

Family Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.

"The Time is Short."

"The time is short," rise up my soul,
And walk no more in sadness!
Now let the burden from thee roll—
And wake my heart to gladness!

"The time is short," thou must not stay
Amid the shadows fretting;
But cast all gloomy fears away,
Ere yet life's sun is setting.

"The time is short," too much, alas!
Is gone past the recalling,
So quickly do the moments pass!
The evening shades are falling.

"The time is short," then take thou up,
With purpose true and willing,
The heavy cross, thou fain would'st pass,
Thine onward pathway filling.

"The time is short," and thou my soul
Hast long with sorrow striven.
Lay down thy weapons, trust alone;
For strength shall yet be given.

"The time is short," ah! much too short
To spend in idle seeming;
Rise up! and take thy Father's hand,
Strength, talents, all redeeming.
S. B. E.

Select Serial.

THE KING'S SERVANTS.

BY HESBA STRETTON

CHAPTER IX.

HOME AGAIN.

Well, I cannot tell you any more
You have heard enough to know how
Transome was faithful unto death.
May be if I had been like him I should
have been with him now in the pres-
ence of the Lord. But he has placed
us here like children at school, who
must stay till their tasks are learned by
heart before they are let free into the
holiday and the sunshine. I'd learned
my lessons so as I might have forgotten
them in the holiday time; and when
Transome was called home from school
the Lord left me here to get them bet-
ter by heart.

All I saw of his funeral was the
little plain hearse belonging to the
union, with four of the workhouse men
riding outside it, ready to carry his
coffin to the grave. After that I was
like one dazed and bewildered, doing
nothing of my own will and choice; but
getting up and going to bed, eating and
drinking only when I was bid. Once I
went to prayers seeking for Transome;
but I never went again. The four bare
white walls of the ward seemed nothing
but a big grave, and I like one dead
and buried in it; only it was a sort of living
death, so dreadful that none but those
who have felt it can know it. Nothing
would ever change again. Summer
and winter would be alike to me. I
was there without pity, and without
help; my heart dead within me. It
seemed as if death itself had forgotten
me, or would not have compassion on me.

It was one day in the spring that
Transome had spoken of, 'I' th' th'
spring, Ally—i' th' spring time!' I
was lying in my bed late on in the
morning, for no one had bid me rise,
though the sun was shining through the
high windows, when the door near me
was opened, and the matron and two
gentlemen came through it. I had
ceased to care to take any notice of
visitors, for if they tried to comfort
me, it was plain they knew nothing of
my sorrow. So I closed my eyes
wearily as they came in. But they
stopped at the foot of my bed; and I
thought may be if I seem to be asleep
they will pass on: for it troubled me
for other folks to talk to me about
Transome. But a voice, a strange
voice, yet with a tone in it that some-
how made me think of my little school,
said loud enough for me to hear:—

'Surely this cannot be Mrs. Transome!'

'It's Alice Transome,' answered the
matron. 'Her husband died four
months ago, and she's never been her-
self since. She takes no notice of any-
body, sir.'

'She'll take notice of me,' said the
same strange, clear, pleasant voice. 'I
must make her know me; for I am
come to pay a debt I owe her. Mrs.
Transome, you have never forgotten
our little scholar, Pippin?'

No, I had never forgotten him; yet I
did not lift up my eyes all at once. I
tried to recall his bonny face; but it
was so mixed up with Willie's face, I
could not. Then I felt a warm, strong
hand take mine into its firm clasp; as
firm as Transome's was when we were
wed.

It's Pippin! said the voice, close to
my ear. I made a great effort then to
shake off the weight that had been
crushing me down all these long
months. I felt myself trembling all
through me: and the warm hand
clasped me more closely.

'Look at me!' said Pippin.

So I opened my eyes, and saw him
standing beside my bed, a young, sun-
burnt man now, but with the same
sunny hair and bright eyes that my
little scholar had. I broke out into
sobbing and weeping, so as I had never
wept since Transome died.

'I am come to take you away from
this place,' he said, soothingly; 'but you
must not talk to me now. After din-
ner you shall get up, and dress, and
come away with father' and me.
Father is come home at last, Mrs.
Transome!'

Then I looked, and saw behind him
a man of middle age, whose hair was
just growing gray, and whose grave
face bore the marks of bitter suf-
ferings. But he looked kindly upon
me as Pippin spoke, and said, 'You
were my boy's best friend when he had
no one to care for him: and we will
not leave you here.' So they went
away; and I lay quiet again, but
feeling that the sun was shining still
upon the world, and there was love and
kindness in it yet, even for me.

That evening I had tea with them in
a grand parlor in an inn in the town,
and was waited upon as if I were a
born lady. Pippin told me all his
story, which is too long to tell here.
How, like a child, the memory of me
had died away from his mind, amid the
many changes of his life. How when
he was a boy of sixteen, just leaving
school, there came a rumor to him of his
father's ship having been wrecked upon
the coast of Africa nine years before, and
how a white man was living among the
black tribes there. It was no more
than a rumor, but he could not rest
until he had adventured himself to take
help to that white man; and behold! it
was his own father, Captain John
Champion, who might never have
escaped from that place, if his boy had
not rescued him. They had only come
back to England a little while ago, and
now the memory of me having grown
strong again, they had returned to our
town to repay me for what I had done
for him when a little child. Ah! if
Transome had only lived to know it!

Yes, they repaid me nobly. Cap-
tain John Champion had brought home
with him stores of gold and ivory, not
enough to make him rich, but ample
and to spare for starting himself and
Philip again in a way of getting more
wealth. But first, they said, they were
bound to provide for me; though I told
them again and again I had done
nothing to deserve it.

Well, by some means or other they
prevailed upon our old landlord, who
was Philip's uncle you remember, to let
me have my old cottage back again.
He was more friendly with them now
they had no need of any friendship
from him. They bought furniture for
me, as far as possible like that which
Pippin could remember; though we
could not have the old loom back, nor
Willie's chair. And because I told
them, and made them believe it, that I
could not be happy to be idle and
burdensome upon them, they set me up
again with benches and books, and
went themselves to the people living in
the dingle to ask them to send their
lads and lasses to my school. Some of
them knew me well for a schoolmistress,
and promised gladly; and before May
came round again, one year only from
that terrible day when we had notice to
quit, I was in my own home again,
with my little troop of scholars coming
up from the town for their schooling.
There was only one great change.

But ah! that one change was almost
more than I could bear. Never to
have Transome sitting opposite to me
in the chimney-nook all through the
long, lonely evenings; never to hear
him move about in the room overhead,
or see him pass by the window!

When Pippin and Captain John Cham-
pion were gone, then I felt how desolate
it was. There were the flowers, and
the spring sunshine, and the fresh air
blowing over the brow of the hill, but
Transome was not there with me to
enjoy them. He was dead. I could
not get it out of my mind, and he had
died in the workhouse.

Then one night I dreamed a dream
in which I saw him standing among a
great crowd of folks, very rich and
very learned, and very grand; and I
thought he looked lonely and strange
among them; and I called to him to
come back to me, who loved him,
though he couldn't read a word out of a
printed book. And directly a great
company of plain, simple men like him-
self came into my sight, and I seemed
to know who they were. There was
Enoch who walked with God, and Noah
who pleased God, and Abraham the
friend of God, and many another; and
Transome seemed quite at home with
them. And I could hear them talking
I thought, about God, as if they had
seen His face, and knew Him for a
friend; not like the learned men who
were talking of Him in hard and diffi-
cult words.

All at once a solemn trumpet sound-
ed, and I saw a glorious throne, and
One upon it who was too bright for me
to look upon, only I could hear His
voice speaking; and after my ear was
used to the sound of it, I heard Him
say, 'Well done, good and faithful
servant; thou hast been faithful over a
few things, I will make thee ruler over
many things; enter thou into the joy of
thy Lord.'

And I looked to see who it was
standing in the light of the throne,
with a crown of life upon his head; and
it was Transome.

CHAPTER X.

A HARD MAN.

I went back to my old cottage in
May, having been away a whole year,
and part of that time in the workhouse,
where Transome died; and where I
should have died likewise, if it had not
been for good friends who took me out,
and set me up in my old home, and
gathered scholars again for me. The
cottage, with its half timber walls, and
high pitched roof, and lattice windows,
had a very different look from all the
new houses about it, built of red bricks,
with sash windows, and six rooms in
each dwelling. When I was young two
rooms in a cottage were thought enough
for a laborer's family. I recollect going
once to the squire's hall, before I was
married, and seeing the grand drawing-
room, where there was every kind of
costly furniture; but what everybody
looked at first and longest was an old-
fashioned carved oak chair, which had
stood in that room over two hundred
years. You could not help thinking of
the children who had been nursed in
it, and the old folks who had rested
their weary limbs in it. The squire
said he would not part with that old
chair for the finest furniture in all
London town; and I would not have
exchanged my cottage for the best and
newest of their six-roomed houses.

But now Transome was dead, and I
there alone, how dreary it seemed at
times! The wind sighed and wailed
against the windows, and the rain beat,
and the summer thunder-storms rolled
over it, as they never used to do when
he and I were young together; nor, for
the matter of that, when we were old
together, and sat in the chimney nooks,
looking across the hearth at each other,
and said, 'Hark! what a crash!' and
smiled at our own comfort and safety.

When the first rent-day came, and
Transome was not there to take it,
than I felt keener than ever that he had
nothing more to do with the old place,
where he and I had dwelt so long. I
gave my little school half holiday, and
the lads and lasses ran away shouting
for joy, for it was a sweet bright day in
June, with not a cloud in the sky, and
the wind that had been moaning and
fretting from the east all through the
month of May was at peace again, and
a soft breath, as quiet as a child's breath-
ing when it is asleep, came up from the
west with a touch of fresh sea-breeze
in it.

It seemed to me as I went slowly
down the steep street which led to the
town, that if Transome had only been
there, the spring day would have made

me young again. But there is always
an if stealing in between us and perfect
happiness, and always will be, till we
stand before the throne of God,
where the light is never dim, and
where the very air we breathe is
the breath of life. Transome was
safely there already; while I was
still in the world with a rent to
pay, and a poor, aching body, getting
on for sixty years of age, which could
never be made young again by June
sunshine, and westerly winds.

I could not get rid of a bit of fear
in going to see my landlord, though I
had my rent tied up in my pocket-
handkerchief; and I had no thought that
he would wish to disturb me again, like
he had done before, in the hope of build-
ing more houses where our old cottage
stood. But I had never had speech with
him while Transome was alive; and I
knew him to be a hard man, though he
went regularly to church, and the sacra-
ment, and was often chairman at the mis-
sionary meetings. When I reached his
door I was forced to wait a minute or
two, for the tears would gather in my
eyes, as I thought how often Transome
had been there before me, carrying the
rent to the same hard landlord.

I knocked as soon as I was myself
again, and a servant woman opened the
door for me. She was a little under
forty years of age; and looked weary
and peevish. But Transome had told
me what a life she had led for many a
year, with no one about her but a
close-handed suspicious master; and I
smiled, and spoke as pleasantly as I
could. 'I am come to pay my rent,'
I said; 'I'm Transome's wife! You re-
member him?' 'Oh! ay! I remember
him,' she said coldly, 'so he died in the
workhouse at last! There she hurt
me. If he had only passed away
peacefully in his own bed, under the
old roof, I could have parted with him
more willingly, seeing he was well on
in years, and racked with rheumatism.
But to think of him driven to the
workhouse in his old age and dying
there, was almost more than I could
bear at times.'

'Ah, well!' she said, 'master got no
good out of it, that's one comfort. The
house never let, and it vexed him sadly.'
He was glad enough to have you back
again as tenant. Come this way;
master never leaves me to take a penny
for him.'

She led the way along a dark
passage into a large, gloomy room, that
looked as if no sunshine or fresh air
could ever find their way into it. The
curtains and carpet were worn thread-
bare; and everything seemed comfort-
less. It was getting toward evening, and
though it was June, there was a sharp
touch in the air, which old folks felt, in
spite of calling the weather summer.

At the far end from the door sat my
landlord, cowering over a little morsel
of fire, which was burning in a large
grate. I could scarcely see him at the
distance he was; but when he spoke,
his voice was the piping, quavering
voice of an old man.

'Mrs. Transome!' he repeated, when
the servant shouted out my name, 'old
Transome's widow? Well! well!
There's no need for you to stay, Re-
becca.'

Rebecca scowled at him, sure that
he could not see her, and muttered
something under her breath, which
even I could not catch. But she
slammed the door after her with a
bang, that made the old man half jump
up from his chair, and cry, 'Noisy
huzzy!' But he sat down again with-
out calling her back, as I thought he
meant to do, and bade me go nearer.

When I was close enough to see him,
I noticed a great change in him since I
saw him last in church, more than a
year ago. He had been stout enough
then, and looked well nourished and
comfortable; but now his cheeks had
fallen in, and all his body seemed
shrunken and smaller. He gazed
keenly at me through his small,
twinkling eyes; and his thin fingers
clutched the few shillings I gave
him, as tightly as if I might wish to
have them back again.

'That's right,' he said, after counting
them twice over, 'ten shillings a
month! I should have been six pounds
richer if I'd let you and Transome
alone last year. But times are bad!
times are bad!'

He never seemed to think of how
much poorer I was by the loss of a

home for twelve months, or by the
death of Transome: nor how I might
have been nothing but a pauper still,
dying a slow death among other
paupers, but for those dear friends,
who had found me out, and set me up
again with my little school.

'Times are bad, sir,' I said, 'and
likely to be badder.'

'Ah! ah!' he moaned.
'They do say,' I went on, 'that
cotton will never be cheap again; and
the mills will only work half time.
But we must hope for the best.'

'Ay!' he answered, 'and Philip
Champion is surety for your rent, you
know.'

'God helping me,' I said, 'I'll win
my own rent, sir. I could have won it
all this year, if you'd not turned us
out of our cottage.'

'It was a mistake,' he answered,
'a sad mistake; and I've lost six
pounds by it. Philip Champion told
me you taught him for nothing when
he was a boy; is that true, Mrs.
Transome?'

'It cost me nothing,' I said, 'and he
was the quickest scholar I ever had in
my school; and see how he is paying
me now, by setting me up again! He's
your own nephew, sir, the only relation
you've left, people say.'

I was almost afraid to say that, for he
had been very bitter against his sister,
Philip's mother, who had left him to
marry a poor man such as Captain
John Champion was. But my land-
lord took it very quietly.

'Ah!' he said, looking into the
smoldering fire, 'I recollect the lad
coming to me one morning: how
Rebecca came to let him in, I don't
know to this day! He was a pretty
boy about seven, I think. 'Uncle,' he
said, as bold as brass, 'please to pay
for me to go to school.' I thought for
a minute or two I'd take to the boy;
but what an expense and upset it would
have been! I should have had to
alter my way of life completely: and
his mother had been so utterly selfish
to leave me and get married, with no
one to look after my interests, that I
did not feel called upon to do anything
for him. So I just bade him go about
his business, for I had nothing to say to
him. And he tells me you taught him
for nothing.'

'For love,' I said, 'he loved me
dearly, and me him.'

'Well,' he went on, fumbling at the
money, 'I should not mind returning
you sixpence out of the rent this once,
as times are bad, and you gave my
nephew schooling for nothing. But
only this once, Mrs. Transome.'

'No, no,' I said, as he pushed a six-
pence back toward me, 'thank you
kindly, sir; but I have no need of it.
I have enough and to spare; it's other
folks as times are bad with.'

'Enough!' he repeated, 'why, wo-
man! I have not enough; and now
there's the six pounds to save that I
have lost by your cottage. Rebecca!
Mrs. Transome says she has enough
money.'

The servant had just come into the
room; and I saw him hide away the
ten shillings quickly out of her sight,
pretending to laugh all the while at
what I had said. I bid him good eve-
ning, and went my way, wondering how
strange it was, that a man rolling in
money like him and on the brink of the
grave, where he could not take a
farthing of it, should feel so much
poorer than me, who had not been out
of the workhouse three months. Sure-
ly, there is none but God, whose blessing
can make rich, and he addeth no sorrow
with it.

I pondered it much that evening, as
my fire burned briskly and cheerfully.
The flames played and leaped as they
had not done in the rich man's smol-
dering fire; and my mind was full of the
difference betwixt him and us.

'Why, Transome,' I said, 'he's ten
times poorer than us. All our riches
are on the far side of the grave, where
Jesus is preparing a place for us. It
doesn't matter what we have here for
such a little while.'

But when I remembered, and lifted
up my eyes, and saw the other chimney-
nook empty, then I found how poor
this life can be, even though we know
the Lord is laying up treasure for us in
heaven.

(To be Continued.)

A straight line is the shortest in
morals as well as in geometry.

Booths' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 158.

A WORD OF TWO SYLLABLES.

1. My first, though great and wide,
A rod did once divide;
'Tis where God bath his way;
And, where, in Moses' day,
All Israel were baptized,
While Pharaoh stood surprised;
And things of curious kind,
Who search therein may find.

2. My next, since time began,
Is just—a little man,
By many a father claimed,
By many a mother named;
Diverse and infinite—
Who can its names recite?
Yet still, wherever known,
'Tis clearly one alone.

3. My whole—a point sublime,
Is man's appointed time;
The time when all events,
All works, and all intents—
Whatever man can do,
Transpire in order due;
'Twas when, in days of old,
Of Herod's crimes they told,
Who did their altars stain
With blood of officers slain;
And when the prisoner Paul
Came at proud Felix' call.

While my young friends are fain
My riddle to explain,
Let me devoutly pray
That their "convenience" may
Agree with God's—to-day!

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

305. Subject—LIGHT.

1. Find passages of Scripture in which
Jesus is spoken of as the Light of this
dark world.

2. Find where God's people are (a)
called children of light; (b) bidden to
walk in the light; and (c) commanded
to show light to others?

3. What has God given us to be our
light on our way through the darkness
of this world?

4. Where shall we no longer need a
light, and why?

306. A QUEER DREAM.

There is a word from the vegetable
kingdom hidden in each line.

Beneath the trees I sleep in ease,
And dream, a pleasant dream;
I see a knight, with helmet bright,
Beside a dashing stream.

And through the glade appears a maid—
A figure small and slight;
'Art thou a fay or angel, say?'
Exclaimed the plumed knight.

'I am no fay, but peasant gay,'
She scornfully replied.
'Oh turn, I pray,' the knight did say,
'And be a noble's bride.'

She at his word awhile demured,
'Now master, you provoke me,'—
Uprose, and frowned; but here a sound,
A robin's call, awoke me.
—Home Circle.

307. Form a square of words:

1. A small island from which comes
Parian marble.
2. A notice of danger.
3. A Jewish teacher.
4. The path of the earth.
5. One who works in metals.

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. 157.

1. Archelaus. 2. Bethlehem. 3. Herod.
4-5. Orpha and Ruth. 6. Tarsus.
7. Hebrew. 8. Areopagus. 9. Tertu-
lius. 10. Wilderness. 11. Heaven.
12. Idumea. 13. Canaan. 14. Hebron.
15. Isaac. 16. Sarah. 17-18. Esther
and Vashti. 19-20. Issachar and Levi.
"ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL."
Rom. xii. 9.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

300. Regal, glare, lager.
301. Water from the well of Bethle-
hem.
302. The three great captains in
David's army.
303. He poured the water out before
the Lord.
304. Changed words:
Line, pine, lane, lime, ling.

Stretch it a Little.

A little girl and her brother were on
their way to the ragged school on a cold
winter morning. The roofs of the
houses and the grass on the common
were white with frost, the wind very
sharp. They were poorly dressed, but
the little girl had a sort of cloak over
her which she seemed to have out-
grown.

As they walked briskly along she
drew her little companion up to her,
'Come under my coat Johnny.'

'It isn't big enough for both,' he re-
plied.
'O, but I can stretch it a little,' she
said; and they soon got as close to-
gether and as warm as two birds in the
same nest.

How many shivering bodies and
heavy hearts and sweeping eyes there
are in the world, just because people
do not stretch their comfort a little be-
yond themselves.