

The Fireside.

GRANDFATHER'S CLASS.

BY HILDA RICHMOND.

Grandfather Read glanced around the room at the easy chairs, the books and pictures, and then across the field at the grim walls of the county infirmary. Since his wife's death he lived with his only son, who was an enterprising young farmer.

Before grandfather came to live with them, John Read and his wife determined to make him comfortable and happy. The best room in the house was set apart for him, and in hundreds of little ways they treated him as an honored guest.

The old man strove bravely to conceal his loneliness for fear they would think him ungrateful, but he had few friends now. His old acquaintances and friends were too far away to visit often, and most of the visitors at the Red farm were young people like John and his wife.

From his window grandfather could see an old lady taking care of three troublesome children on the lawn while several old men were hoeing in the garden of the county farm.

"If I get lonely in the midst of peace and plenty, what must those poor old people do all day," mused grandfather. "Helen never allows the children to annoy me and John is so good, but yet it is tiresome sitting around all day."

"Come, father," called a sweet voice. "John and I are going to town and we want you to go along."

Mrs. Read hastened to find grandfather's hat and coat for him and the people across the way were forgotten. The next day was Sunday and the whole family went to church as usual. After dinner grandfather sat with his worn Bible on his knee. "I believe I'll just walk across the garden and be with the rest of the old folks," he said.

Mrs. Read looked up in astonishment. "I'll read to you or sing to you, father, if you are tired."

"You are very kind, Helen, but I really would like to go," said grandfather, and in a few minutes the circle under the elm tree had widened to take in a new member.

"Do you ever get to church," asked grandfather after a few minutes' chat about the weather and the gardens.

"Once in a long time they have services here, but we never get to go to church," said an old lady.

"I miss the meetings so much," said a withered old man. "Mother and I never missed a Sunday before I came here, and now I never get to go."

"Is your wife dead?" asked grandfather, sympathetically.

"No, but you see, John—he's my son, and he said he could not afford to keep both of us, and mother could help take care of the children, so I had to come here."

It was a mixed up explanation, but grandfather understood. He looked with pity on the unfortunate old man and wondered what his wife would have thought if they had been separated before she died. In the course of the conversation it turned out that all but one old lady—Aunt Mary, as she was called—had children living, some well-to-do and others poor.

Grandfather, who had never dreamed that anyone could send an aged parent to the poor house, unless absolutely impossible, was shocked beyond measure at the old people's stories.

"Let's start a meeting right away," he suggested. "I have my Bible with me, and after I read a chapter one of you will lead us in prayer." It seemed odd to the little audience that grandfather's Bible opened at "I my Father's house are many mansions," but when they came to know him better, they found it was his favorite chapter and the book always opened at that place.

Then followed a broken prayer that all who had known on earth what it was to have no home might be made worthy through suffering for the inheritance with the saints in the mansion above. The singing was the only part of the meeting that was a failure, for every one broke down on "Rock of Ages," and after several attempts they concluded to hear their testimonies and let the birds in the green boughs overhead furnish the music.

Grandfather came home radiant. "They are the nicest old people in the world, John," he said. "We are going to have meeting every Sunday, and they insisted that I should be the leader."

John and Helen looked at each other and smiled.

"I had no idea that father was lonesome," said Mrs. Read. "I suppose he misses the children when they are at school or out playing, but I am glad he has found something to interest him and make him happy," answered her husband.

All summer the little class met under the elm tree, and by degrees most of the inmates of the infirmary gathered around to listen. Mr. and Mrs. Read and their three children often came over to take the place of the bird choir, and once each month they brought a minister out from town to speak. On these occasions the minister always took tea at the Read farm and all the old folk from the infirmary were asked to come also.

One beautiful September afternoon, Rev. Mr. Hunt, accompanied by his son, who was an editor on one of the city papers, came out to preach. Robert Hunt, the son, was touched by the sight of these homeless old people. He learned their names and ages, all about their families, how long they had been in the infirmary and other things that only a reporter can find out.

The next week appeared a glowing account of the class under the elm tree and the good it was doing for the inmates of the poor house.

If Robert Hunt could have seen grandfather and his class on the last Sunday they met under the elm tree he would have doubted the wisdom of his little article.

From one to three relatives called on each of the old people and some insisted on an immediate removal to their homes. The article had stated that the writer intended visiting these interested old ladies and gentlemen in a short time and learning more of their history.

As so many were going away with relatives, it was a sad meeting. It had so long been the one bright spot they were loth to give it up.

Once more the Bible opened at the familiar place and once more each spoke

of the life immortal, where parting was unknown. After the old people were called in grandfather sat on the rustic seat in the mellow sunlight. The leaves were yellow, and red now, and the sun's rays slanted softly through them, for most of them had fallen.

"Father must not sit there too long," said careful Helen. "The air is getting chilly."

"Let us walk around and bring him home," suggested her husband.

But when they saw the peaceful smile on grandfather's face they knew he was waiting for his class beside the tree of life.

DRUNKARDS' SONS.

Of the 420 boys committed to the Industrial School at Lancaster during the past year, 120, or nearly one-third of the whole, had intemperate fathers; five had intemperate mothers. Of boys without either father or mother, there were 31, and of those with father dead there were 93, while 82 had lost a mother, and ten knew nothing of either parent. There is food for abundant reflection in these cases cited. There is no single cause, it appears, which sends a boy to the bad quicker than an intemperate father. This sort of parent is worse than none at all, according to the statistics.

The records of the hospitals, asylums, prisons, reformatories, all show that the man who indulges in liquor is unfit to be a father. The drinker's children are cursed with parental taints, which crops out in insanity, imbecility, vice, and crime. Even though a line of good ancestry, and the opposing power of purity in the mother shield the children of a drinking father from the worst of his traits, the evil influences of the drunkard in the home yet mar the masterpiece. The boys and girls of a drunken father or mother go to the bad in appallingly large proportion.

The worst of the drinking habit is its emulative effect. The father may, because his father and mother were temperate, be able to drink with impunity, apparently, but his son has a greater craving and less vitality. The evil that the drinking man does to his energies impairs the powers of his offspring, and they fall easy victims to the liquor habit. —*American Issue.*

TOO MUCH HUMIDITY.

He was suffering from inflammatory rheumatism, but was carefully nursed by his wife, who was very devoted to him in spite of his fault-finding. His suffering caused her to burst into tears sometimes as she sat at his bedside.

One day a friend of the invalid came in and asked him how he was getting on.

"Badly! badly!" he exclaimed. "And it's all my wife's fault."

"Is it possible?" asked the friend, in surprise.

"Yes. The doctor told me that humidity was bad for me, and yet that woman sits there and cries and cries!" —*Detroit Free Press.*

What we need to make them Christians is, not to be better convinced of Christian truth, but to fall in love with Christian life. The world is not reading the Bible much. What men get of the truth of revelation, they read in the lives of those who profess to believe it. Men are not caring for theories; they want results.

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THE DEAD SEA SINKING.

Despatches from Jerusalem state that Palestine has been the seat of earthquake disturbance, which has chiefly been felt in the Valley of the Jordan, particularly around the Dead Sea, which is stated to have shrunk in area, and fallen considerably below its ordinary level, so that the River Jordan, which used to flow into it smoothly, now falls into it from an elevation. Apparently the bottom of the Dead Sea has subsided, through the earthquake convulsion. The whole region of the Jordan Valley is of the most extraordinary character, and much of it is markedly volcanic. It is a great chasm, stretching for miles between towering hills, and for the most part far below the level of the sea. At the Sea of Galilee, for instance, it is six hundred feet below sea level, and at the Dead Sea no less than thirteen hundred feet below sea level.

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