

## Our Lving Folks.

### GOLDEN GRAIN BIBLE READINGS.

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#### GOD'S CLEANSING FIRE.

Is not *My word like as a fire?* saith the Lord, Jer. xxiii. 29; Luke iii. 16.  
It discovers sin, Rom. iii. 20, Heb. iv. 12; 2 Sam. xii. 1-7.  
It cleanses from sin, Jno. xv. 3; 2 Sam. xii. 13; Psa. cxix. 9.  
It creates a hatred of every evil thing, Psa. cxix., 104, Prov. i. 23.  
It imparts a delight in holiness, Micah ii. 7; Psa. cxix. 173.  
It regenerates and renews the nature, 1 Peter xxiii, Titus iii. 5.  
It prepares for and urges to testimony, Jer. xx. 9, Neh. i. 6.  
It fits for the reception of blessing, Jno. xv. 7; 1 Jno. ii. 5.

#### THE PLAN THEY TRIED—A TRUE STORY.

Two such woe-begone, draggled little figures! They came back to the house, one behind the other, as slowly as if they were going to their great grandmother's funeral, and indeed they looked like chief mourners.

The nurse had caught them playing in the brook, an amusement strickly forb. 'len at this time of the year, and a whipping was inevitable.

The whippings didn't come very often in this family, but for direct disobedience they were as sure as fate.

"Letty," said the older of the two little sisters, "I'll tell you what let's do."

They had on dry clothes, and had been seated on two stools, one on each side of the sitting room fireplace, while mamma went to get the switch.

"Well, what let's do?" asked Letty in a depressed tone.

"Why, the first lick mamma gives, let's holler like we were bein' killed," whispered Sue, "then she won't whip much."

This naughty plan seemed to work well. Both little girls yelled so loud that mamma was scared.

"My switch must be too keen," she said, and left off.

"It didn't hardly hur' me a bit," said one little girl, gleefully, when mamma was out of hearing.

"Me neither," said the other.

Just then they heard a rustle of a newspaper in the library, and, peeping through the half-opened door, they saw papa. After that the children went about like culprits with a rope round their necks, expecting another whipping. But mamma was trying a new plan.

"Mamma, please take this splinter out of my hand," said Letty: "it hurts me."

"Oh, no!" said mamma, quietly. "You are holler-ing before you are hurt," and the poor little finger festered and got sore.

"Please give me a drink of water," said Sue, "I'm so thirsty."

"I reckon not," said mamma. "You always holler before you are hurt, you know," and Sue had to go to the kitchen for water.

Every petition was treated in the same way, until they could stand it no longer.

"We most haven't got any mamma," sniffed Sue.

Then they took courage, and made a clean breast of their misery.

"Is it 'cause papa told you what we did 'bout bein' whipped?" asked Letty.

"Yes," said mamma gravely, "that's the reason I treat you as if you never told the truth."

"O mamma," they both cried, "we'd rather be whipped!"

"But this is God's plan with his big children," answered mamma. "Ananias and Sapphira were punished quick and sharp like a whipping, but mostly God leaves liars to get their punishment by degrees. And it always comes; as soon as people find out that you have told a lie they quit believing anything you say, and I've just been showing you how uncomfortable that is."

"But mamma," cried Letty, "if we say we are sorry and won't do so no more, won't you believe us then?"

"Yes," said mamma, with her brightest smile.

"That's God's way, too, as soon as anybody is sorry, and wants to do better, He says He is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy."

I never knew Letty or Sue to act another lie.

#### BRUCE AND THE SPIDER.

For Scotland and for Freedom's right  
The Bruce his part had played,  
In five successive fields of fight  
Been conquered and dismayed.  
Once more against the English host  
His hand he led, and once more lost  
The meed for which he fought;  
And now, from battle faint and worn,  
The homeless fugitive forlorn  
A hut's lone shelter sought.

And cheerless was that resting-place  
For him who claimed a throne;  
His canopy, devoid of grace,  
The rough, rude beams alone;  
The heather couch his only bed.  
Yea, well I ween, had slumber fled  
From couch of eider down!  
Through darksome night till dawn of day,  
Absorbed in wakeful thought he lay,  
Of Scotland and her crown.

The sun rose brightly, and its gleam  
Fell on that hapless bed,  
And tinged with light each shapeless beam  
Which roofed the lowly shed;  
When, looking up with wistful eye,  
The Bruce beheld a spider try  
His filmy thread to fling  
From beam to beam of that rude cot,  
And well the insect's toilsome lot  
Taught Scotland's future king.

Six times his gossamery thread  
The wary spider threw;  
In vain the filmy line was sped;  
For powerless or untrue  
Each aim appeared, and back recoiled  
The patient insect, six times foiled,  
And yet unconquered still.  
And soon the Bruce, with eager eye,  
Saw him prepare once more to try  
His courage, strength and skill.

One effort more—his seventh and last!  
The hero hailed the sign—  
And on the wished-for beam hung fast  
The slender silken line.  
Slight as it was, his spirit caught  
The more than omen; for his thought  
The lesson well could trace.  
Which even "he who runs may read"—  
That Perseverance gains its meed,  
And Patience wins the race.

#### A HAPPY HOME.

A pretty story about a German family discloses the secret of a happy home, where joy aboundeth, though there are many to feed and clothe.

A teacher once lived in Strasburg who had hard work to support his family. His chief joy in life, however, was in his nine children, though it was no light task to support them all.

His brain would have reeled and his heart sunk had he not trusted in his heavenly Father, when he thought of the number of jackets, stockings and dresses they would need in the course of a year, and of the quantities of bread and potatoes they would eat.

His house, too, was very small quarters for the many beds and cribs, to say nothing of the room required for the noise and fun which the merry nine made. But the father and mother managed very well, and the house was a pattern of neatness and order.

One day there came a guest to the house. As they sat at dinner the stranger, looking at the hungry children about the table, said compassionately, "Poor man, what a cross you have to bear!"

"I? A cross to bear?" asked the father wonderingly, "what do you mean?"

"Nine children, and seven boys at that!" replied the stranger, adding bitterly, "I have but two, and each of them is a nail in my coffin."

"Mine are not," said the teacher, with prompt decision.

"How does that happen?" asked the guest.

"Because I have taught them the noble art of obedience. Isn't that so, children?"

"Yes," cried the children.

"And you obey me willingly?" The two girls laughed roguishly, but the seven youngsters shouted.

"Yes, dear father, truly."

Then the father turned to the guest, and said: "Sir, if Death were to come in at the door, waiting to take one of my children, I would say"—here he pulled

off his velvet cap and hurled it at the door—"Rascal who cheated you into thinking that I had one too many?"

The stranger sighed; he saw that it was only disobedient children that made a father unhappy. One of the nine children of the poor schoolmaster afterward became widely known; he was the saintly pastor, Oberlin.

#### SMALL BEGINNINGS.

Man is made in the image of God, and his mind is peculiarly interested and impressed by this feature of the Divine handiwork. And when, on a far humbler scale, it characterizes his own works, he is greatly moved. Witness the delight of the schoolboy when a handful of snow, rolled patiently along the garden, becomes a huge lump taller than himself. Witness the satisfaction of some laborious writer, who for years upon years has been toiling at a dictionary, or history of the world, or a philosophy of the universe, or some such task, and at last sees the slender first day's page multiplied into a work of a dozen enormous volumes. A successful man of the people who founded an institute in a provincial town in Scotland placed in it a little green box, more interesting to him than to the public, because when he started in life it contained the whole of his earthly possessions. In the hall of a splendid mansion on the edge of Loch Lomond, I have seen the picture of a little sailing vessel, which carried the owner and all his goods, when he set out for the East to begin what proved to be a vast and most lucrative business. And how often at firesides, or dinner tables, in the course of friendly saunters by the way, do men who have acquired a position delight to rehearse the story of their progress; and how interested are most of us in hearing or in reading how the gulf was spanned between the lawyer's first brief and the woosack, or the doctor's first fee and his baronetcy, or, in the case of the American President, between the log cabin and the White House.

#### THE SPIRIT OF DISCONTENT.

The other day, we stood by a cooper who was playing a merry tune with his adze round a cask. "Ah," said he, "mine is a hard lot—driving a hoop."

"Heigho," sighed the blacksmith on a hot summer day, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, while the red iron glowed on the anvil: "This is life with a vengeance, melting and frying oneself over a hot fire."

"Oh that I was a carpenter!" ejaculated the shoemaker as he bent over his lapstone. "Here I am, day after day wearing my soul away, making soles for others—cooped up in this little seven-by-nine room. Hi-ho-hum!"

"I'm sick of this outdoor work!" exclaimed the bricklayer, "broiling under the sweltering sun or exposed to the inclemency of the weather. I wish I was a tailor."

"This is too bad," petulantly cried the tailor, "to be compelled to sit perched up here plying the needle all the time. Would that mine were a more active life!"

"Last day of grace! Banks won't discount, customers won't pay—what shall I do?" grumbles the merchant, "I had rather be a truck, a dog, or anything else."

"Happy fellows!" groans the lawyer, as he scratches his head over some dry, musty records—"happy fellows! I had rather hammer stones all day than puzzle my head on these tedious, vexatious questions."

#### TAKE CARE OF YOUR CHARACTER.

Take care of your character. Do not be too much concerned for your reputation. Keep the character right and the reputation will give you no trouble. Character is everything—something that cannot be hid from God or man, that cannot be changed as we change a garment; but we carry it with us wherever we go, and by it we are known every day of our life. A pure, earnest, broad, consistent, symmetrical character—what divine glory it reflects, what blessings it confers on the world!

HE that diligently seeketh good procureth favour; but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.