



Jessica's First Prayer (Classic Reprint)

Hesba Stretton

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Excerpt from Jessica's First Prayer

In the Sunday Magazine there is an interesting account of Hesba Stretton, whose real name, it seems, is Miss Sarah Smith. Miss Hesba Stretton lives with her sister at Ham Common. The writer of the article, in describing this popular authoress and her works, says: "Her ideal Church is 'all people that on earth do dwell,' with the four Gospels for their theology, Jesus of Nazareth for their one Master, and the pleasures of brotherhood as their holy communion. Jessica's first prayer is her idea of prayer, the personal childlike speaking of our joys and wants to a living, loving Father.

"Miss Hesba Stretton's entrance into literary life does not seem to have been premeditated, but was brought about by, apparently, her sending a ghost story to the late Charles Dickens. He not only accepted the story of 'The Lucky Leg' and published it within a fortnight, but also asked for more contributions from the same pen.

"This was Miss Stretton's start, and one which does not come to many writers. The point of unity with Mr. Dickens was sympathy with helplessness, and especially the helplessness of children. The sight of it seemed to exercise a spell over them, and what they themselves felt they were happily enabled to make others feel by the vivid power of their descriptions.

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