

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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The Years Pass On.

"When I'm a woman you'll see what I'll do—
I'll be great and good and noble and true;
I'll visit the sick and relieve the poor—
No one shall ever be turned from my door;
But I'm only a little girl now."
And so the years passed on.

"When I'm a woman," a gay maiden said,
"I'll try to do right and not be afraid;
I'll be a Christian and give up the joys
Of the world, with all its dazzling toys;
But I'm only a young girl now."
And so the years passed on.

"Ah me!" said a woman gray with years,
Her heart full of cares and doubts and fears,
"I've been putting off the time to be good
Instead of beginning to do as I should;
And I'm an old woman now."
And so the years passed on.

Now is the time to begin to do right;
To-day, whether skies be dark or bright;
Make others happy by good deeds of love,
Looking to Jesus for help from above;
And then you'll be happy now
And as the years pass on.

THE BOY DISCIPLE.

BY

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON.

CHAPTER II.

Nothing was said for a little while. The doves as before cooed of peace, and Phineas began a steady tap-tap with his hammer.

A pleasant-faced woman came out of the door with a water-jar on her head, and passed down the path to the public well. She gave Joel a friendly greeting in passing.

"Wait, mother!" lisped Ruth, as she ran after her. The woman turned to smile at the little one, and held out her hand. Her dress, of some soft, cotton material, hung in long flowing folds. It was a rich blue colour, caught at the waist with a white girdle. The turban wound around her dark hair was white also, and so was the veil she pushed aside far enough to show a glimpse of brown eyes and red cheeks. She wore a broad silver bracelet on the bare arm which was raised to hold the water-jar, and the rings in her ears and tallsmans on her neck were of quaintly wrought silver.

"I did not know it was so late," said Joel, rising to his feet. "Time passes so fast here."

"Nay, do not go," said Phineas. "It is a long walk back to your home, as the sun is very hot. Stay and eat dinner with us."

Joel hesitated; but the invitation was repeated so cordially, that he let Jesse pull him down on the grass again.

"Now I'll tickle your lips with this blade of grass," said the child. "See how long you can keep from laughing."

When Abigail came back with the water, both the boys were laughing as heartily as if there had never been an ache or pain in the world. She smiled at them approvingly, as she led the way into the house.

Joel looked around with much curiosity. It was like most of the other houses of his kind in the town. There

was only one large square room, in which the family cooked, ate, and slept; but on every side it showed that Phineas had left traces of his skillful hands.

There was a tiny window cut in one wall; most of the houses of this description had none, but depended on the doorway for light and air. Several shelves around the walls held the lamp and the earthenware dishes. The chest made to hold the rugs and cushions which they spread down at night to sleep on, was unusually large and ornamental. A broom, a handmill, and a bushel stood in one corner.

Near the door, a table which Phineas had made stood spread for the mid-day meal.

There was broiled fish on one of the

manhood in Jerusalem, and, unlike the simple Galileans among whom he now lived, tried to observe its most detailed rules.

The child heard them discussed continually, till he felt he could neither eat, drink, nor dress, except by these set rules. He could not play like other children, and being so much with older people had made him thoughtful and observant.

He had learned to read very early; and hour after hour he spent in the house of Rabbi Amos, the most learned man of the town, poring over his rolls of scriptures. Think of a childhood without a picture, or a story-book! All that there was to read were these old records of Jewish history.



A CARPENTER SHOP, NAZARETH.

platters, beans and barley bread, a dish of honey, and a pitcher of milk. The fare was just the same that Joel was accustomed to in his uncle's house; but something made the simple meal seem like a banquet. It may have been that the long walk had made him hungrier than usual, or it may have been because he was treated as the honoured guest, instead of a child tolerated through charity. He watched his host carefully, as he poured the water over his hands before eating, and asked a blessing on the food.

"He does not keep the law as strictly as my Uncle Laban," was his inward comment. "He asked only one blessing, and Uncle Laban blesses every kind of food separately. But he must be a good man, even if he is not so strict a Pharisee as my uncle, for he is kinder than anyone I ever knew before."

It was wonderful how much Joel had learned, in his eleven short years, of the law. His aunt's husband had given to

The old man had taken a fancy to him, finding him an appreciative listener and an apt pupil. So Joel was allowed to come whenever he pleased, and take out the yellow rolls of parchment from their velvet covers.

He was never perfectly happy except at these times, when he was reading these old histories of his country's greatness. How he enjoyed chasing the armies of the Philistines, and fighting over again the battles of Israel's kings! Many a tale he stored away in his busy brain to be repeated to the children gathered around the public fountain in the cool of the evening.

It mattered not what character he told them of,—priest or prophet, judge or king,—the picture was painted in life-like colours by this patriotic little hero-worshipper.

Here and at home he heard so many discussions about what was lawful and what was not, that he was constantly in

fear of breaking one of the many rules, even in as simple a duty as washing a cup.

So he watched his host closely till the meal was over, finding that in the observance of many customs he failed to measure up to his uncle's strict standard.

Phineas went back to his work after dinner. He was greatly interested in Joel, and, while he sawed and hammered, kept a watchful eye on him. He was surprised at the boy's knowledge. More than once he caught himself standing with an idle tool in hand, as he listened to some story that Joel was telling to Jesse.

After a while he laid down his work and leaned against the bench. "What do you find to do all day, my lad?" he asked, abruptly.

"Nothing," answered Joel, "after I have recited my lessons to Rabbi Amos."

"Does your aunt never give you any tasks to do at home?"

"No. I think she does not like to have me in her sight any more than she is obliged to. She is always kind to me, but she doesn't love me. She only pities me. I hate to be pitied. There is not a single one in the world who really loves me."

His lips quivered, but he winked back the tears. Phineas seemed lost in thought a few minutes, then he looked up. "You are a Levite," he said slowly, "so of course you could always be supported without needing to learn a trade. Still you would be a great deal happier, in my opinion, if you had something to keep you busy. If you like, I will teach you to be a carpenter. There are a great many things you might learn to make well, and by-and-bye it would be a source of profit to you. There is no bread so bitter as the bread of dependence, as you may learn when you are older."

"Oh, Rabbi Phineas!" cried Joel. "Do you mean that I may come here every day? It is too good to be true!"

"Yes; if you will promise to stick to it until you have mastered the trade. If you are as quick to learn with your hands as you have been with your head, I shall have reason to be proud of such a pupil."

Joel's face flushed with pleasure, and he sprang up quickly, saying, "May I begin right now? Oh, I'll try so hard to please you!"

Phineas laid a soft pine board on the bench, and began to mark a line across it with a piece of red chalk.

"Well, you may see how straight a cut you can make through this plank."

He picked up a saw, and ran his fingers lightly along its sharp teeth. But he paused in the act of handling it to Joel, to ask, "You are sure, now, that your uncle and aunt will consent to such an arrangement?"

"Yes, indeed!" was the emphatic answer. They will be glad enough to have me out of the way, and learning something useful."

The saw cut slowly through the wood; for the weak little hand was a careful one, and the boy was determined not to swerve once from the line. He smiled with satisfaction as the pieces fell apart, showing a clean, straight edge.

"Well done!" said Phineas, kindly. "Now let me see you drive a nail." Made bold by his first success, Joel pounded away vigorously, but the hammer slipped more than once, and his unpractised fingers ached with the blows that he had aimed at the nail's head.

"You'll soon learn," said Phineas, with an encouraging pat on the boy's shoulder. "Gather up those odds and ends under the bench. When you've saved them in-