

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XVI.]

TORONTO, JUNE 20, 1896.

[No. 2.]

Marjorie.

"Oh, dear," said Farmer Brown, one day.
"I never saw such weather!
The rain will spoil my meadow hay,
And all my crops together."
His little daughter climbed his knee;
"I guess the sun will shine," said she.

"But if the sun," said Farmer Brown,
"Should bring a dry September,
With vines and stalks all wilted down,
And fields scorched to an ember!"
"Why, then 'twill rain," said Marjorie,
The little one upon his knee.

"Ah, me!" sighed Farmer Brown that fall,
"Now what's the use of living?
No plan of mine succeeds at all—"
"Why next month comes Thanksgiving,
And then, of course," said Marjorie,
"We're all as happy as can be."

"Well, what should I be thankful for?"
Asked Farmer Brown. "My trouble
This summer has grown more and more,
My losses have been double!
I've nothing left—" "Why, you've
got me!"
Said Marjorie, upon his knee.
—Wide Awake.

THE BOY DISCIPLE.

BY

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Joel went out on the streets next morning, although it was quite early, he saw a disappointed crowd coming up from the direction of Simon's house on the lake shore.

"Where have all these people been?" he asked of the baker's boy, whom he ran against at the first corner.

The boy stopped whistling, and rested his basket of freshly baked bread against his knee, as he answered:

"They were looking for the Rabbi who healed so many people last night. Say, do you know," he added quickly, as if the news were too good to keep, "he healed my mother last night. You cannot think how different it seems at home, to have her go'ng about strong and well like she used to be."

Joel's eyes brightened. "Do you think he'll do anything for me, if I go to him now?" he asked wistfully. "Do you suppose he could straighten out such a crooked back as mine? Look how much shorter this leg is than the other. Oh, do you think he could make them all right?"

The boy gave him a critical survey, and then answered, emphatically, "Yes! It really does not look like it would be as hard to straighten out as old Jeremy, the tailor's father. He was twisted all out of shape, you know. Well, I'll declare! There he goes now!"

Joel looked across the street. The wrinkled face of the old basket-weaver was a familiar sight in the market; but Joel could hardly recognize the once crippled form, now restored to its original shapeliness.

"I am going right now," he declared, starting to run in his excitement. "I can't wait another minute."

"But he's gone!" the boy called after him. "That's why the people are all coming back."

Joel sat down suddenly on a ledge projecting from the stone wall. "Gone!" he echoed drearily. It was as if he had been starving, and the life-giving food had to his famished lips had been sud-

denly snatched away. Both his heart up after awhile, and dragged himself and his feet felt like lead when he got slowly along to the carpenter's house.



FLAT-ROOFED MUD HOUSES AT BANIAS.



OUTSIDE STAIRWAY TO FLAT-ROOFED HOUSES.

It was such a bitter disappointment to be so near the touch of healing, and then to miss it altogether.

No cheerful tap of the hammer greeted him. The idle tools lay on the deserted workbench. "Disappointed again!" he thought. Then the doves cooed, and he caught a glimpse of Ruth's fair hair down among the garden lilies.

"Where is your father, little one?" he called.

"Gone away with the good man 'at makes everybody well," she answered. Then she came skipping down the path to stand close beside him, and say confidentially: "I saw him—the good man—going by to Simon's house. I peeped out 'twixt the rose-vines, and he looked wite into my eyes with his eyes, and I couldn't help loving him!"

Joel looked into the beautiful baby face, thinking what a picture it must have been, as framed in roses it smiled out on the Tender-hearted One, going on his mission of help and healing.

With her little hand in his, she led him back to hope, for she took him to her mother, who comforted him with the assurance that Phineas expected to be home soon, and doubtless his friend would be with him.

So there came another time to work by himself and dream of the hour surely dawning. And the dreams were doubly sweet now; for side by side with his hope of revenge, was the belief in his possible cure.

They heard only once from the absent ones. Word came back that a leper had been healed. Joel heard it first, down at the custom-house. He had gotten into the way of strolling down in that direction after his work was done, for here the many trading-vessels from across the lake, or those that shipped from Capernaum, had to stop and pay duty. Here, too, the great road of Eastern commerce passed which led from Damascus to the harbours of the West. So here he would find a constant stream of travellers, bringing the latest news from the outside world.

The boy did not know, as he limped up and down the water's edge, longing for some word from his absent friends, that near by was one who watched almost as eagerly as himself.

It was Levi-Matthew, one of the officials, sitting in the seat of custom. Sprung from the same priestly tribe as Joel, he had sunk so low, in accepting the office of tax-gatherer, that the righteous Laban would not have touched him so much as with the tip of his sandal.

"Bears and lions," said a proverb, "might be the fiercest wild beasts in the forests; but publicans and informers were the worst in cities."

One could not bear witness in the courts, and the disgrace extended to the whole family. They were even classed with robbers and murderers. No doubt there was deep cause for such a feeling; as a class they were unscrupulous and unjust. There might have been good ones among their number, but the company they kept condemned them to the scorn of high and low.

When a Jew hates, or a Jew scorns, be sure it is thoroughly done; there is no half-way course for his intense nature to take.

So this son of Levi, sitting in the seat of custom, and this son of Levi strolling past him, were, socially, as far apart as the east is from the west,—as unlike as thorn and blossom on the same tribal stem.

Matthew knew all the fishermen and ship-owners that thronged the busy beach in front of him. The sons of Jonah and Zebedee passed him daily; and he must have wondered when he