

Family Reading.

Interpretation.

The lamp burned low, the hour was late, The embers died within the grate, Yet with an anxious brow she sat.

And questioned keenly of the day Just closed, that had been toiled away In work that would not brook delay.

"I had not meant," she sighed, "to see It slip my grasp, and yet there be No separate duty done for thee!

"This little trustful sleeper here, Who clogs me with a love so dear— How could I keep my conscience clear.

"If, recreant to the word I said That day beside the dying bed, I failed to win the nursing bread?"

"So, working with such full accord As finds therein its own reward, I've left no margin for my Lord."

Just then the golden head was stirred, As in its nest a crooning bird; And then her voice she deemed she heard:

"O sister! such a dream I had! So sweet and strange, it made me glad: I thought that you were sitting sad."

"Because the king of all the land Had sent the people his command To bring him, each, a gift in hand."

"And in my dream I saw you there, And heard you say, 'No hands can bear A gift, that are so filled with care.'"

"What care?" the king said; and he smiled To hear you answer, wailing wild, 'I only toil to feed a child!'"

"And then, with such a look divine, ('Twas that awaked me with its shine,) He whispered, 'But the child is mine!'"

She sprang to clasp, with arms outthrown The little dreamer; all was lone And hushed; the dream had been her own.

—Margaret J. Preston in S. S. Times.

Select Serial.

THE KING'S SERVANTS.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER XV.

TOO LATE.

What a sight that room was when I went in! I told you there were more locked up boxes and drawers there than anywhere else in the house, which no one had ever seen opened; but now all their contents were strewn and scattered about the floor. Well! the old master's mother must have been as fond of hoarding as he was; but she had hoarded clothing, and there were all her old satin dresses and petticoats, and high-heeled slippers, and laces and linens, all faded and mildewed. There was also good warm clothing that might have kept many a poor creature from dying of cold, but now it was moth-eaten and useless. I saw packets of yellow letters, and a miniature portrait, or two lying among them. But I could not wait to look well at these things. I pressed on to the head of the bed, and drew the tattered curtain aside, and looked down on the master's face.

Was he dead? The poor withered face lay on the pillow, with its mouth fallen half open, and its filmy eyes staring with a look of terror, such as I never saw before or since. I spoke to him softly, then loudly; and laid my hand upon the bent and crooked fingers which seemed to be grasping at something. After that I knew it was true. He was dead!

There was no one in the room with me; for there had been a little scuffle with the thieves, and they had been dragged by our neighbors into the room beyond.

But at my sudden cry one of them came running in quickly. He saw in a moment what had happened, and quietly, as if awe-struck at the terrible face of the corpse, he drew me away out of the room, and himself locked the door, and said he would carry the key at once to the police station.

How it was I cannot tell. Neither he nor I spoke a word of it; but whether it was from our faces, or from his locking the door so silently, but the truth seemed to flash upon all the rest. The thieves themselves were struck dumb for a minute; and then one of them cried out with a loud and terrified voice:

"We never laid a finger on him!" he said; "a law swear 't by God A'mighty. Rebecca, speak for me! Thou knows aw could na' have th' heart to kill an oud man like him. Rebecca, doesn't thee know me? See! Aw'm Robin Cherrick, thy sweet-heart i' th' oud' time, as th' oud' mester persuaded thee to turn off. Eh! lass, if thee had been true to me, aw should never ha'e come to such a pass as this!"

I turned about to look for Rebecca, and there she stood, with a face like death; only her dark eyes were fastened upon the man that had spoken, and her lips moved as if she were speaking, only no sound came through them. All at once, before any of us could run to her, she fell down on the floor like one dead.

Some of them carried her up stairs, and laid her on her bed; and I was left alone with her to bring her back to her senses. I could hear many strange sounds down in the house below; voices and footsteps echoing through the desolate room, and such a stir, and noise, and confusion all about him, as would have brought the old master to life again, if there were any way of stepping back over the threshold he had just crossed. My own mind seemed to be wandering, as if I were only passing through a frightful dream; only there was Rebecca's face, white and rigid, with lips close set, under my very eyes and her heart scarcely beating when I laid my hand upon it.

I almost thought she was dead too; but after a long while I saw her eyelids quiver a little, and a deep, heavy sigh came through her parted lips. I had no light save a small farthing candle, such as had been burning in the master's room; and her face looked ghastly, with the hair all ruffled about it. I did not speak to her but I bathed her forehead again with some cold water.

"Mrs. Transome?" she whispered. "Ay, it's me," I said, "you're very ill, Rebecca. Lie quiet my dear."

She lay still as I bade her for a few minutes; but she was busy thinking, and remembering what had happened. All at once she started up, and clung to me like a child that has been scared and frightened.

"Was there anybody robbing the master?" she asked in a hurried, but faint voice.

"Hush! my dear," I said, "Yes, there have been thieves in the house; but they're taken away now."

"Did one of them say his name! she asked again.

"Ay!" I answered. "Tell me what it was!" she said eagerly, "don't be afraid to tell me."

"Robin Cherrick," I answered, "who is he, Rebecca? Tell me all about it, my poor dear."

She had fallen back again upon the bed, and had hidden her face in the pillow; but all her body was shaken by her heavy sobs. It was a long, long time before she could speak to me again.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRANGE SABBATH DAY.

Down stairs there was a concourse of strange people about. Two or three policemen, a doctor, and Mr. Saunders, the lawyer. Mr. Saunders called me into the parlor as I passed the door.

"You are as likely as any body to tell us where Philip Champion can be found," he said; "he is your master's next relative and heir-at-law, if he has made no will."

"But I thought you had made his will, sir," I answered.

"Not I," he said, "He was often talking about it; but I could never persuade him to give me the necessary instructions. It is possible he has made one himself; but we cannot find any in his cabinet."

Down, down sank my heart; for I knew nothing of law or inheritance. The old man had not kept his promise to me, or to Rebecca. Then I remembered that our Lord himself never inherited money, and was a poor man all His life. Why should I desire the charge of riches for Philip, whose only wish was to be like his master?

"If there is no will," said the doctor, "young Champion takes every penny, I suppose? A hundred thousand, some folks say."

"And half as much again added to

that," answered Mr. Saunders. "Yes, yes, Philip Champion comes into it all!"

I think it frightened me to hear there was so much money coming to my Philip,—Pippin, my little scholar. I sank down on the nearest chair, so shaken I was. I had only reckoned on him getting a few thousand pounds; such as would provide comfortably for him all his life, without him running peril by the sea, as his father, Captain John Champion, had done. But a hundred and fifty thousand! That was more than my mind could take in. "Lord," I said in my heart, "give thy blessing with it, and add no sorrow to it."

A strange Sabbath day was that; so different from any other in my life, that even now, often of a Sunday morning, when I awake, the remembrance of it spoils and sullies all the peace and gladness that used to come with the dawning of that day. It seems to me as if I should never know it again, until I awake to the Sabbath of that home with God, where no worrying week days come. I had been used to escape from the weary care of our master's dismal house to the quiet of my own cottage, where I could gather strength and comfort for the week. But that Sunday I could not quit the house, with all those strange men about it. As for finding a nook for myself, where I could collect my thoughts a little, and have a quiet spell over my Bible, that was out of the question, save for a few minutes, by the side of Rebecca's bed, while she still slept. But she aroused up soon after noon tide, and gave me no rest with asking questions about Robin Cherrick, who by this time was fast bound in Lancaster jail, in some secure place, may be, nigh at hand. All I could tell her was that there would be a coroner's inquest early the next morning.

"You're a kind woman," she said, "and poor old Transome was a good hearted man. He knew Robin, he did. He was my sweetheart, and we were going to be wed on Whit Monday, only master persuaded me to give him up. Eh! and I'd promised to be his wife scores and scores of times. Master said he'd give me a thousand pounds; and it seemed such a mint of money; and Robin did not get a good wage, for he was only a letter-carrier; and I never thought master would live so long. So I told Robin to wait awhile; and he got into bad ways, and then he stole a letter with money in it, and had five years for that. I was fond of him, as fond as you were of Transome, I'm sure. Often and often I've wished I'd married him, if we'd been as poor as Job. And I went myself to fetch folks in to catch him; Oh! if I'd only known as it was Robin! He'd have hearkened to me, may be, and left the house quietly; but now he'll go to jail, and I must bear witness against him. Let me get up. Perhaps I could persuade master to let him off. He ought to let him off, for it's all through him and his money, that Robin took to bad ways. Oh, it's a curse to have anything to do with a rich old man, when you're waiting for his money."

She pushed me away with all her might, and was getting up to go and beg for her master to have pity on Robin Cherrick; but my next word stopped her. "It's too late, my dear," I said, "he's taken to jail already." "Oh, Robin! Robin!" she cried, in such a lamentable voice as made me tremble, "it's years since I saw him; and now it's me that has given him up to go to jail. If I'd only kept true to him when master tempted me with his thousand pounds! He'd have made a good man. I know; as good as your old Transome was. But I'll make the master do all he can to get him off as light as possible. If he doesn't I'll leave him to-morrow, and lose the money after all."

But I was silent, and my face was very sorrowful. She looked at me closely, and drew my head down closer to hers, and whispered in a very frightened voice,

"Has anything else happened?" she asked.

"Rebecca," I said, "our old master is gone, where he can do nothing for himself or you with all his riches." She stared at me for a few moments with glaring eyes; and after that she

screamed again and again like a maniac, till the doctor came up from the floor below to see what was the matter with her. It was a long while before he could control her; and then he gave her a draught, which presently threw her into a sound sleep.

I was free now to go down stairs. Through the long, narrow window on the staircase, I saw the dawn breaking, in clear gray light, with rosy clouds floating across the east, already bright from the shining of the unrisen sun. It seemed strange to me just then to have the idea of heaven come across me; with Transome dwelling in the light of God's presence, and me here in the dark world, amidst sin, and misery, and death. It was Sunday morning, when Christ rose from the dead; and close behind this thought of death came the thought of the resurrection. But how should he arise, the dead soul in the chamber below, who had passed away in terror and afflict, taking nothing with him of all his riches, and having no treasure laid up for him beyond the grave?

But after nightfall the place grew quiet. Mr. Saunders, who had been searching through every desk and drawer for a will, was gone; and that room was locked up carefully, as though it contained some precious treasure. One policeman alone remained to guard it. Then—but how can I tell you the awful stillness that seemed to gather and brood over the place which held the corpse of the poor miser? Rebecca, who had been wailing and weeping all day, fell into silence, as though she dared not hear the sound of her own voice. The wind moaned through the empty rooms in the other part of house, and whistled through the key-hole, but there was nothing else to be heard, though we held our breath, and listened—listened as though we might perhaps catch the old man's footfall, or the jingling of his keys, in the locked up room overhead. It grew fearsome at last—that silence like the grave.

"Rebecca," I said, "I'll read a verse or two up loud."

My voice sounded through the stillness, as if I had shouted out the words, I opened my Bible at random, as I remember mother used to do when I was a girl, if she lacked special comfort or direction. I had never been used to do it myself, but that night it came natural to me. Surely if my mother ever needed special comfort through the common troubles of her country life, I needed it more sorely in that trouble. But my eye fell upon these words; and I kept silence, and did not read them aloud to Rebecca. "The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered; he opened his eyes, and he is not."

"Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealth him away in the night."

"The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and a storm hurleth him out of his place."

"For God shall cast upon him, and not spare; he would fain flee out of his hand."

"Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place."

Even when I nodded a little in my chair, slumbering for very heaviness of heart, I seemed to hear a voice repeating over and over again, "Hiss him out of his place?"

Diary of a Small Potato.

BY MRS. ADA C. CHAPLIN.

I am a small potato in a barrel. If I were a small squash, or a small pumpkin, or a small turnip, I should be bigger than these large potatoes about me, and I could bear it. If I were a small peach, or orange, or lemon, though I might be smaller than now, I should be valued so much more that life would seem quite tolerable; but I am a small potato, and potatoes are not of much account any way. But if I were a large potato, I could be contented. It is not to be great absolutely that I care for, but to be bigger than the folks that I have to do with.

Every day somebody comes down-cellar, rolls me and the rest of my size one side, fishes out a dozen large potatoes, and carries them up, up, up, the dazzling, giddy heights of fame, way up to the top of the cellar-stairs, out of my sight. Then a while later, I hear a song like the song of a tea-kettle; but

in it I can catch the tones of their voices. Oh, it must be glorious to be a large potato.

Now and then children come to get a potato, to make a man or a cow of. Sometimes the house-keeper wants one for yeast. I don't know what yeast is, but I know it is something that rises, and that is the very thing I care for. But they always pick out the large potatoes. So I have been rolled back and forth till I am bruised and sore.

If I were a small potato at large; if I were in any situation but the one I am in, it might be bearable. I could be thrown at the heads of small boys, and perhaps I could make my mark there. In the dark I might be mistaken for an apple, or an English walnut, and that would be just as good as really being one, till the light came. But there is no chance for that here. Everybody knows that this is a barrel of potatoes.

There is nothing for me but the dismal hope that, some time, all the large potatoes will be removed to a higher sphere, and then I shall be perhaps the biggest potato in the heap. The only comfort I have is, that now and then I find a potato a good deal smaller than I am, and I snub it just as the large potatoes snub me.

OCT. 30. Such a change in my life and yet here I am in the same spot, in this same barrel. The master of the house came yesterday and took me in his hand and said, 'A small potato.' He said it very gently though, and laid me back again. 'Small potatoes are just as good for seed.'

That was all, but I think it was very beautiful. Some time I shall be in the ground, and from my life there shall come out a wonderful plant with leaves and flowers which the great sun will stoop to paint, and roots that can move and feel their own way into the heart of mother earth.

That is what I am for—seed—seed—seed. Oh, how careful I must be not to do anything that will make me unfit for seed. To think of having the sun, and the rain, and mother earth, and the master of the house himself all busy taking care of me—me, a small potato! And to think that I can share their work and help others. That is best of all. I'll begin now. At least I'll roll out of the way of that big potato that is crowding me—and I won't knock hard against the potatoes that are smaller than I am any more. For now the mystery of my life is solved, and I am very happy.

P. S. I have just learned that the potatoes that I supposed went up the giddy heights of fame, only go up-stairs to be boiled. I am glad I am not a large potato.—Home Circle.

Kissed His Mother.

She sat on the porch in the sunshine, As I went down the street,— A woman whose hair was silver, But whose face was blossomed-sweet, Making me think of a garden, Where, in spite of the frost and snow Of bleak November weather, Late, fragrant lilies blow.

I heard a footstep behind me, And the sound of a merry laugh, And I knew the heart it came from, Would be like a comforting staff In the time and the hour of trouble, Hopeful and brave and strong; One of the hearts to lean on When we think that things go wrong.

I turned at the click of the gate-latch, And met his manly look; A face like his gives me pleasure, Like the page of a pleasant book. It told of a steadfast purpose, Of a brave and daring will— A face with a promise in it, That, God grant, the years fulfil.

He went up the pathway singing; I saw the woman's eyes Grow bright with a wordless welcome, As sunshine warms the skies. "Back again, sweetheart mother," He cried, and bent to kiss The loving face that was lifted For what some mothers miss.

That boy will do to depend on; I hold that this is true— From lads in love with their mothers Our bravest heroes grew. Earth's bravest hearts have been loving hearts, Since time and earth began! And the boy who kissed his mother Is every inch a man!

Booths' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 162.

Here is a word picture of an event which occurred in ancient times.

A terrible war is in progress and a hail storm came on. Some of the men were killed by the stones of hail which fell from heaven. The Israelites were ultimately victorious, although a combination had taken place among the enemies of the Lord and of Israel. The Israelites took five of the enemies' kings, and after all the men of Israel had put their feet on the necks of the five kings, they smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees, until late in the day, and at the going down of the sun they took them off the trees and cast them into a cave, and laid great stones at the cave's mouth.

Where is it found?

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- 318. Where are "Letters of commendation" mentioned?
319. Who was sent with an open letter by a servant with the intention of damaging the authority of a governor?
320. What faithful servant carried the letter to his captain which contained his own death-warrant?
321. What letter was written to ask the forgiveness of a Christian master for a once dishonest but now repenting slave?
322. What king was enraged at the receipt of a letter from another king?
323. There is a thing that nothing is, And yet it has a name; 'Tis sometimes tall, and sometimes short, It joins our walks, it joins our sport, And plays at every game.

Find answers to the above—write them down—and see how they agree with the answers to be given next week.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 161.

- 1. T haddesus, Mark iii. 18; vi. 3; Luke vi. 16; Jude 1.
2. H ebron, 2 Sam. ii. 3, 4; v. 1-10.
3. E lishaba, Ex. vi. 23; Num. iii. 10; xviii. 7.
4. L eopard, Dan. vii. 6, 17.
5. O g, king of Bashan, Num. xxii. 33.
6. R od of Moses, Ex. iv. 1-5; xxx. 31.
7. D ura, plain of, Dan. iii. 1-6.
8. R amoth Gilead, 1 Kings xxii. 29-38; xxi. 19.
9. E arthquake, Num. xvi. 30-33.
10. I ron, 2 Kings vi. 5-7.
11. G oshen, Gen. xlvii. 27; Ex. xii. 51.
12. N ebuchadnezzar, Dan. ii. 1, 28-45.
13. E gypt, Psalm lxxviii. 43-52.
14. T ubal cain, Gen. iv. 22.
15. H aggai, Book of Haggai.
THE LORD REIGNETH. Psa. cxvii. 1.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- 313. Eli.
314. Hophni and Phineas.
315. By the hand of Joab.
316. TWO DIAMONDS OF THREE-LETTER WORDS.
T E N E T D E W
T E N E T D E W E D
N E T W E D
A
317. C O R N
O H I O
R I G A
N O A H

It is bad beginning business without capital. It is hard marketing with empty pockets. We want a nest-egg, for hens will lay where there are eggs already. It is true you must bake with the flour you have, but if the sack is empty, it might be quite as well not to set up for a baker. Making bricks with straw is easy enough, compared with making money when you have none to start with. You, young gentleman, study as a journeyman a little longer, till you have saved a few pounds; fly when your wings have got feathers; but if you try it too soon, you will be like the young rook that broke its neck through trying to fly before it was fledged. Every minnow wants to be a whale, but it is prudent to be a little fish while you have but little water, when the pond becomes the sea, then swell as much as you like. Trading without capital is like building a house without bricks, making a fire without sticks, burning candles without wicks; it leads men into tricks, and lands them in a fix.—John Ploughman.

'Ma,' said a little four-year-old, 'I saw something run across the kitchen floor this morning without any legs. What do you think it was?' The mother-guessed various legless worms and things, and finally gave it up, when the child said, 'Why, ma, it was water.'

Three things to govern—temper, tongue and conduct.