

Two Little Old Ladies.

Two little old ladies—one grave, one gay—
In the selfsame cottage lived day by day.
One could not be happy, "because," she said,
"So many children were hungry for bread;"
And she really had not the heart to smile,
When the world was so wicked all the while.

The other old lady smiled all day long,
As she knitted or sowed or crooned a song;
She had "not time to be sad," she said,
"When hungry children were crying for bread;"
She baked and knitted and gave away,
And declared the world grew better each day.

Two little old ladies—one grave, one gay—
Now which do you think chose the wiser way?

—Parish and Home.

THE BOY DISCIPLE.

BY

ANNIE FELLOW'S JOHNSTON.

CHAPTER XXI.

They went back to their simple lives again,—those hardy fishermen, the busy carpenter, and the boy. Phineas was silent and grave. For him, hope still lay dead in that garden tomb near Golgotha; but Joel sang as he worked.

The appointed time was nearing when the Master was to meet them on the mountain. As often as he could, Joel stole away from the moody man at the work-bench, and went down to the beach for more cheerful companionship.

One morning, seeing a fishing-boat that he recognized, pulling in quickly to shore, he ran down to see what luck his friends had had during the night.

He held up his hands in astonishment at the great haul of fish the boat held.

"We have been with the Master," explained one of the men. "We toiled all night, and took nothing till we met him."

Joel listened eagerly while they told him of that meeting in the early dawn, and of the meal they ate together, while the sun came up over the Galilee, and the blue waves whispered their gladness to the beach, as they heard the Master's voice once more.

"Oh, to think that he is in Galilee again!" exclaimed Joel. That thought added purpose and meaning to each new day. Every morning he woke with the feeling, "Maybe I shall see him before the sun goes down." Every night he went to sleep saying, "He is somewhere near! No telling how soon I may be with him!"

When the day came on which they were to go to the mountain, Joel was up very early in the morning. He bathed and dressed himself with the care of a priest about to enter the inner courts on some holy errand.

When he started to the mountain, Abigail noticed that he wore his finest headdress of white linen. His tunic was spotless, and, from the corners of his brown and white striped mantle, the blue fringes that the Law prescribed hung smooth as silk.

He did not wait for Phineas or any of his friends. Long before the time, he had climbed the rock path, and was sitting all alone in the deep shadowed stillness.

The snapping of a twig startled him; the falling of a leaf made him look up hopefully. Any minute the Master might come.

His heart beat so loud it seemed to him that the wood-birds overhead must surely hear it, and be frightened away.

Imagine that scene, you who can,—you who have just seen the earth close over your best-beloved; who have awakened in the lonely night, with that sudden sickening remembrance of loss; who have longed, with a longing like a constant ache, for the Jice and the smile and the footstep that have slipped hopelessly beyond recall.

Think of what it would mean, if you knew now, beyond doubt, that all that you have loved and lost would be given back to you before the passing of another hour!

So Joel waited, restless, burning, all in a quiver of expectancy.

Steps began to wind around the base of the mountain. One familiar face after another came in sight, then strange ones, until, by-and-bye, five hundred people had gathered there, and were sitting in reverent, unbroken silence. The soft summer wind barely stirred the leaves; even the twitter of nestlings overhead was hushed.

After awhile, thrilled by some unseen influence, as a field of grain is swayed by the passing wind, they bowed their heads. The Master stood before them, his hands outspread in blessing.

Joel started forward with a wild desire to throw himself at his feet, and put his arms around them; but a majesty he had never seen before in that gentle face restrained him.

He listened to the voice as it rose and fell with all its old winning tenderness. As you would listen could the dead lips you love move again; as you would greedily snatch up every word, and hide it in your heart of hearts, so Joel listened.

O golden time, to be forever shrined upon the inmost altars of the memory! O happy day, white winged and fleeting! How often shalt thou, like a dove of peace, bear back thy olive branch of recollection, when these glad hearts who listen now are struggling in the flood so soon to come!

As the beloved voice went on, promising the Comforter that should come when he was gone, all the dread and pain of the coming separation seemed to be lost.

Boy though he was, Joel looked down the years of his life feeling it was only a fleeting shadow, compared with the eternal companionship just promised him.

He would make no moan; he would utter no complaint. but he would take up his life's little day, and bear it after the Master,—a cup of loving service,—into that upper kingdom where there was a place prepared for him.

It was all over so soon. They were left alone on the mountain-side again, with only the sunshine flickering through the leaves, and the wood-birds just beginning to trill to each other once more. But the warm air seemed to still throb with the last words he had spoken: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Phineas came down the mountain with his face all ashine, at last his eyes had been opened.

"He and the Father are one!" he exclaimed to the man walking beside him. "That voice is the same that spake from the midst of the burning bush, and from the summit of Sinai. All these years I have followed the Master, I believed him to be a perfect man and a great prophet! I believed him to be 'the rod out of the stem of Jesse,' who through Jehovah's hand was to redeem Israel, even as the rod in Aaron's hand smote the floods and made a pathway for our people."

"When I saw him put to death as a felon, all hope died within me, even today I came out here unbelieving. I could not think that I should see him. How blind we have been all these years! God with us in the flesh, and we did not know him!"

Joel walked on behind the two, sharing their feeling of exaltation. As they came down into the valley and entered Capernaum, the work-a-day sights and noises seemed to jar on their senses, in this uplifted mood.

A man standing in an open doorway accosted Phineas, and asked when he could commence work on the house he had talked to him about, building.

Phineas hesitated, and looked down at the ground, as if studying some difficult problem. In a few minutes he raised his eyes with a look of decision.

"I cannot build it for you at all," he answered.

"Not build it!" echoed the man. "I thought you were anxious for the job."

"So I was," answered the carpenter; "but when I asked for it, I had no belief that the Master could rise from the dead. Just now, on the mountain yonder, I

have been with him. His command is still ringing in my ears. 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature!'

"Henceforth I shall give my life to him, even as he gave his to me. My days are now half spent, but every remaining one shall be used to proclaim, as far and wide as possible, that the risen Christ is the Son of God!"

The man was startled as he looked at Phineas, such a fire of love and purpose seemed to illuminate his earnest face that it was completely transformed.

"Even now," exclaimed Phineas, "will I commence my mission. You are the first one I have met, and I must tell to you this glad new gospel. He died for you! 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life! O my friend, if you could only believe that as I believe it!'"

The man shrank back into the doorway, strangely moved by the passionate force of his earnestness.

"I must go up to Jerusalem," continued Phineas, "and wait till power is given us from on high, then I can more clearly see my way. I do not know whether I shall be directed to go into other lands, or to come back here to carry the news to my old neighbours. But it matters not which path is pointed out, the mission has been already given, —to tell the message to every creature my voice can reach."

"And you?" asked the man, pointing to the companion of Phineas.

"I, too, received the command," was the answer, "and I, too, am ready to go to the world's end, if need be."

"Surely there must be truth in what you say," muttered the man. Then his glance fell on Joel. "You, too?" he questioned.

"Nay, he is but a lad," answered Phineas, before Joel could find words to answer him. Come! we must hasten home."

Joel talked little during the next few days, and stole away often to think by himself, in the quiet little upper chamber on the roof.

Phineas was making his preparations to go back to Jerusalem; and he urged the boy to go back with him, and accept Simon's offer. Abigail, too, added her persuasions to his, and even old Rabbi Amos came down one day and sat for an hour under the fig-trees, painting in glowing colours the life that might be his for the choosing.

It was a very alluring prospect; it had been the dream of his life to travel in far countries. He pictured himself surrounded by wealth and culture; he would be able to do so much for his old friends. He could give back to Jesse and Ruth a hundred fold what had been bestowed on him; and the poor—how much he could help them, when he received a son's portion from the wealthy Simon! O the hearts he could make glad, all up and down the land!

The old day-dreams he used to delight in danced temptingly before him. As he stood idly beside the work-bench one afternoon, thinking of such a future, a soft step behind him made him turn. The hammer fell from his hand to the grass, as he saw the woman who came timidly to meet him.

"Why, Aunt Leah!" he cried. "What brought you here?"

He had not seen her since the night her Uncle Laban had driven him from home.

She drew aside her veil, and looked at him. "I heard you had been healed," she said, "and I have always wanted to come and see you, and tell you how glad I am; but my husband forbade it. Child!" she cried abruptly, "how much you look like your father! The likeness is startling!"

The discovery seemed to make her forget what she had come to say, and she stood and stared at him; then she remembered. "Rabbi Amos told me of the offer you have had from a rich merchant in Bethany, and I came down here, secretly, to beg you to accept it. In your father's name, I beg you!"

Joel looked perplexed. "I hardly know what to do," he said. "Every one advises me just as you do; but I feel that they are all wrong. Surely the Master meant me as well as Phineas

and the others, when he charged us to go and preach the gospel to every creature."

A sudden interest came into the woman's face; she took a step forward. "Joel, did you see him after he was risen?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Oh, I believe then that he is the Christ!" she cried. "I have thought all the time that it might be so, and the children are so sure of it."

"And Uncle Laban?" questioned Joel. She shook her head sadly. "He grows more bitterly opposed every day."

"Aunt Leah," he asked, coming back to the first question, "don't you think he must have meant me as well as those men?"

"Oh, hardly," she said, hesitatingly, "you are so young, and there are so many others to do it, it would surely be better for you to go to Bethany."

After she had gone home, he put away his tools, and, like one in a dream, started slowly towards the mountain.

The same summer stillness reigned on its shady slopes as when the five hundred had gathered there. He climbed up near the summit, and sat down on a high stone.

To the eastward the Galilee glittered like a sapphire in the sun; Capernaum seemed like a great ant-hill in commotion. No wonder he could not think among all those conflicting voices; he was glad he had come up where it was so still.

Phineas was going away in the morning. If Joel went also, maybe he would never look down on that scene again.

Then almost as if some living voice broke the stillness, he heard the words

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature!" It was the echo of the words that had fallen from the Master's lips. Nothing once uttered by that voice can ever die; it lives on and on in the ever-widening circles of the centuries, as a ripple, once started, rings shoreward through the seas.

In that instant all the things he had been considering seemed so small and worthless. He had been planning to give Simon's gold and silver to the poor; but the Master had given them his life, himself! Could he do less?

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me," something seemed to say to him. Yes, he could do it for the Master's sake, for the One who had healed him, for the One who had died for him.

Then and there, high up in the mountain's solitudes, he found the path he was to follow, and then he wondered how he could have thought for an instant of making any other choice. It was the path the Master's own feet had trod, and the boy who had followed, knew well what a weary way it led.

For his great love's sake, he gave up the old ambitions, the self-centred hopes, saying, in a low tone, as if he felt the beloved Presence very near, "Oh, I want to serve thee very truly! If I am too young now to go into all the world, let me be thy little cup-bearer here at home, to carry the story of thy life and love to those around me!"

The west was all alight with the glory of the sunset, somewhere beyond its burnished portals lay the City of the King. Joel turned from its dazzling depths to look downward into the valley. He had chosen persecution and sacrifice and suffering, he knew, but the light on his face was more than the halo of the summer sunset.

As he went down the mountain to his life of lowly service, a deep peace fell warm across his heart; for the promise went with him, a staff to bear him up through all his after life's long pilgrimage. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!"

THE END.

An old coloured man that addressed a temperance meeting said: "When I sees a man goin' home wid a gallon of whiskey an' a ha'f pound of meat, dat's temperance lecture 'nuff for me, an' I sees it every day; I knows everything in his house is on de same scale—a gallon of misery to ebery ha'f pound of comfort."