

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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The Five Loaves.

What if the little Jewish lad
That summer day had failed to go
Down to the lake, because he had
So small a store of loaves to show?

"The press is great," he might have said;
"For food the thronging people call.
I only have five loaves of bread,
And what are they among them all?"

And back the mother's words might come,
Her ceasing hand upon his hair:
"Yet go; for they might comfort some,
Among the hungry children there."

Lo, to the lakeside forth he went,
Bearing the scant supply he had:
And Jesus with an eye intent,
Through all the crowds, beheld the lad.

And saw the loaves and blessed them.
Then
Beneath his hand the marvel grew:
He brake and blessed, and brake again:
'The loaves were neither small nor few;

For, as we know, it came to pass
That hungry thousands there were fed,
While sitting on the fresh green grass,
From that one basketful of bread.

If from his home the lad that day
His five small loaves had failed to take,
Would Christ have wrought—can any
say?
That miracle beside the lake?

THE BOY DISCIPLE.

BY ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON.

CHAPTER XI.

After that night of the voyage to the Gadarenes, Joel ceased to be surprised at the miracles he daily witnessed. Even when the little daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, was called back to life, it did not seem so wonderful to him as the stilling of the tempest.

Many a night, after Phineas had gone away again with the Master to other cities, Joel used to go down to the beach, and stand looking across the water as he recalled that scene.

The lake had always been an interesting place to him at night. He liked to watch the fishermen as they flashed their blazing torches this way and that. A sympathetic thrill ran through him as they sighted their prey, and raised their bare sinewy arms to sling the net or fly the spear.

But after that morning of healing, and that night of tempest, it seemed to be a sacred place, to be visited only on still nights, when the town slept, and heaven bent nearer in the starlight to the quiet earth.

The time of the Passover was drawing near,—the time that Joel had been looking forward to since Phineas had promised him a year ago that he should go to Jerusalem.

The twelve disciples who had been sent out to all the little towns through Galilee, to teach the things they had themselves been taught, and work miracles in the name of him who had sent them, began to come slowly back. They had an encouraging report to bring of their work; but it was shadowed by the news they had heard of the murder of John Baptist.

Joel joined them as soon as they came into Capernaum, and walked beside Phineas as the footsore travellers pressed

on a little farther towards Simon's house.

"When are we going to start for Jerusalem?" he asked eagerly.

Phineas looked searchingly into his face as he replied, "Would you be greatly disappointed, my son, not to go this year?"

Joel looked perplexed; it was such an unheard-of thing for Phineas to miss going up to the Feast of the Passover.

"These are evil times, my Joel," he explained. "John Baptist has just been beheaded. The Master has many enemies

jealous of his popularity. He upsets their old traditions, and teaches a religion that ignores some of the laws of Moses. I can easily see why they hate him so. They see him at such a long distance from themselves, they cannot understand him. Healing on the Sabbath, eating with publicans and sinners, disregarding the little customs and ceremonies that in all ages have set apart our people as a chosen race, are crimes in their eyes.

"It is only could get close enough to understand him; to see that his pure

hospitable door, Phineas said, "Enter with them, my lad, if you wish. I must go on to my little family, but will join you soon."

To Joel's great pleasure, he found they were to cross the lake at once, to the little fishing port of Bethsaida. It was only six miles across.

"We have hardly had time to eat, said Andrew to Joel, as they walked along towards the boat. "I will be glad to get away to some desert place, where we may have rest from the people that are always pushing and clamouring about us."

"How long before you start?" asked Joel.

In a very few minutes," answered Andrew, "for the boat is in readiness."

Joel glanced from the street above the beach to the water's edge, as if calculating the distance.

"Don't go without me," he said, as, breaking into a run, he dashed up the beach at his utmost speed. He was back again in a surprisingly quick time, with a cheap little basket in his hand; he was out of breath with his rapid run.

"Didn't I go fast?" he panted. "I could not have done that a few weeks ago. Oh, it feels so good to be able to run when I please! It is like flying."

He lifted the cover of the basket. "See!" he said. "I thought the Master might be hungry; but I had no time to get anything better. I had to stop at the first stall I came to."

At the same time the boat went gliding out into the water with its restful motion, thousands of people were pouring out of the villages on foot, and hovering on around the lake, ahead of them.

The boat passed up a narrow winding creek, away from the sail-dotted lake; its green banks seemed to promise the longed-for quiet and rest. But there in front of them waited the crowds they had come so far to avoid.

They had brought their sick for healing. They needed to be helped and taught, they were "as sheep without a shepherd." He could not refuse them.

Joel found no chance to offer the food he had bought so hastily with another of his hoarded coins,—the coins that were to have purchased his revenge.

As the day wore on, he heard the disciples ask that the multitudes might be sent away.

"It would take two hundred pennyworth of bread to feed them," said Philip, "and even that would not be enough."

Andrew glanced over the great crowds and stroked his beard thoughtfully. "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?"

Joel hurried forward and held out his basket with its little store,—five flat round loaves of bread, not much more than one hungry man could eat, and two dried fishes.

He hardly knew what to expect as the people were made to sit down on the grass in orderly ranks of fifties.

His eyes grew round with astonishment as the Master took the bread, gave thanks, and then passed it to the disciples, who, in turn, distributed it among the people. Then the two little fishes were handed around in the same way.

Joel turned to Phineas, who had joined them some time ago. "Do you see that?" he asked excitedly. "They have been multiplied a thousandfold!"

Phineas smiled. "We drop one tiny grain of wheat into the earth," he said, "and when it grows and spreads and bears dozens of other grains on its single stalk, we are not astonished. When the Master but does in an instant, what na-



FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND.

among those in high places. It would be like walking into a lion's den for him to go up to Jerusalem.

"Even here he is not safe from the hatred of Antipas, and after a little rest will pass over into the borders of the tetrarch Philip. We have no wish to leave him!"

"Oh, why should he be persecuted so?" asked Joel, looking with tear-brimmed eyes at the man walking in advance of them, and talking in low, earnest tones to John, who walked beside him.

"You have been with him so much, father Phineas. Have you ever known him to do anything to make these men his enemies?"

"Yes," said Phineas. "He has drawn the people after him until they are

He needs no ceremonies of multiplied hand-washings; that is his broad love for his fellow men that makes him stoop to the lowest classes,—I am sure they could not do otherwise than love him.

"Blind fanatics! They would put to death the best man that ever lived, because he is so much broader and higher than they that the little measuring line of their narrow creed cannot compass him!"

"Is he never going to set up his kingdom?" asked Joel. "Does he never talk about it?"

"Yes," said Phineas; "though we are often puzzled by what he says, and ask ourselves his meaning."

They had reached the house by this time, and as Simon led the way to its