

Family Reading.

For the Christian Messenger. Christ our Helper. (Hebrews ii. 18)

And wast thou tempted, O my Lord, And didst thou in thy holy soul, Feel agony and sore distress, And yet press forward to the goal?

Then there is ever hope for me; Thy smile's enough to light my way, Thy hand I clasp, I cling to thee, And darkness yields to perfect day.

O comfort inexpressible! O joy to know that not alone— I tread the path, the conflict feel, For on before there walketh One—

Whose "form is like the Son of God," Who did his Father's perfect will, Nor faltered on his weary road; He loved me erst, He loves me still.

The deepest grief, the strongest throes, That ever could my soul assail; He pities me, He loves, He knows, Nor lets my enemy prevail.

The earnest cry, the faltering prayer, He pleads for me before the throne; And I shall find acceptance there, By walking as my Lord hath done.

I thank thee as the risen Lord, I bless the Star that marked thy birth; I read thy life as God's own Word, And trace thy footprints o'er the earth—

Over them all a glory shines, The very countenance of God, I read it in a thousand lines, From birth to life one hallowed road.

Bristol, December, 1881.

Select Serial.

THE KING'S SERVANTS.

BY HESBA STRETTON. CHAPTER VII.

IN THE SPRING TIME.

AH! how wearily the long hours of the day dragged by! I had been an active woman all my life; and now there was nothing for me to do. I begged that I might help to scour out the old men's ward, thinking I might get a word with Transome; but they said I was past the age at which women were set to work. I asked the matron to find me some sewing to do; but she told me that it was all done by the girls at school in the workhouse. I saw then how the miserable old women about me had sunk lower and lower, till they were little better than idiots; and nothing lay before me but the same fate.

The only time of the day when I felt myself alive was morning and night, when prayers were read in the big room. We old folks were not required to attend, for the room was cold and draughty; but I would not have missed it for anything less than the chance of getting out of the house again; not that I thought God would listen to me more there than in the ward. But Transome never missed going. We could neither speak to one another, nor sit side by side; but we could see each other's faces, and we felt that we were together while we were hearing the same prayers, and repeating the same words. When we said "Our Father," I would have kept silent, hearkening if I could catch his voice, only I was afraid he might be hearkening for mine; and I said it, and listened, till at times I fancied that I could hear a word or two from him amid all the hum of the other voices; just as a mother hears her baby sob in its sleep, though there may be a hundred louder noises about her. It was the rule for the women to go out from prayers first; and when I went by in my turn I could always see Transome looking toward me, with his patient smile upon his face. It used to go to my heart to think of him dragging himself across the yard when the rain was falling, or the snow was under foot, and him so weak with rheumatism. But then, it was our only comfort, his as well as mine; and he never missed coming morn and night.

But when Sunday afternoons came; and we had our half hour together, we had very little to say to one another. We sat side by side, silent for the most part, and strangers that had seen us would have thought we cared naught

for one another. Our lives were so dull, with no change in them, that there was nothing to tell, and Transome could never get his thoughts shaped about in words. All I knew from him was that his ward was just like mine, filled with old men, with all the life gone out of them. He was warmed, and clothed, and fed, as well as the rest, but that was all. There was nothing for us to talk about.

Yet when we had our afternoon out, and went outside the workhouse walls then our tongues seemed unloosed. We had got permission to go out on the same day, and Transome was waiting for me in his work house clothes when I went through the great black doors. It was a chilly day in December, but it did not rain when we met, and we scarcely thought of the weather. Transome seemed more himself than he had done for a long, long while; and he crept along brisker, and with a brighter face than usual. We were like two birds that had been caged, and let out into freedom again for a little time, only with broken wings, and a string that would pull us back into the cage again.

The workhouse was on the same side of the town as our old house, and because we had nowhere else to go to, we turned toward that, though we knew it would be gone, and had no more a place save in our hearts. The north wind blew coldly against us as we toiled up the steep street leading to the brow of the hill; but we scarcely took notice of it. We were together once more, out of the dark shadow of the workhouse walls.

But when we reached the top of the street, where the dingle used to be, and turned the corner of the last house, to see the spot where our cottage had once stood, think what it was to find that it was standing still! Not one whit changed! There was the poplar-tree, with a few brown leaves clinging still to its topmost boughs, and the thatched roof, all green with moss and house-leek, and the lattice windows, with the dried stems of the creepers hanging about them, and my bushes of rosemary and lavender, just as we had left them! No, I could not believe my own eyes. I had been fretting and mourning over it in my secret heart as pulled down and destroyed; and now I saw it unchanged, not a beam, not a handful of thatch gone; only there was no smoke from the chimney, and the kitchen-shutter was not taken down. Transome lifted the latch of the wicket, and we walked down the old path together, as if we had only been to market, and I had the key in my basket. We sat down on the little bench beside the door, and looked in wonder at one another till I could not see him through my tears.

"Ally, lass!" said Transome, "it's like one o' my dreams. Thee and me comin' home to the ould house! Is it true, think's ta? Grip my hand hard if thee thinks it's true!"

"Ay, it's true!" I answered, "and the old master might have left us alone in it all this time instead of driving us to the workhouse."

"Hush! hush! lass," he said, "it is na' a' together him. God sent us there, and we mun never set oursen again Him. But may be He's keepin' it for us till we're ready to come out o' th' house again."

"We'll come out at once, I said, 'if we could only have the ould house again at the old rent; I could win bread for thee and me. Let us leave the house at once and come back.'"

"Nay, Ally," he answered, shaking his head, "we're bound to wait th' Lord's pleasure. Th' winter's frost and snow han to come yet; and we've got nayther bed, nor chair, nor table left. But i' th' spring, lass!"

We sat there all the afternoon, chilled to the bone; yet happier than we had been since the evening Transome came home with the bad news that we were to quit. A lass from one of the houses hard by came to us and told us how one of the biggest mills about there had failed shortly after we had left that part of the town; and now as trade had begun to fall off, no one had taken to the mill and set the looms at work again. Many of the houses in the dingle were empty, she said. That was why our old landlord had not pulled down the cottage and built more in its place.

last by the nightfall, though we lingered till it was quite dark, now and again plucking up a weed, or binding up a flower in the old garden, where we had so often worked together in the cool of the day. As we made our way slowly back to the workhouse, I talked over our plans as if I were a young wife again, and he had only just wedded me. As for Transome, he spoke but few words as usual, only muttering to himself from time to time, 'I' th' spring my lass—i' th' spring!'

It began to rain fast when we were more than half a mile from the workhouse; yet Transome, who was weary, could not quicken his lame feet. He bade me hurry on and get under shelter; but I begged and prayed him so to let me stay beside him as long as I could that he could not say me no. For the rain did not take away the new hope from my heart, or the new plans from my head; and I scarcely felt it for myself, only for him, whose coat was getting soaked through and through. He was shivering with the cold; but still there was a bright light in his eyes, and a smile upon his face, as he kept saying, 'I' th' spring, Ally—i' th' spring-time.'

Spite of the rain it grieved me to reach the workhouse gates again. Transome and I had been happy together once more; and now we must go our separate ways, and never see one another save at prayers until Sunday afternoon came again. The gas was lit inside the doors, and I could see his face clearly; and I see it now when I shut my eyes. I suppose there must have been wrinkles on it, and the eyes were sunken and dim, and it was old and withered, and his hair was thin and gray; but to me it was like the face of an angel, that loving, patient light in his eyes, which had been shining there whenever I had seen them, ever since we came into the house.

"My lass!" he said, holding me by the hand, "we mun lay none o' th' blame to th' Lord. When thee and me were young, an' brass plentiful, we niver laid a denny by agen a rainy day, thee knows. It were wrong on Ally; but there! aw niver reckoned, an' thee an' me 'ud ever grow ould. But whatever comes we mun na threep agen th' Lord."

"No, Transome, no!" I answered; "I'll bide His will; and may be He'll let us go home again in the spring."

"Ay! i' th' spring-time, lass!" he said, smiling, and lifting up his head as if he could feel the spring coming already. We bade good-by, yet stood together a minute longer; as if, like young folks, we could not make up our minds to lose sight of one another. Then he went his way, and I mine.

But all that night I could not sleep, and the next morning I found that the heavy rain of the evening before had brought on many pains in my old limbs. I had no power to lift myself from the bed; though when the bell rang for prayers, and I thought of Transome going, and how he'd feel at not seeing me there, I wept sore for trouble and sorrow. I begged everybody that came near me to take a message to him, but I got no answer back from him. Ah! they were a long three days but I lay there, not able to stir hand or foot without a groan wrung from me, spite of myself. But on the fourth morning I made shift to get out of bed, and crawl across the floor to the fireplace at the far end of the ward, and take my place among the old women cowering about it. I was stretching out my stiff hands toward the blaze to gather all the warmth I could, when all of a sudden the door at the other end of the long room was thrown open, and a shrill voice called out to me, a sharp, shrill voice that rang through me, "Alice Transome, ye're to go quick to the sick-ward, for ye're man's deatin'!"

CHAPTER VIII.

UNTO DEATH.

ALL my pains were gone in an instant—swallowed up by a greater pain. I started from my chair, hurried down the room, and across the yard to the sick-ward, thinking of nothing, knowing nothing, hearing and seeing nothing, only the dree words ringing through and through my head, "Ye're man is deatin'!" The doctor met me at the foot of the stairs, and I could only cry out the name, "Transome!" He shook

his head, and said something, but my ears were dull of hearing, and his voice sounded smothered and low. I almost ran as soon as I saw the door of the place where he was lying and I knocked at the door, which had no latch on the outside, earnestly, earnestly, as if some terrible thing was hunting me, and I had fled there for safety. But the terrible thing was in there before me; though I pushed in eagerly as soon as the door was opened.

The place was exactly the same as the ward I came from, and the ward he came from—a long, narrow room, with narrow beds on each side, and the same coarse blue quilts over them. But every person lying on these beds was ill as well as poverty-stricken. I saw Transome the first moment—I saw no one save him. He was alone, no one near him; for he was passing away quietly, and the nurses had much to do, and were glad to leave him to himself. Quite alone, lying with his eyelids closed, and drifting away tranquilly out of this troublesome life as if he did not know that he was going—just as a child falls asleep without knowing it. So quiet and still he was, that when I stole on tip-toe to his side, like I used to steal to Willie's cradle, he did not open his eyes, or move the poor hands that lay outside the quilt. I laid my hands softly upon them, and the icy chill that ran through me forced me to cry aloud.

"Oh, Transome," I said, "are you going to leave me—to leave me behind you in this dreadful place?"

At that his face quivered all over, and his lips moved, and his eyelids opened. A smile came across his face, full of content, and his poor glazed eyes brightened as he saw me bending over him.

"Ally, my lass! Ally!" he whispered. I knelt down beside him, and put my arm under his old gray head; and he kept on whispering, "Ally, my lass! my poor Ally, till I couldn't bear it a minute longer."

"Oh! I cried, 'the Lord is dealing very hard with us.'"

"No, no, he answered, 'He's dealin' softer w' us nor w' His own Son, as were crucified up' the cross. Nobry i' th' world has borne harder nor that. Aw'm a weary, sinfu' ould man; but He were young, and there was no sin in Him, yet they put Him to death up' the cross. No! Thee munna threep agen th' Lord, Ally.'"

"If He'd only let me come, too!" I cried again, feeling as if God must hear my cry, and take me along with Transome.

"Ay! awd bide for thee awhile if aw could, for sure," he said, tenderly, "aw promised to bide w' thee till death parted us; but 'twere the workhouse first, and now it's death. But thee'll not be long after me, Ally.'"

"No," I said, but my throat was so dry and choked I could say no more. If Transome died all was over for me. I was a helpless, friendless old woman, with nothing before me but to live and die in the workhouse; yet I could not be sure that I should die soon.

"Ally," he whispered again, "aw've gie'en thee mony and mony a cross to bear. But thee'll forgie me a, now."

"Thou never gave me a hard word," I said.

"Th' Lord knows," he went on, "at aw love thee more now nor when we were wed. Dost remember, lass? But tell me, quick, what were those words thee learned me th' neet afore we came into th' house? 'Faithful unto death.' Quick, Ally.'"

God knows how hard it was for me to make my voice speak through my sobs; but quietly and softly I repeated the words, putting my lips close to his ear.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!" "Gran' words," he whispered; "faithful unto death; crown o' life! Gran' words. Faithful unto death, Lord!"

His gray head fell heavier on my arm, and his eyelids dropped half over his eyes. His breath came feebler and feebler. I knew what it was. He tried to speak once more to me, but his poor tongue was stiff and cold. His fingers groped about a bit on the quilt, till I put my other hand into them. I would not stir or utter a cry, lest any of the strange women who were in the ward should come nigh us, and perhaps take me away from him. So quiet he was when he passed away forever, that even the sick man next to him, whom I could have touched with my hand without moving, did not know Transome was dead. Only I knew.

(To be Continued.)

Baby has gone to School.

The baby has gone to school; ah, me! What will the mother do, With never a call to button or pin, Or tie a little shoe? How can she keep herself busy all day, With the little "hinderin' thing" away?

Another basket to fill with lunch, Another "good-by" to say, And the mother stands at the door to see Her baby march away; And turn with a sigh that is half relief, And half a something akin to grief. She thinks of a possible future morn, When the children, one by one, Will go from their home out into the world

To battle with life alone. And not even the baby be left to cheer The desolate home of that future year.

She picks up garments here and there, Thrown down in careless haste, And tries to think how it would seem If nothing were displaced. If the house were always still as this, How could she bear the loneliness?

Booths' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 156.

Answer the following questions, and by that means refresh your memory of what you probably have long known. Set the names in order, and the initials will give a wise injunction of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, and what may be a safe guide to youth and age:

- 1. Who was the first Gentile convert? 2. Who was converted by an early discourse at Phillippi? 3. Who was Timothy's mother? 4. An aged prophetess who held the infant Jesus in the temple. 5. The wife of Ahasuerus. 6. The first garden containing fruit-trees. 7. The mount of transfiguration. 8. The mount of ascension. 9. Abraham's father. 10. Where Abraham died. 11. King David's rebellious son. 12. The unbelieving Apostle. 13. The name given to Christ in John i. 14. Samuel's mother. 15. King Saul's son and successor. 16. Which of the spies went into the promised land with Joshua? 17. Jael's husband. 18. Give the name of Aaron's son. 19. Who was the first Christian martyr? 20. The Jewish Rabbi from whom Paul received his early instruction. 21. Paul's true friend when in prison. 22. The slave of Philemon. 23. The good woman who worked for the poor.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

297. A reading lesson, crab fashion: Denrael ylerav evah il' yeht nosselrieh, Denresciad evah yeht guidne eht nehv, Deepes etaredon htiw deecorp suht dna, Daer yeht tfeI of tigr morf fi neht. Doe eht ofr gnintigee eht ekat taum, Dneherpmoc nossel siht dluow ohw yeht.

A CHARADE.

My first and my last are alike You will own, My second and fourth are the same. Of either my first or my last Be it known My third just its half will proclaim. My whole is a compliment Frequently paid To ladies of every grade. Behold me, and then it may Truly be said I'm the first of my kind ever made. Curtail but this last, and now it may Truly the name Of a lady my letters convey. Read backwards or forwards I'm each way the same Now tell me this riddle, I pray.

Selected.

299. Form a half square of the following described words:

- 1. A poisonous medicinal plant. 2. The mount of Christ's ascension. 3. An animal having two feet. 4. Smooth. 5. Taken by the hand. 6. A pronoun. 7. The commencement of literature.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 155.

- 1. L o t. Gen. xiii. 11; xix. 17. 2. A nn a. Luke ii. 36, 37. [vii. 25. 3. Z ee e. Ps. lxxxiii. 11; Judges 4. A bd i. 2 Chron. xxix. 12-20. 5. R igh t. Ezek. xviii. 26-29. 6. U zia h. 2 Chron. xxvi. 15-22. 7. S usann a. Luke viii. 3.

LAZARUS—TABITHA.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

293. Cross of words: R E E M O O D E E D E E M

294. F D O G D R U I D F O U N D R Y G I D D Y D R Y

295. Jonah, to the city of Nineveh. 296. Paper.

If people only said and did what it was absolutely necessary to say and do, this would be a world of silence and leisure.

Not a Marrying Girl.

They were seated together side by side on the sofa, in the most approved loving fashion—his arm encircling her taper waist, etc.

"Lizzie," he said, "you must have read my heart ere this; you must know how dearly I love you."

"Yes, Fred, you have certainly been very attentive," said Lizzie.

"But, Lizzie, darling, do you love me? Will you be my wife?"

"Your wife, Fred? By all things, not No indeed, nor any one else's."

"Lizzie, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say, Fred. I've got two married sisters."

"Certainly, and Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Skinner have very good husbands; I believe."

"So people say; but I wouldn't like to stand in either May's or Nell's shoes; that's all."

"Lizzie, you astonish me."

"Look here, Fred. I've had over twenty-five sleigh rides this winter, thanks to you and my other gentlemen friends."

Fred winced a little here, whether at the remembrance of that unpaid livery, bill, or the idea of Lizzie sleighing with her other gentlemen friends, I cannot positively answer.

"How many do you think my sisters have had? Not a sign of one, either of them. Such pretty girls as May and Nellie were, too, and so much attention as they used to have."

"Now Lizzie,"

"I am fond of going to a party occasionally, as well as a lecture or concert sometimes, and I shouldn't like it if I proposed attending any such entertainment to be invariably told that times were hard and my husband couldn't afford it, and then to have him sneak off alone."

"Lizzie, Lizzie,"

"And then, if once in a dog's age, he did condescend to go with me anywhere in the evening, I shouldn't like to be left to pick my way along the slippery places at the risk of breaking my neck, he walking along unconsciously by my side. I'm of a dependent, clinging nature, and need the protection of a strong arm."

"Lizzie, this is all nonsense."

"I'm the youngest of our family, and perhaps I've been spoiled. At all events, I know it would break my heart to have my husband vent all the ill-temper which he conceals from the world on my defenceless head."

"But, Lizzie, I promise you that I"—

"Oh yes, Fred, I know what you are going to say—that you will be different; but May and Nell have told me time and again that no better husbands than theirs ever lived. No, Fred; as a lover you are just perfect; and I shall hate to give you up. Still if you are bent on marrying, there are plenty of girls who have not married sisters, or who are not wise enough to profit by their example, if they have. And don't fret about me, for I've no doubt I can find some one to fill your place."

But before Lizzie had concluded Fred made for the door, muttering something "unmentionable to ears polite."

"There!" exclaimed Lizzie, as the door closed with a bang, "I knew he was no better than the rest. That's the way John and Aleck swear and slam the doors when things don't go just right. He'd make a bear of a husband; but I'm sorry he came to the point so soon, for he was just a splendid bear!" Fredonian.

Watch your Words.

Keep a watch on your words, my darlings, For words are wonderful things; They are sweet, like the bees' fresh honey— Like the bees, they have terrible stings. They can bless like the warm, glad sunshine, And brighten a lonely life; They can cut, in the strife of anger, Like an open two-edged knife.

Let them pass through the lips unchallenged, If their errand is true and kind— If they come to support the weary, To comfort and help the blind; If a bitter, revengeful spirit Prompt the words, let them be unsaid; They may flash through a brain like lightning Or fall on a heart like lead.

Keep them back, if they're cold and cruel, Under bar and lock and seal; The wounds they make, my darlings, Are always slow to heal. May peace guard your lives, and ever, From the time of your early youth, May the words that you daily utter Be the words of beautiful truth.

It is one thing to see that a line is crooked, and another thing to be able to draw a straight one.