

Family Reading.

The Time is Short.

I sometimes feel the thread of life is slender, And soon with me the labor will be wrought; Then grows my heart to other hearts more tender— The time is short.

A shepherd's tent of reeds and flowers decaying, That night-winds soon will crumble into naught; So seems my life, for some rude blast decaying— The time is short.

Up, up, my soul, the long-spent time redeeming: Sow thou the seeds of better deed and thought; Light other lamps, while yet thy light is beaming— The time is short.

Think of the good thou might'st have done, when brightly The sun to thee life's choicest seasons brought; Hours lost to God in pleasure passing lightly— The time is short.

The time is short. Then be thy heart a brother's To every heart that needs thy help in aught; Soon thou may'st need the sympathy of others— The time is short.

If thou hast friends, give them thy best endeavor, Try warmest impulse and thy purest thought; Keeping in mind, in word and action ever, The time is short.

Where summer winds, aroma-laden, hover, Companions rest—their work forever wrought; Soon other graves the moss and fern will cover— The time is short.

Up, up, my soul, ere yet the shadow falleth; Some good return in latter seasons wrought; Forget thyself, when duty's angel calleth— The time is short.

By all the lapses thou hast been forgiven, By all the lessons prayer to thee hath taught, To others teach the sympathies of heaven— The time is short. —Author of "Steps Heavenward."

Select Serial.

THE KING'S SERVANTS.

BY HESA STRETTON.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE ADVERTISEMENT.

In the evening after school was over, and I'd helped Transome to get up and come down stairs, and had settled him quite comfortably in his own chair out of all draughts, I told him about my new scholar.

"Why, my lass!" he cried, "aw do believe as it's our measter's own nephew? He'd a gradely fine lass for for's sister, and who wedded beneath her, like thee, Ally. Captain John Champion was na' captain o' one o' the better-most sort o' ships; and our measter swore 'at he'd never forgie' her."

I coaxed Transome to tell me all he knew about it, though his words were as scarce as silver. He had seen the little lad's mother scores of times before she was married, when she was living with her brother, our landlord. But when she had died, or how her poor child came to be living in our town, he could not tell.

"Transome," I said, as I poured out his tea. "if God had asked me what I wished for as he asked Solomon, I'd have chose to have written a book."

"Eh! but aw niver did see sech a woman for a book!" he said again, looking across the table at me with such a pleasant look that I could not keep myself from going round to kiss him. He was sore changed since we came home together along the canal, and picked flowers from morning till night; but I loved him as much, ay! ten times more now than then.

"If I could write a book," I went on, as I sat down again in my chair, "I'd write one that would prick our old measter's heart to the quick."

"Eh, lass! it 'ud take a pen very long, and very sharp to prick his heart," he answered.

"Yet," I said half to myself, "he's a church member, and takes the sacrament; he's chairman at the meetings.

If that boy belonged to me, and me rolling in riches like him, I'd give him the best schooling in all England. I suppose he's too proud to forgive his poor dead sister for marrying below her."

"He's a gradely rich man," said Transome, shaking his head gravely, "and aw reckon he can afford to have his likes and di-likes."

"No," I answered, "the Lord hasn't made any one rich enough for that."

"Aw were wrung," he said, "rich and poor are all alike to Him; but that's hard to mind, Ally."

Well! to go on with my story. Pippin came to school for nigh upon twelve months, never missing, morning or evening. I got so used to him being close beside me in the chimney-nook that I should not have been myself if he was away. Never, no! never had I such a scholar as him. He learned as if he was hungry and thirsty for learning, and could never have enough. Many and many a question he asked that I could not answer, any more than it he had been a little angel come from heaven to learn all about this world. I used to wonder how Mary answered the questions the blessed child Jesus would be sure to ask her. What little I know I taught him; but I soon saw he would be quickly beyond me. He was like a young bird with untidged wings nestling under my care for a little while; but soon his wings will be strong enough to carry him away, and he would fly out of my sight, and think no more of me than a bird thinks of last year's nest, left in the branches of a tree. As soon as he could hold a pen, or make an a, and a b, he was wild to write a letter to his father. And many a letter he wrote, and directed them all "To father, Captain John Champion, on the Sea." Even Mrs. Brown had not the cruel heart to tell him that his letters could never, never find his father.

But one night, when Transome and me were sitting quiet in the fire-light as usual, I heard a low rap at the door. Now it was an understood thing that none of the scholars were to come to the house of an evening, lest they should disturb Transome, being, as I said, a silent man, and not used to children's talk since Willie died. I opened the door by a handbreath, and who should be breaking the rule save Pippin himself? There he stood panting as if he had been hunted up the hill. The cold air was rushing in upon Transome through the open door, and as the boy could not find his voice to speak, I drew him inside. His handsome face was crimson, and his eyes were glowing and sparkling with excitement. I took him up to the hearth, and poked the fire into a blaze for Transome to have a good look at him.

"This is Philip Champion," said I. Transome put down his pipe, and wiped his glasses on his sleeve before looking at him.

"He favors his uncle," he said, as the boy faced him; "but he's the born image 'o his mother, poor lass."

"I've come to say good-by," cried Pippin, all eagerness and excitement; "I'm going a long way off to-morrow by the train—to London."

"Going to London!" I repeated in amazement; "is your father come back, Pippin?" I could not get rid of the notion that his father would come back some time, and that helped the boy to be so fond of me.

"No," he said sorrowfully; "Mr. Brown's sure he'll never come home now. So I'm going away."

"But where to?" I asked, drawing him within my arms to the very front of the fire. I felt my heart very heavy all at once; and the cold wind, whistling round the house, made it chilly even at the fire-side.

"Why," he answered, squeezing my arm to his side; "it's partly because you taught me how to write letters. Just read this up, loud, Mrs. Transome."

He drew a crumpled bit of printed paper out of his little pocket. But I could not read the small print without my glasses, which were at the end of the mantle-helf. When I had found them, and lit a candle, I smoothed out the bit of paper, and read these words—

"A lady wishes to adopt an orphan, the child of respectable parents, and will provide for the maintenance and education of the same. A boy preferred, who must come for three

months on trial. All expenses paid. Address:—E. D. G. P. O., London."

"Well?" I exclaimed, more puzzled than before.

"I wrote to her out of my own head," said Pippin "and she's sent money for me to go to London to-morrow."

"I never heard of such a thing!" I cried. "Don't you know any more about her, Pippin, my dear child?"

"No," he said. "I wrote of my own self, and she's sent the money to Mrs. Brown for me to go. Only if I don't do for her, you know, I'm to be sent back in three months; and Mrs. Brown says she doesn't know who's going to have me, for she can't. She says I must go to the union, and that's a dreadful place."

"Ay,—so it is," said Transome, whose eyes were fastened on the boy.

"Couldn't you have me," he asked, coaxingly, and putting his little arm around my neck. "You're kinder to me than anybody else. Don't you let me be sent to the union—please don't."

I looked across at Transome, and his face looked happy and pleasant, and he nodded his head at me. We had lived together so long there was no need for him to speak. It was as much as if he had said, "Ally, my lass, do as thee likes." It was getting harder work than ever to win bread for him and me; but I could not bear to think of my clever bonny boy being sent to the union, and his uncle rolling in riches.

"Yes, yes, my laddie," I said, "if you come back we'll find a corner for you, and a morsel to eat, and a sup to drink. The Lord, He'll provide for us all. But she won't send you back; the lady in London is sure to love you, if she hasn't a heart of stone."

"But I must come back some time to pay you," answered Pippin. "I'll not forget it, never. So I've brought you a bit of money father gave me long ago. That's all I've got now; but I'll pay you lots when I'm a rich man."

"That's reet and honest, lad," said Transome, "faithful in little, faithful in much."

It was naught but a small foreign coin, with a hole bored through it, and hung on a blue ribbon, like a coronation medal. But it was all Pippin had, and he would not take it back again, so I put it away carefully into a small box, where I kept a curl of Willie's hair, and the little Testament he had learned to read in.

"It's earnest money," I said. "The Lord will know when to give us the rest."

"So we bid Pippin good-by, not without tears even in Transome's eyes, though he was growing too old to shed tears at little things. And I stood to watch him, in spite of the searching bitter wind blowing over the brow of the hill, as he ran down the street until he was fairly out of sight. That night I strung up Willie's chair again to the ceiling.

CHAPTER IV.

A TERRIBLE BLOW.

No, such another child never came again to my school, I had good scholars and bad ones, and they were constantly changing. Old ones leaving and fresh ones coming in; but never one like Pippin. Not one of them had his hungry brain and loving heart. He had been to me something like the beloved John was to our Lord; and now he was gone all the others seemed commonplace and at a distance from me. They could not creep into my heart as Pippin had done.

He did not come back at the end of three months. We never even heard of him. He was little more than a babe in years, and children cannot remember as old folks remember their friends. Mrs. Brown told me, when I made a purpose journey to inquire after him, that the lady had written to say he was safe and quite content, but she did not wish him to have any communication with his former home. Soon after that Mrs. Brown went away to live in Manchester, so we could ask for no more news about Pippin. I had, at times, an unsatisfied yearning when I thought of him; but, as years slipped away, I only recollected him as a child, who was dearest to me, next to my own Willie.

Transome's rheumatism did not mend as he grew older and more infirm, and the burden of earning the rent as well

as the living fell upon me. But times were very prosperous in the town just then, and trade was increasing every year. New mills were built along the river, and the mill hands had constant work. Money was plentiful, and not a soul grumbled when I raised the school wage by a penny a week; the extra penny just serving to pay our rent. Now and then I was troubled within me by a talk of some grand new school being opened that would 'tice all my scholars away; but the talk never came to anything. I used to wonder at times what I could do, for I could not see to stitch fine cloth any longer, my eyes were too dim, and the stockings I knit instead did not pay me half as well, though I knit as long as there was a glimmer of fire in the grate.

Ah! I shall never, never forget that sunny evening early in May, when I followed my last scholar down the garden, and stood for a moment or two leaning over the wicket. The broad open land lay all before me, with a great sweep of sky-line resting on the brows of the distant hills. The sky was all blue; and the yellow stonewall on the thatch shone like gold. The withy branches were covered with soft, fluffy little tufts, called goslings by children; and though the poplar-tree, growing so tall and slender at the corner of the house, had no leaves yet, there were tassels of long crimson catkins hanging on its topmost twigs, and floating down when the soft pleasant spring breeze shook them a little. There were the rosemary and lavender bushes, that I had carried all the way from home when I was married, to plant under our kitchen window, and they were just coming into bud, I looked down what used to be the dingle, and thought of the primroses and hawthorn, and bluebells, that used to grow in its green and grassy nooks. It was no wonder that I could not help shaking my head a little at the ugly houses that had sprung up in their place. Yet when I turned my back upon them, and could see nothing but our own home, with the blue sky only behind the thatched roof, I was more than content.

The Lord knows exactly what I love best, I said to myself as I walked back up the garden path more slowly and toilsomely than when I was a young wife; "I wouldn't change it for the grandest house in all the town. Home's home, be it ever so homely."

Transome had been hearty enough that afternoon to go down to his old master's to carry the month's rent. It was not far to go, but he would be weary and worn out more than enough before he could climb up home again; so it would not do for me to loiter and tarry in the sweet air and sunshine. I hurried in to redd up the house, pile away the benches, and lay the tea all ready. The benches began to feel much heavier than they used to be. 'It's the grasshopper,' I thought, smiling to myself; 'the grasshopper shall be a burden. Yes, yes! that time'll come to me as well as poor Transome. But God Almighty, He'll help me to bear the grass'opper, for he has helped me to bear the burden and heat of the day.'

But I had not put everything as it should be before Transome came in slowly, slowly dragging one foot after another, and groaning heavily. Poor old man! I had not got my glasses on for fear of breaking them over my rough work, and I could not see his face clearly, but his groans went right to my heart. He had never given way so badly before, and I hastened to pull his arm-chair toward.

"Transome," I said, "is the pain so very bad this evening?"

"Ally!" he answered, in a stammering choking voice; "Ally, lass! aw've gotten a blow."

All at once his old gray head fell on my shoulder, and he broke out into bitter sobbing and wailing, like a little child crying on its mother's bosom; only it was a thousand times more pitiful than a child, who can be hushed and sung to sleep in its worst trouble.

"What blow, Transome?" I cried; "who'd strike an old man like thee?"

"Th'oud measter," he said, amid his sobs; "we've got to go, Ally, to quit. He's goin' to sell th'oud place to build bigger houses on; and we're bound to quit in a month's time. Oh! Ally, my lass!"

It fell upon me that sudden I was quite stunned and dazed at first, as if, as Transome said, somebody had struck me a heavy blow. All the house-place seemed swimming round me. I could hear his sobs and groans; but I felt as if I could not understand why he was in such trouble. Then all at once it came over me, like a great wave, and all the trouble stood out clear. I felt as if the house was crumbling away. Better it should fall upon us, and crush us to death, than we be driven out of it in our old age.

That was a night to be remembered for ever. We sat down to the tea-table, but we could not swallow a morsel, nor a sup, though our throats were parched and our tongues dry. Whichever way we looked all was darkness and blackness. There was no one to comfort him nor me, and no one to help. Neither had any hope of changing our master's mind. After we were gone to bed and both lay awake, making pretense to sleep, I could see no way—no way at all—out of our bitter sorrow and distress.

"Lord! I heard Transome whisper, in the dead of the night, 'only gie us strength to be faithful in little, and am 'm sure thee'll gie us much when the reet time is come!'"

But how could we be faithful in little if even that little was taken from us? (To be Continued.)

Boys' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 154.

Give in order the proper answers to the following seven questions. The initials are a precept of Peter which would lead to the whole duty of man:

- 1. In what trees is the stork said to have her house?
2. One said to have been subject to like passions as other men.
3. An admonition of Paul to the Thessalonians.
4. A famous city in the mountains of Gilead.
5. Command of Christ to one who wished to know who was his neighbor.
6. One of the conditions through which Judah should eat the good of the land.
7. One of the conspirators against Moses and Aaron.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

289. Form a word square of the following:

- 1. Having but little substance.
2. A quadruped often hunted.
3. The centre of the eye.
4. A bird's home.
290. 1. A curtain.
2. A mechanical power.
3. That of which Solomon's throne was made.
4. A Roman emperor.
5. A fabled lady.

291. Decapitations.

- 1. Behead paradise, and leave a cave.
2. Behead a knot, and leave a poem.
3. Behead a large bird, and leave a disturbance.
4. Behead a dish for dinner, and leave two thirds of a falsehood.
5. Behead a girdle, and leave a tree.
292. Take the numbers 1 to 8. Find in 1, 2, 3, the curse of the world. 3, 2, 4, 1, the nickname of a race. 6, 5, 4, to carry. 8, 2, 3, 4, something round. 7, 3, an "article."

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 153.

Bible Acrostic: Isaiah, Moses, Mary, Obed, Ruth, Timothy, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Thomas, Y.

IMMORTALITY.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- 285. Item, time, mite, emit.
286. H ur L
A ir Y
R os R
P ac E

Harp, Lyre.

- 287. S aul,
O badiab,
L ot,
O rnah,
M onna,
O phir,
N somi.

288. Here are two examples.

Table with 2 columns of numbers: 53, 71, 27, 9, 1, 6, 9, 4, 6, 5, 4, 3, 100, 2, 100.

A medical certificate is among the treasures of the London General Post-office, worded as follows:—"This is to certify that I attended Mrs. — in her last illness, and that she died in consequence thereof."

Plucky.

The boy marched straight up to the counter.

"Well, my little man," said the merchant complacently,—he had just risen from such a gloriously good dinner—"what will you have to-day?"

"Oh, please, sir, mayn't I do some work for you?"

It might have been the pleasant blue eyes that did it, for the man was not accustomed to parley with such small gentlemen, and Tommy was small of his age. There were a few wisps of hair on the edges of the merchant's temples, and looking down on the appealing face, the man pulled at them. When he had done tweaking them, he gave the ends of his cravat a brush, and then his hands travelled down to his vest pocket.

"Do some work for me, eh? Well now, about what sort of work might your small manship calculate to be able to perform? Why, you can't look over the counter."

"Oh, yes I can; and I'm growing, please, growing very fast; there, see if I can't look over the counter."

"Yes, by standing on your toes; are they coppered?"

"Wuat, sir?"

"Why, your toes. Your mother couldn't keep you in shoes if they were not."

"She can't keep me in shoes anyhow, sir," and the voice hesitated.

The man took pains to look over the counter. It was too much for him: he couldn't see the little toes. Then he went all the way round.

"I thought I should need a microscope," he said very gravely, "but I reckon if I get close enough I can see what you look like."

"I'm older than I'm big sir," was the neat rejoinder. "Folks say I'm very small of my age."

"You see my mother hasn't anybody but me, and this morning I saw her crying because she could not find five cents in her pocket-book, and she thinks the boy that took the ashes stole it—and—I—haven't had—any any breakfast, sir!"

The voice again hesitated, and tears came to the blue eyes.

"I reckon I can help you to a breakfast, my little fellow," said the man, feeling in his vest pocket. "There—will that quarter do?"

The boy shook his head. "Mother would'n't let me beg, sir," was his simple reply.

"Humph! Where's your father?"

"We never heard of him, sir, after he went away. He was lost, sir, in the steamer City of Boston."

"Ah! you don't say; That's bad. But you are a plucky little fellow anyhow. Let me see," and he pondered, puckering up his mouth and looking straight down into the boy's eyes, which were looking straight up into his. "Saunders," he asked, addressing a clerk who was rolling up and writing on parcels, "is Cash No. 4 still sick?"

"Dead, sir—died last night," was the reply.

"Ah! I'm sorry to hear that. Well, here's a youngster that can take his place."

Mr. Saunders looked up slowly; then he put his pen behind his left ear; then his glance travelled curiously from Tommy to Mr. Towers.

"Oh, I understand," said the latter; "yes, he is small—very small indeed—but I like his pluck. What did No. 4 get?"

"Three dollars, sir," said the still astonished clerk.

"Put this boy down four. There, youngster, give him your name, and run home and tell your mother you've got a place at four dollars a week. Come back on Monday, and I'll tell you what to do. Here's a dollar in advance; I'll take it out of your first week. Can you remember?"

"Work, sir—work all the time?"

"As long as you deserve it, my man." Tommy shot out of that shop. If ever broken stairs that had a twist through a whole flight, creaked and trembled under the weight of a small boy,—or perhaps, as might be better stated, laughed and chuckled on account of a small boy's good luck,—those in that tenement house enjoyed them, selves thoroughly that morning.

"I've got it mother! I'm took. I'm a cash boy! Don't you know when they take the parcels, the clerks call 'Cash?' Well! I'm that! Four dollars a week! and the man said I had real pluck,—courage, you know. And here's a dollar for breakfast! And don't you never cry again; for I'm the man of the house now."

The house was only a little ten by fifteen room; but how those blue eyes did magnify it! At first the mother looked confounded; then she looked faint; and then she looked,—well it passes my power to tell how she did look as she caught the boy in her arms, and hugged him and kissed him, the tears streaming down her cheeks. But they were tears of thankfulness now.