

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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[No. 3.]

No! Never.

Take a drink? No, not I!
Reason taught me better
Than to bind my very soul
With a galling fetter.
Water, sweet and cool and free,
Has no cruel chains for me.

Take a drink? No, not I!
I have seen too many
Taking drinks like that of yours,
Stripped of every penny.
Water, sweet and cool and clear,
Costs me nothing all the year.

Take a drink? No, never!
By God's blessing, never
Will I touch, or taste, or smell,
Henceforth and forever!
Water, sweet and clear and cool,
Makes no man a slave or fool.

THE BOY DISCIPLE.

BY

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON.

CHAPTER XVI.

Simon the leper sat at the door of his cave. He held a roll of vellum in his unslightly fingers; it was a copy of the Psalms that Lazarus had once made for him in happier days.

Many a time he had found comfort in these hope-inspiring songs of David; but to-day he was reading a wail that seemed to come from the depths of his own soul:

"Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Thou hast put mine acquaintance far from me. Thou hast made me an abomination unto them. I am shut up and I cannot come forth. Lord, I have called daily upon thee. I have stretched out my hand unto thee. Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise again and praise thee? Lord, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me?"

The roll dropped to the ground, and he hid his face in his hands, crying, "How long must I endure this? Oh, why was I not taken instead of Lazarus?"

The sound of some one scrambling over the rocks made him look up quickly.

Simon never made his visits at this time of the day, and strangers had never before found the path to this out-of-the-way place. Joel came on, and stopped by the rock where the water-jar stood.

Simon stood up, covering himself with his mantle, and crying out, warningly, "Beware! Unclean! Come no further!"

"I bring you news from the village," said Joel. The man threw out his hand with a gesture of

alarm. "Oh, not of my wife, Esther," he cried, imploringly, "or of my little Joseph! I could not bear to hear aught of ill from them. My heart is still sore for the death of my friend Lazarus. I went as near the village as I dared, and heard the dirge of the flutes and the wailing of the women, when they laid him in the tomb. I have sat here ever since in sackcloth and ashes."

"But Lazarus lives again!" exclaimed Joel, simply. He had seen so many miracles lately, that he forgot the startling effect such an announcement would have on one not accustomed to them.

The man stood petrified with astonishment. At last he said bitterly, "You but mock me, boy, at least leave me to my sorrow in peace."

"No!" cried Joel. "As the Lord liveth, I swear it is the truth. Have you not heard that Messiah has come? I have followed him up and down the country, and know whereof I speak. At a word from him the dumb sing, the blind see, and the lame walk. I was lame myself, and he made me as you see me now."

"Why did you take the trouble to come and tell me that,—a poor despised leper?" he finally asked.

"Because I want everybody else to be as happy as I am. He cured me. He gave me back my strength. Then why should not my feet be always swift to bring others to him for the same happy healing? He himself goes about all the time doing good. I know there is hope



MARY ANOINTING CHRIST'S FEET.

for you, for I have seen him cleanse lepers."

Simon trembled, as the full meaning of the hope held out to him began to make itself clear to his confused mind. Health, home, Esther, child, all restored to him. It was joy too great to be possible.

"Oh, if I could only believe it!" he cried.

"Lazarus was raised when he had been four days dead. All Bethany can bear witness to that," persisted Joel. The words poured out with such force and earnestness, as he described the scene, that Simon felt impelled to believe him.

"Where can I find this man?" he asked.

Joel pointed down the rocky slope. "Take that road that leads into Bethany. Come early in the morning, and as we all pass that way, call to him. He never refuses any who have faith to believe that he can grant what they ask."

When Joel was half-way down the hill, he turned back. "If he should not pass on the morrow," he said, "do not fail to be there on the second day. We will surely leave here soon."

Simon stood in bewilderment till the boy had passed down the hill; he began to fear that this messenger was only the creation of a dream. He climbed upon the cliff and peered down into the valley. No, he had not been deceived; the boy was no mirage of his thiraty soul, for there, he came out into full sight again, and now, he was climbing the opposite hillside.

"How beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of him who bringeth good tidings!" he murmured. "Oh, what a heaven opens up before me, if this lad's words are only true!"

Next morning, after they left Bethany, Joel looked anxiously behind every rock and tree that they passed; but Simon was not to be seen.

Presently Joel saw him waiting farther down the road; he was kneeling in the dust. The white mantle that in his sensitiveness was always used to hide himself from view, was cast aside, that the Great Healer might see his great need.

He scanned the approaching figures with imploring eyes. He was looking for the Messiah,—some one in kingly garments, whose jewelled sceptre's lightest touch would lay upon him the royal accolade of health.

These were evidently not the ones he was waiting for. These were only simple wayfarers; most of them looked like Galileans.

He was about to rise up with his old warning cry of unclean, when he caught sight of Joel. But where was the princely Redeemer of prophecy?

Nearer and nearer they came, till he



CHRIST BLESSING THE CHILDREN.