

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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"I Wonder If Ever."

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

I wonder if ever the children
Who were blessed by the Master of old
Forgot he had made them his treasures,
The dear little lambs of his fold?
I wonder if, angry and wilful,
They wandered afar and astray—
The children whose feet had been guided
So safe and so soon in the way?

One would think that the mothers at
evening,
Soft smoothing the silk-tangled hair,
And low leaning down to the murmur
Of sweet childish voices in prayer,
Of bade the small pleaders to listen,
If haply again they might hear
The words of the gentle Redeemer
Borne swift to the reverent ear.

And my heart cannot cherish the fancy
That ever these children went wrong,
And were lost from the peace and the shelter,
Shut out from the feast and the song.
To the days of gray hairs they remem-
bered,
I think, how the hands that were given
Were laid on their heads when he
uttered,
"Of such is the kingdom of heaven"

He has said it to you, little darling,
Who spell it in God's Word to-day;
You too may be sorry for sinning;
You also believe and obey.
And 'twill grieve the dear Saviour in
heaven
If one little child shall go wrong—
Be lost from the fold and the shelter,
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THE BOY DISCIPLE.

BY

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON.

CHAPTER XIII.

"What are you looking for, grand-
father?" called Jesse, as he pattered up
the outside stairs to the roof, where
Reuben stood, scanning the sky in-
tently.

"Come here, my son," he called.
"Stand right here in front of me, and
look just where I point. What do you
see?"

The child peered anxiously into the
blue depths lit up by the sunset.

"Oh, the new moon!" he cried.
"Where did it come from?"

"Summer hath dropped her silver
sickle there, that Night may go forth to
harvest in her star-fields," answered the
old man. Then seeing the look of in-
quiry on the boy's face, hastened to add,
"Nay, it is the censor that God's hand
set swinging in the sky, to remind us
to keep the incense of our praises ever
rising heavenward. Even now a mes-
senger may be running towards the
Temple, to tell the Sanhedrin that it
has appeared. Yes, other eyes have
been sharper than mine, for see! Al-
ready the beacon light has been kindled
on the Mount of Olives!"

Jesse watched the great bonfire a few
minutes, then ran to call his sister. By
the time they were both on the roof, an-
swering fires were blazing on the distant
hilltops throughout all Judea, till the
whole land was alight with the an-
nouncement of the Feast of the New
Moon.

"I wish it would be this way every
night, don't you, Ruth?" said Jesse.
"Are you not glad we are here?"

The old man looked down at the chil-
dren with a pleased smile. "I'll show
you something prettier than this, before
long," he said. "Just wait till the
Feast of Weeks, when the people all
come to bring the first fruits of the
harvest. I am glad your visit is in
this time of the year, for you can see
one festival after another."

The day the celebration of the Feast

of the town from which it came. A
white ox, intended for a peace-offering,
was driven first; its horns were gilded,
and its body twined with olive wreaths.

Flocks of sheep and oxen for the sacri-
fice, long strings of asses and camels
bearing freewill gifts to the Temple,
or old and helpless pilgrims that could
not walk, came next.

There were wreaths of roses on the

for no one came empty-handed up this
"Hill of the Lord."

As they drew near the gates, a number
of white-robed priests from the Temple
met them. Reuben lifted Jesse in his
arms that he might have a better view.
"Listen," he said. Joel climbed up on a
large rock.

A joyful sound of flutes commenced,
and a mighty chorus went up: "I was
glad when they said unto me,
let us go into the house of the
Lord. Our feet shall stand
within thy gates, O Jerusalem!"

Voice after voice took up the
old psalm, and Reuben's deep
tones joined with the others, as
they chanted, "Peace be within
thy walls, and prosperity within
thy palaces!"

Following the singing pilgrims
to the Temple, they saw the
priests take the doves that were
to be for a burnt-offering, and
the first fruits that were to be
laid on the altars.

Jesse held fast to his grand-
father's hand as they passed
through the outer courts of the
Temple. He was half fright-
ened by the din of voices, the
stamping and bellowing and
bleating of the animals as they
were driven into the pens.

He had seen one sacrificial
service; the great stream of
blood pouring over the marble
steps of the altar, and the smoke
of the burnt offering were still
in his mind. It made him look
pitiably now at the gentle calves
and the frightened lambs.
He was glad to get away from
them.

Soon after the time of this
rejoicing was over, came ten
solemn days that to Joel were
full of interest and mystery.
They were the days of prepara-
tion for the Feast of the Atonement.
Disputes between neigh-
bours were settled, and sins con-
fessed.

The last great day, the most
solemn of all, was the only time
in the whole year when the
High Priest might draw aside
the veil, and enter into the Holy
of Holies.

With all his rich robes and
jewels laid aside, clad only in
simple white, with bare feet and
covered head, he had to go four
times into the awful Presence.
Once to offer incense, once to
pray, to sprinkle the blood of a
goat towards the mercy-seat, and
then to bring out the censor.

That was the day when two
goats were taken; by casting
lots one was chosen for a sacri-
fice. On the other the High
Priest laid the sins of the peo-
ple, and it was driven out into
the wilderness, to be dashed to
pieces from some high cliff.

Tears came into Joel's eyes as
he watched the scape-goat driven
away into the dreary desert. He
pityed the poor beast doomed to
such a death because of his nation's
sins.

Then came the closing ceremonies,
when the great congregation bowed
themselves three times to the ground,
with the High Priest shouting solemnly,
"Ye are clean! Ye are clean! Ye are
clean!"

Joel was glad when the last rite was
over, and the people started to their
homes as gay now as they had been
serious before.



Jews celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles.

of Weeks commenced, Reuben left his
shop in charge of the attendants, and
gave up his entire time to Joel and
Jesse.

"We must not miss the processions,"
he said. "We will go outside the gates
a little way, and watch the people come
in."

They did not have long to wait till
the stream of people from the upper
countries began to pour in; each com-
pany carried a banner bearing the name

heads of the women and children; bands
of lilies were tied around the sheaves of
wheat. Piled high in the silver vessels
of the rich, or peeping from the willow
baskets of the poor, were the choicest
fruits of the harvest.

Great bunches of grapes from whose
purple globes the bloom had not been
brushed, velvety nectarines, tempting
pomegranates, mellow pears, juicy
figs,—these offerings of fruit and
flowers gleamed all down the long line.