me that God was a punishin' me fur settin' myself agin his anointed an' fightin' agin his commands 'bout the heathen.

"I got fretted and worritted, an' Jared felt out doors more heartsome than indoors, even in cold weather, an' I couldn't bear to see our neighbor Tom Sloan drive past with his boy by his side, fur it made me all the more sad 'bout poor Jack.

"Well, one day when Jared drove home from the Corners, he fetched the mail, an' while I was a waitin' of him to put up his team an' come to dinner, I see among the mail a paper with my name on the kiver, a kind of stylish like—'Mrs. Jared Brush,' me that was simply Betty Brush. A wonderin' who could know me to send me a paper, I pulled the kiver off, an' it happened to be that little paper, the *Missionary Record*, belongin' to the Woman's

Society. You see, Jared had been to conference—Jared's purty smart, an' they 'lected him delegate last year, an' a young woman there asked him to write his name down fur the paper. Well, he didn't want it, an' he told her so, but she kinder insisted an' said 'take it for your wife,' Jared can't stan' coaxin' from a woman an' he jist took the paper, to git cl'ar o' her. An' as he knew I was ded set agin sich things, when the paper come to the post office, insted of bringin' it home like as he ought ter do with a thing he'd paid fur, he just left it there fur a light-en' the fire; but this time he cl'ar furgot that it was among his papers, fur he niver told me he had put my name down fur it.

"Well, as I was a sayin'—while I was a waitin' of him to put up his horses an' come to dinner, I opened the paper, an' I see somethin' 'bout Japan an' them other countries an' I thought—may be Jack'll go to visit them places, an' so I felt like readin' an' learnin, 'bout them.

"I said nothin' to Jared jist then 'bout the paper, but put it away till all the chores were done up at night, an' then when he was a readin' his papers I got mine out. There was a story in it 'bout Polly Pimpkins an' her Penitence Bag that took my attention, fur I soon see that Polly's besettin' sin was the same as me own—a sayin' things behind peoples' backs that ain't the most flat-terin'; so I had a fellow feelin' fur Polly. Polly's rule allus was, to put a penny in her bag fur every offence, an' if she spoke agin the preacher, she allus put in a dollar; an' so, I thought a Penitence Bag is jist what I need, fur

if I hadn't talked agin the preacher—least always afore Jack, I might a had the dear lad with me still.

“It would take me too long to tell you of all my experience with this bag, an' how I'd sometimes think I'd got rid of the habit of talkin' 'bout people, till Mirandy Blake or Sophrony Thompson would come in—they live to the Corners, an' know all the neighborhood news—an' afore I'd know it, I'd be a talkin' of my neighbors an' some of the church people I didn't jist 'gree with, as hard as anyone. This bag's had many a mortifyin' penny go into it, an' I didn't know I was sich a sinner till I commenced to watch myself—me that was a believin' Christian an' convarted nigh onto thirty year ago at Elder Brown's revival meetin'.

“Howsomever, the bag got a dollar from me only once, fur like Polly, I'd promised to put a dollar in every time I'd say anything agin the preacher, an' like Polly, it was for a findin' fault with him fur bringin' home a young bit of a wife, that wasn't a Methody nor a woman of experience neither. Well, I don't know as I'm done a puttin' into this bag yit, but as I was a sayin', the money ought to be a circulatin', an' I want you to use this *bag* money fur a sendin' that mission'ry paper to them that don't want it, p'raps they'll git to keer as I did; an' this money in the mite box,' said she, lowering her voice, “is more sacred like, cause it was fur *blessin's* the money went in—me that thought I had no *blessin's*,—an' I want you to use it all fur the missionaries. An' then I'm goin' to fill the box agin a fore Jack comes home—there! I

wasn't goin' to tell you jist yit that Jack was a comin'," said she with tears of joy in her eyes, "I was a goin' to tell you first of the auxiliary we have in our church, but you see I'm allus thinkin' of Jack.

"We got a letter from him nigh onto two months ago, an' Jared he was a'most cut up 'bout it, fur he keered fur Jack as much as I did, only he didn't show it in the same way—kinder hid his good feelin's you know, an' Jack thought his father didn't care shucks fur him. Well, since the letter's come Jared's been puttin' into this box too; an' I brung the letter along thinkin' you might care to read what the dear lad wrote; an' here it is," said she, drawing from her satin bag a well worn envelope and handing it to me. I took it and carefully unfolded the letter, for it required careful handling, and this is what it said:

YOKOHAMA, Jan. 12th, 18—.

My dear, dear Mother:—

Can you ever forgive me for being so cruel as not to write to you all this time? I never thought it was so cruel until I was taken sick and thought I was going to die; then how much I wished for your kind hands. I am getting better, but am still here at the Seaman's Home. Our vessel went on and left me, but O, mother! the good news I have to tell you, I've found the Saviour! I can scarcely wait to see you, and to write to you seems so slow. I just want to fly to you at once and ask you to forgive your erring boy. God has been so good to me, and you are the kindest and best of mothers and I know you will forgive me too. Last night I dreamed that you came to my bed and kissed my forehead just like you used to do when you came to tuck me in, and I remember, I would sometimes pretend I was asleep just to hear you say, "My darling boy." Yes, mother, it is so pleasant to lie here and think I hear you saying that still of your prodigal boy. How good God is, but it was these missionaries, mother, that did it; they often come here and talk to the sailors, and one of them sat with me nights

when I didn't know anything, and as I became better she talked with me and led me to Christ. One of these ladies is so much like Miss Steel, my Sunday-school teacher, you remember her, and while I was sick I thought it was she who was sitting by my bed. Tell father not to work too hard and I will soon be home to take the hardest of the work and let him rest. Our ship will call at this port in a few weeks, and our two year's cruise will soon be over. My dear, dear mother, I will never cause you another moment's sorrow. Pray that I may come to you in safety.

Your own loving JACK.

As I folded the letter and handed it back, my own eyes moist with tears of joy and sympathy, my visitor arose to go, apologizing for her long call, but just then Bridget's good natured face appeared at the door saying, "I thought ma'am as ye'd like a cup o' tea, an' if ye'll step out to the dining room ye'll find a bite spread on the table."

Thanking Bridget for her well timed hospitality, of which I, interested in my visitor's story had failed to think, I led the way to the dining room, and while partaking of the lunch prepared with Bridget's utmost care, I enjoyed hearing further of the auxiliary which had been organized by the preacher's "young bit of a wife" as many of the parishioners besides Mrs. Brush had derisively called her.

And I learned too, that the young wife had brought an influence into that settled, conservative, old church which had quietly worked until every woman was taking part in some form of Christian service; and the auxiliary was to have a delegate at the next Branch meeting, who was none other than my visitor herself.

"How strange," said she, as she was bidding me good by, "that Jack should be converted through them mission'ries,

an' how strange it seems that I should be here,—come 'specially to talk 'bout these things I was once so dreadfully set furninst, but may be that was the way the dear Father had to take with me fur bein' so stiff-necked.

“Why, if there ain't Jared!” she exclaimed, as she looked up street and saw a man trudging along with a heavy basket and gazing at the houses as if looking for some particular one. She soon attracted his attention and called, “What's the matter, Jared, anything wrong?”

“Nothin's wrong, mother,” he replied, coming up quickly, I sold my load of truck sooner'n I thought, an' its not safe fur you to be a travelin' alone so I've come up fur you, an' beside, I wanted to bring this lady some of our apples—the finest in the country,” he explained, as he showed me the nicest, largest pippins I had seen that winter.

Returning to the room, my visitor bethought herself and introduced “Squire Brush,” but the Squire needed no introduction, and during the few minutes of his stay he expressed himself so warmly in favor of woman's work in foreign missions that left no fears in my mind of any backsliding in that household.

“I've been a thinkin',” said he as he carried the basket of apples to the bin (a thing which he insisted on doing himself) “that the mission'ry work ain't so bad a thing fur us in this country, to say nothin' of t'other countries. Why, down to our church we're jist gettin' 'quainted with t'other churches; we didn't use to know any body outside our church down in the holler, but now the wim-

men's talkin' o' them other wimmen what's doin' mission'ry work, and you'd think they knew every one o' 'em to hear 'em talk, 'specially, Mrs. Anderson that head treasurer woman and the president, Mrs. Brown, an' lots more o' 'em that's jist left my head this moment, an' it all comes o' readin' that paper the wimmen prints, an' I tell you it makes 'em feel proud to be counted in with 'em—gives 'em kind of a family feelin', you know; an' them Branch meetin's—why they're jist splendid for bringin' the wimmen out, an' the men too for that matter—I 'spose Mis' Brush's been a tellin' you of our boy?"

And without waiting for an answer, he exclaimed between a half sob and a laugh—"Well, he's home, *he's home*, an' that's why I've come fur her;" but sinking his voice to a whisper he continued, "but I mus'nt tell mother only by degrees, she'd scarcely live to tell her all at once, she's had sich a frettin' time of it sence our boy left, an' she looks ten year older; an' the mission'ry business was the first thing that took her attention, but now that he's to home she'll be all right,"

I could scarcely keep back the tears of gladness for the good news, and more difficult it seemed to restrain my expressions of joy to the loving mother, but a glance at the pale, worn face that looked up, as if from a brown study as I re-entered the room, showed me that she was still "a thinkin' an' a thinkin'," and I felt that the Squire's course was right—in breaking the news to her gently.

Many months have passed since the unexpected visit of Mr. and Mrs. Brush, but the acquaintance commenced at

that time has continued, and the church "down in the holler" is one of the most prosperous that reports to our Branch meeting. From being too poor to give anything to foreign missions, the church dates its prosperity from the origin of its foreign missionary society, and the story of Mrs. Brush's "Penitence Bag" has not been without its influence, in at least, one direction. The law of kindness rules the tongues of all, and the religious life of the church has moved steadily upward to a higher and a better plane.

