

Family Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.
Good Cheer.

Let others tune their harps to grief,
And touch the chords of solemn sadness,
Be mine to strike, since life is brief,
The higher notes of joy and gladness.

When this fair world from chaos sprang,
And life began its glad career,
The Morning Stars together sang,
The sons of God gave shout and cheer.

Then why should man, the lord of earth,
Fill half his days with sighs and tears,
When songs of joy, and hallowed mirth,
Should rise responsive to the spheres?

Too lightly do men value life,
They little know what wealth they hold;
The realms of thought and sense are rife
With brighter things than gems and gold.

There's much on earth to love and prize,
And nature's heart beats warm and true,
A world of beauty round us lies,
And glory bounds the upward view.

O let us strive, with heart and will,
By virtuous deeds to tune the soul
To catch the living joyous thrill
That circles through the mighty whole.

Should trials come, let's not despond,
A hopeful spirit lightens pain,
There's good around us and beyond,
A seeming loss is often gain.

Though dark the way, and fears annoy,
The clouds will scatter by and by;
The purest springs of human joy
Along the path of duty lie.

Then forward, hearts, and bravely do,
Give love a tongue, let hate be dumb;
Would each to all be kind and true
The grand prophetic day were come!

Though life's remaining sands be few,
We will not mourn its vanished hours;
With Christ ahead and Heaven in view
Who would go back to Eden's bowers?

Sweet Faith and Hope will not recoil,
But gladly plume a stronger wing,
Since "dust to dust" but forms the soil
Whence higher life and joy shall spring.

The hand that strewed the earth with flowers,
And garnished yonder glowing sky,
Will reach across the tide to ours,
A voice shall whisper, "It is I."

S. S.

Select Serial.

THE KING'S SERVANTS.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF MY COUNTY.

If it would do anybody good to hear my story, they are welcome to it; ay! kindly welcome. I'm too old now to be of any use as a guide; but may be I can still be useful as a finger-post, that points the way folks should follow.

I married out of my county; my people said, out of my station. For my father held a small farm, and the squire's lady had seen that I learned to read and write, and do fine sewing; but my husband was only a hand-loom weaver from the north, a man that could weave and sing right well, but never cared much for the inside of a book. But he was true and faithful to the backbone, till I learned from him something of his faithfulness, and knew it was the same as Abraham's, who was called the father of the faithful. Words that were always on his lips were "Faithful in little, faithful in much;" and it seems to me now he is gone those words are my chief comfort. Wherever Transome is, he is faithful still.

It was a daring thing to marry so far away from one's own people in those days. There were no railroads, and the coaches were too dear for us, even the outside of them, where in the summer you were covered with dust and parched with thirst, and nipped with frost and wind in the winter. Transome and I did not once think of taking the coach after we were wedded. The coach ran almost straight from my village to his; and though the journey took us the best part of three days, and he was winning no money, it was the cheapest way of traveling. It seems to me, when I shut my eyes and think of it, as if it had all been in some other world, when Transome and I were young, and the warm sunny days were full of light and brightness, such as the sun never gives nowadays, as if the sun itself is growing old. The boat floated slowly, slowly along the canal, while we walked together till we were tired, gathering the blossoms from the grassy banks, or we sat on the boat, plucking the waterlilies up by their long roots.

How gently we were rocked as the water rose beneath us in the locks! I can hear the rush and gurgling of the water now! And with my dim old eyes shut, I can see Transome looking upon me with a smile, such as I shall never more see again, till I behold his face on the other side of death's dark river, smiling down upon me as I reach the shore. Ah! there are no times now like those old times!

It was in the cool of the evening he brought me to his house, standing on the brow of a low hill, with what he called a clough, and I called a dingle, full of green trees and underwood, running down to a little sparkling river in the valley below. We could see far away from the door, and feel the rush of the fresh air past us, as it came over fields and meadows, and swept away to other fields and meadows. The cottage was an old one even then—built half of timber, with a thatched roof pitched very high and pointed, and with one window in it to light our up-stairs room. Down stairs was one good-sized kitchen, with a quarried floor, and the loom standing on one side. Not a bit of parlor or spare chamber, such as I'd been used to. I knew Transome thought often of that; but the place grew so dear to me, I ceased to care about any parlor. As for the garden, we worked in it all our spare time, till many a passer by would stop to look at the honeysuckle, and traveler's joy climbing up the wall, and hanging over our window in the roof; and at the posies in the garden, the hollyhocks, and roses, and sweet-williams, which made the air all sweet with their scent. After a while, when father and mother were dead, I forgot my old home; and it seemed as if I had never dwelt anywhere else, and must dwell there till the end of my days. Nothing happened to us; nothing save the birth, and the short, short life of a little child of ours, our only child, who died when he was seven years old, and could just read to his father at the loom. It was that year the sky began to grow grayer, and the wind to blow more chilly about the house. Transome was ten years older than me, and he began in some way to feel his age, now the boy was gone. And as time went on things became duller and duller; and his rheumatism grew worse and worse, till he had to give up his loom, and at last he could do little more than work out the rent by being odd man for our landlord, who knew he could trust him with untold gold.

But all this while the country side was changing even faster than Transome and me. The railroads had been made, and machinery invented, and all the little villages were turning into towns as if by magic. There had always been a few miles along the course of our little river, but every year more and more sprang up with their tall smoky chimneys, and streets were made, and houses built until the dingle itself became a row of straggling cottages, creeping up toward our pretty homestead. Perhaps it was because I belonged to another country, and spoke in a different fashion, but none of the country folk about there ever took heartily to me, and I always felt shy with them and their rough ways. Transome himself was a quiet man, and never cared to make many friends; so we dwelt like strangers among our neighbors, up in our thatched cottage, which was as different from the new red brick houses about it as we were to the factory people living in them. But I never felt strange with children, nor they with me. So when Transome was laid up from his work, I opened a little dame school for the lads and lasses living in the houses down the dingle. They soon flocked to me like chickens at the cluck-clucking of an old mother hen, till I might have filled my kitchen twice over. But my outside number was thirty, and as they paid me three-pence a week each, Transome and I managed to get along—what with him working out the rent, and me taking in fine sewing from the ladies of the town.

Transome was always proud of my learning, and now he was glad for me to earn money in that way, instead of by washing as many a woman has to do when her man is ailing. But he did not like little ones as I did; they pestered him, he said, and he never knew how to manage them. So after a while whenever he could not go to work, he

liked better to lie abed up stairs, till the evening school was over, than sit in the chimney nook listening to the hum of their lessons, which always sounded in his ears like a score of hives swarming. I used to be afraid he would be dreary and sad in those long days, while I was as busy as could be down stairs. But he said he had thoughts come into his head that he could not put into words, for he had always been a man of few words, fewer than any I ever met with, and as he got older they became fewer still. May be he'll know how to tell me those thoughts of his when we meet in heaven.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW SCHOLAR.

I HAVE only one thing to tell you about my little school; the only one strange thing that happened to me all the years I kept it.

It had been a sharp frost in the night, so sharp that the panes in the window, little diamond-panes, were frosted over with so many pretty shapes that I almost wished they could stay there always. I quite wished that the children were there to see them. When I opened the door all the great, broad sweep of country stretching before me was lightly powdered over with snow, and long icicles hung like a ragged fringe to the eaves. If the dingle had been there, how sparkling and beautiful every tree and shrub would have shone in the early light! But the last bit of the dingle was gone, and a new, red brick house stood at the end of our garden. Still the low bushes about our place were silvered over, and glittered in the frosty sunshine, which they caught before it reached the house below.

I had overslept myself that morning, for the night before I'd been poring over a book that had been lent me, till my candle burned down in the socket, and left me in the dark. I could not put that book down; it stirred my heart so. But now I began to feel as if I'd been wasteful, for candles were not plentiful with us, nor money to buy them. Though I was loath to blame myself at any rate I was behind time, and I could not tarry at the door but must hurry more than usual in getting breakfast over and redding up the kitchen in time for school. Inside the house the place seemed dark and everything was cold to the touch of my fingers. I began to think of how ailing Transome was, and how the frost would bite him. He had not been to work for a fortnight; and the rent was running on all the while. The rent was my heaviest care. As long as that was paid, it did not matter much to me what I had to eat and drink, so that we made both ends meet, and kept out of every man's debt. But Transome's pains had been very bad all night; and I knew well he could not go out in such a bitter frost, if the rent was never paid.

Well! I was down-hearted that morning; and I felt as if I could not afford to put more than a spoonful and a half of tea in our little black teapot, which stood simmering on the hob. I'd been in such a glow over that book the night before, it seemed as if it made me all the lower that morning. I had wanted to be doing some good in the world; trading for the Lord, so as to offer Him something more than my mere day's work, which seemed to be all for myself and Transome. But now the glow was gone I felt what a poor old creature I was, and that I could do nothing at all extra for Him.

"Ally!" I heard Transome calling from the room up stairs, "are ye asleep again! Aw'm fair parched wi' drought."

The floor between that room and the kitchen was nothing but boards and beams, so I could hear if he only turned over in bed. I had no need to stir from the fire to answer him; I only raised my voice a little.

"Coming, coming in a minute," I called back, "the tea's in the pot, and's only standing to get the strength out."

"Aw nivir see such a lass for a book," I heard him mutter to himself; "hoo forgets all when hoo has a book."

That was quite true. But hearing him say it to himself, and him in such pain, was ten times worse than if he had rated at me. Ay! I'd been selfish, all in my glow of wishing to do good in the world. What better good could I do than attend to the duties the Lord had given me? He had given me

Transome to nurse, and take care of, and wait upon, and I'd sat up late into the night, and overslept myself in the morning, while he was parched with thirst and racked with pain. Then there was the school; and the clock was pointing to not far from school-time, and me nothing like ready. If I could not fulfill these little duties, how could I ask the Lord to set me a grater one?

I poured out Transome's tea, and carried it up stairs. He did not seem in the best of tempers. But I took no notice of his contrariness; for how could he be cheerful when he could not lift his hand to his mouth, and I had to feed him with every morsel and every sup he swallowed? At last he smiled upon me, a very little smile, and bade me go down to my own breakfast. I had hardly time to eat it, before my scholars came trooping up from the dingle; the mischievous little urchins bringing with them icicles hidden under their jackets, which soon melted and trickled down in pools on the floor. I had need of patience that morning.

After the water was well wiped away, I sat down behind my table in the chimney nook, with my Bible and a Catechism, a Hymn-book and a primer before me. There were four benches across the floor, besides a small one at the end of the loom, where I put my best scholars, because there were out of my sight there. All were full, till there was scarcely elbow-room; and much care and thought it gave me how to scatter the most troublesome of them among the good ones, like the tares and the wheat growing together until the harvest. Not but that I could have picked out the tares well enough; but I knew it would never do to let them all congregate together. May be the Lord knows it is better for the wicked themselves to be scattered about among the good; so I set the tares about side by side with the wheat, but kept them all where I could have my eye upon them.

The snow was beginning to fall pretty thickly, with large, lazy flakes drifting slowly through the air, for there was no wind, when a boy near the door all at once broke in upon a spelling-class, that stood in a ring before me.

"There's somebody knockin' at the door," he said, in a loud voice.

It must have been a quiet knock, for I had not heard it; but then my hearing was not as quick as it used to be when I could hear the bubbling of the river below the dingle. Besides, the lads and lasses were all humming their tasks. I told the boy to open the door; and he jumped up briskly, glad to put down his lesson-book, if only for a minute. Still when the door was open I could see nothing, but the large flakes floating in, and the children catching at them.

"Eh! but he's a gradely little chap!" cried the boy at the door in a tone of surprise.

"Tell him to come in," I called, bidding the class make way for our visitor.

Well, well! I never saw such a beautiful boy before nor since. He was about seven, but rather small and delicate for his years. His eyes were as blue as the forget-me-nots that used to grow along the river-side; and his brown hair was sunny as if it had a glory round it. Somehow, I thought all in a moment of how the Lord Jesus looked when He was a blessed child on earth. The little fellow had on a thin, threadbare, sailor's suit of blue serge—so thin that he was shivering and shaking with cold, for the snow had powdered him over as well as everything else. He looked up in my face half smiling, though the tears were in his eyes; and his little mouth quivered so he could not speak. I held out my hand to him, and called him to me in my softest voice, wishing it was as soft as it used to be when I was young.

"What are you come for, my little man?" I asked.

"I want to come to your school," he said, almost sobbing; "but I haven't got any money; and Mrs. Brown says you'll not have me without money."

"Who is Mrs. Brown?" I asked, feeling my heart strangely drawn to the child.

"She's taking care of me," he answered, "till father comes back. Father'll have lots of money when he comes home. But he's been away a long, long while; and nobody's kind to

me now. Sometimes Mrs. Brown says I must go to the workhouse, Father brought me a parrot last time he came; but it flew away one night while I was asleep, and nobody ever saw it again."

I felt the tears start in my own old eyes as he spoke, and all the scholars looked to me as if there was a mist in the room.

"Poor boy!" I said. "And where is mother?"

"I might have spared him the question if I had thought a moment. His little mouth quivered more than ever, and the tears slipped over his eyelids, and ran down his cheeks."

"Never mind!" I said hastily, and drawing him near to me, closer and closer till his curly little head was on my bosom, "you shall come to school, my little lad."

Yet before the words were off my tongue, I began to wonder how it could be managed. There was not a spare inch of bench, not even at the end of the loom, where my best scholars sat. Only the day before I had refused steadily to take in a boy for pence a week: ay! sixpence a week his mother offered me if I would only have him, and keep him out of mischief. Besides, there was Transome laid up, and the rent running on, and sixpence a week ready for me if I'd take it. Still, it would cost me nothing to teach the child, and it came across me as if the Lord was saying, "This is what you can do for me!" Yes, this was the extra work I had set me to do. After that if anybody had offered me five shillings a week to send that child away to take another, I could not have done it.

"I'll be sure to pay some day," said the boy anxiously; "when you've taught me to write I'll write and ask father to come home quickly. He went away in his ship a long while ago; but he's sure to come home if I write him a letter. So I want to make haste and learn. May I begin this morning?"

"You shall begin very soon," I answered, ready to laugh and cry together at his eager way, and his belief that his father would come back if he could only write him a letter; "Tell me what your name is."

"My father's Captain John Champion," he said, lifting his little head proudly, "and my name's Philip; but father calls me Pippin, and you may if you like. Mrs. Brown calls me all sorts of names."

"Creep in here, Pippin," I said, making a place for him close beside me in the chimney nook. There was barely room for me to stir; but the little lad kept so still and quiet, with his shining eyes lifted up to me, and his face all eager with hearkening to what I was teaching the other scholars that I did not care about being crowded.

There was a small, low chair of Willie's, my only boy who was dead, that was kept strung up to a hook in the strong beam by a bit of rope. It was a pretty chair, painted green, with roses along the back, and many a time my scholars had adored it. But no child had ever sat in it since Willie died. When morning school was over I climbed up on one of the benches, in spite of my stiff limbs, and unfasted it. The tears stood again in my eyes, for I fancied I could see my boy sitting in it by the side of the fireplace, and watching me while I was busy about my work. But I dusted it well, and set it down just in Willie's own place in the chimney nook, where Pippin was still quietly squatting on the floor; for he had not run away the moment school was over, like the other children.

"There!" I said, "that's your seat now, my little lad. It belongs to my Willie, who's been in heaven these twenty years, waiting for me and father. Nobody but a good boy ought to sit on a chair that belongs to him, now he's an angel."

"I'm going to be a good boy now, and an angel some day," said the child, smiling up into my face.

"The Lord help him and me!" I said to myself, as I put the room to rights after the lads and lasses, "It's not that easy to be good."

(To be Continued.)

Conduct is the great profession. Behavior is the perpetual revealing of us. What a man does tells us what he is.

Bonths' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 153.

BIBLE ACROSTIC.

1. What prophet wrote in sweet melodious strain
The coming glories of Messiah's reign?
2. A man alone of all the human race
Who spake with God his Maker face to face.
3. A woman by the Saviour well approved,
All of the household, too, by Him beloved.
4. In A-a's reign, who urged the king to free
His realm from sinful, vile idolatry?
5. Who did her idol gods and country leave,
And to her husband's mother fondly cleave?
6. A man instructed from his early youth
In Holy Scripture and in gospel truth.
7. The patriarch in whom it is confessed,
"Shall all the nations of the earth be blessed?"
8. Whose noble uncle plead with God in vain
To spare the guilty cities of the plain,
Though he was rescued from the impending doom
Which sank those cities in a fiery tomb?
9. Who when a child was banished from his home
With his mother in a wilderness to roam?
10. The disciples say, "We have seen our risen Lord!"
Who, doubting still, would not believe their word?
11. For last, my Bible I have searched in vain,
Nor name of place or person can obtain;
Letter for word, then, I must leave intact;
Search, puzzlers, all, and prove my word a fact.

These initials compose a word denoting a precious boon vouchsafed to humanity through the gospel of Christ.—Selected.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

285. A word of four letters transposed and from the same form four words:
At first it is a bit of news, or a thought to be kept in mind.
The next you must learn to use, or its worth you can never find.
Then third it is a trifling thing, and its value is but small.
And fourth is to cast forth (an odor but not a ball).
286. Of the initials of the following described words form a stringed instrument; and of the finals form another one:
1. To fling away. 2. Exposed. 3. To cry aloud. 4. To walk.
287. Who was the first king of Israel? Who fed the prophets in a cave? Who chose the best and got the worst? Who was Ruth's sister-in-law? What was the Israelites' food? What was the early gold country? Who was Ruth's mother-in-law?

Answer these questions correctly and the initials will give the name of the wise king.

288. Take the figures from 0 to 9 and place them so that by adding together, they amount to 100. Each figure being used only once.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 152.

1. N urse.....Ruth iv. 16; 2 Sam. iv. 4.
2. E ssa.....Gen. xxv. 29-34.
3. W arren.....Ex. x. xxvii. 16, 18.
4. J ael.....Judges iv. 17-21.
5. E lam.....Gen. x. 22; xiv. 1.
6. R ebecca.....Deut. xv. 1, 2.
7. U riah.....1 Chron. viii. 40.
8. S amuel.....1 Sam. xv. 9.
9. A nne.....2 Cor. i. 20.
10. L aw.....John i. 17.
11. E sra.....Isa. lv. 3.
12. M ead.....1 Kings xvii. 14-16.

NEW JERUSALEM. Heb. xi. 8, 10, 16; Rev. xxi. 2.

153. King Ananias; previous to learning Haman's plot. Esther 6th ch.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

279. D R U M
R O P E
U P A S
M E S S
280. R A C K
A C R E
C R A Q
K E G S
281. H A T S
A R E A
T E A M
S A M E
282. Stub-tub.
Bass-Aw.
Wear-Ear.
Warm-arm.
283. B L I N D
L O S E R
I S S U E
N E U S S
D R E S S
284. C
C A M
C A M E L
M E T
L

285. I the Lord search the heart, I the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah xvii.