

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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No. 1.

STORIES OF THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS.

The following three poems are taken from Longfellow's Miracle Play in "The Golden Legend," which in turn derives them from the apocryphal gospels of the infancy and childhood of our Lord. There are about fifty apocryphal gospels, some entire, others in fragments, of which we have nothing but the name. Some of these are of ancient Syrian origin, some old Coptic or Egyptian, some are in Arabic. There were also apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, Epistles and Revelations. While possessing no canonical authority, they are curious as showing the views very early held about our Lord and the apostles. In their childish legends and miracles they differ in a world-wide manner from the inspired narrative of the Scriptures.—Ed.

In the legend the little Jesus makes sparrows of clay and claps his hands, when they all fly off. When the pitcher which Jesus is carrying breaks, he brings the water in the corner of his robe. When the couch which Joseph is making for a customer proves too short, Jesus stretches it to the proper length. These puerile stories are given with much variety in early art, and are in striking contrast to the simple account of the Scriptures, which sums up the boyhood of Christ in the words, "And he was subject unto them. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL.

[The Rabbi Ben Israel, with a long beard, sitting on a high stool, with a rod in his hand.]

RABBI.

I am the Rabbi Ben Israel,
Throughout this village
known full well,
And, as my scholars all will
tell,
Learned in things divine;
The Kabala and the Talmud
hoar,
Than all the prophets prize I
more,
For water is all Bible lore,
But Mishna is strong wine.

Come hither, Judas Iscariot,
Say, if thy lesson thou hast
got
From the Rabbinical book or
not;
Why howl the dogs at
night?

JUDAS.

In the Rabbinical book it
saith,
The dogs howl, when with
icy breath
Great Sammael, the Angel of Death,
Takes through the town his flight!

RABBI.

Well have ye answered, every one!
Now, little Jesus, the carpenter's son,
Let us see how thy task is done,
Canst thou thy letters say?

JESUS.

Aleph.

RABBI.

What next? Do not stop yet!
Go on with all the alphabet.
Come, Aleph, Beth; dost thou forget?
Cock's soul! thou'dst rather play!

JESUS.

What Aleph means I fain would know,
Ere I any further go!

RABBI.

Oh, by Saint Peter! wouldst thou so?
Come hither, boy, to me.
As surely as the letter Jod
Once cried aloud and spake to God,
So surely shalt thou feel this rod,
And punished shalt thou be!

[Here Rabbi Ben Israel shall lift up his rod to strike Jesus, and his right arm shall be paralyzed,

CROWNED WITH FLOWERS.

[Jesus, sitting among his playmates crowned with flowers as their King.]

BOYS.

We spread our garments on the ground!
With fragrant flowers thy head is
crowned,
While like a guard we stand around,
And hail thee as our King!
Thou art the new King of the Jews!
Nor let the passers-by refuse
To bring that homage which men use
To majesty to bring.

[Here a traveller goes by and the boys lay hold of his garments.

BOYS.

Come hither! and all reverence pay
Unto our Monarch crowned to-day!
Then go rejoicing on your way,
In all prosperity!

TRAVELLER.

Hail to thee, King of Bethlehem,
Who wearest in his diadem
The yellow crocus for the gem
Of his authority!

[He passes by, others come in, bearing on a litter a sick child.

BOYS.

Set down the litter and draw near!

JUDAS.

See how the stream has overflowed
Its banks, and o'er the meadow road
Is spreading far and wide!

[They draw water out of the stream by channels, and form little pools. Jesus makes twelve sparrows of clay, and the other boys do the same.

JESUS.

Look! look! How prettily I make
These little sparrows by the lake
Bend down their necks and drink!
Now will I make them sing and soar
So far, they shall return no more
Unto this river's brink.

JUDAS.

That canst thou not! They are but clay,
They cannot sing, nor fly away,
Above the meadow lands!

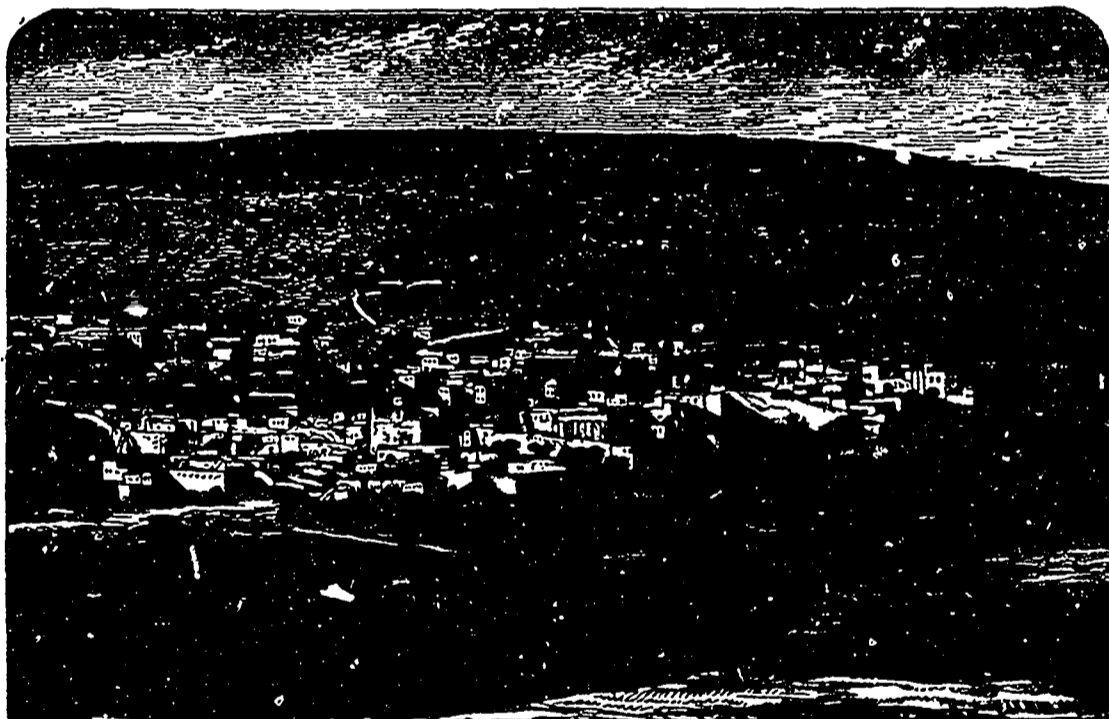
JESUS.

Fly! fly! ye sparrows! Ye are free!
And while ye live remember me,
Who made you with my hands.

[Here Jesus shall clap his hands and the sparrows shall fly away chirruping.

JUDAS.

Thou art a sorcerer, I know;



NAZARETH.

The King of Bethlehem is here!
What ails the child, who seems to fear
That we shall do him harm?

THE BEARERS.

He climbed up to the robin's nest,
And out there darted, from his rest,
A serpent with a crimson crest,
And stung him in the arm.

JESUS.

Bring him to me and let me feel
The wounded place; my touch can heal
The sting of serpents, and can steal
The poison from the bite!

[He touches the wound and the boy begins to cry.

Cease to lament! I can foresee
That thou hereafter known shalt be
Among the men who follow me,
As Simon the Canaanite!

JESUS AT PLAY WITH HIS SCHOOL-MATES.

JESUS.

The shower is over. Let us play,
And make some sparrows out of clay,
Down by the river's side.

Oft has my mother told me so,
I will not play with thee!
[He strikes Jesus on the right side.

JESUS.

Ah, Judas! thou hast smote my side,
And when I shall be crucified,
There shall I pierced be!

WONDERFUL GOLD LEAF.

BY MISS. D. V. FARLEY.

The process by which gold is made into thin leaves is called gold-beating. And yet, the use of machinery for this purpose is very limited, nearly all gold leaf being beaten by hand.

First, the gold is cast into oblong ingots about three-fourths of an inch in width and weighing two ounces each. These ingots are passed between polished steel rollers and flattened out into "ribbons," about 1-300 of an inch in thickness. The ribbons are then softened by heat and cut into pieces exactly one inch square. One hundred and fifty of these pieces are placed between vellum leaves, one piece above another, and the entire pile is enclosed in a double parchment case, and the inch pieces are extended to four-inch squares. They are then taken

from the case, and each square is cut into four pieces; the pieces thus obtained are then placed between "gold-beater's skin"—a delicate membrane prepared from the large intestine of the ox—made into piles, again inclosed in a parchment case, and again beaten, but this time with a hammer of light weight.

Still the leaves are not thin enough, and once more each leaf is cut into four pieces and again beaten. This last quartering and beating produces twenty-four thousand leaves, and the thickness of each is about 1-200,000 of an inch. Gold is so malleable that it is possible to obtain a still greater degree of thinness, but not profitably.

These wonderfully thin gold leaves are taken up with wood plinters, placed on a cushion, blown out flat, and carefully cut into squares three and one-fourth inches in size. The squares are placed between the leaves of paper books which have previously been rubbed with red chalk to prevent adhesion of the gold. Each paper book contains twenty-five squares or leaves of gold, and in this form the leaf is sold—not by weight, but by superficial measure.

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS.

His outward life was the life of all those of his age and station and place of birth. He lived as lived the other children of peasant parents in that quiet town, and in a great measure as they live now. He who has seen the children of Nazareth in their red caftans and bright tunics of silk or cloth, girded with a many-coloured sash, and sometimes covered with a loose outer jacket of white or blue—he who has watched their games and heard their ringing laughter as they wander about the hills of their little native vale, or play in bands on the hillside beside their sweet and abundant fountain, may perhaps form some conception of how Jesus looked and played when he too was a child. And the traveller who has followed any of those children—as I have done—to their simple homes, and seen the scanty furniture, the plain but sweet and wholesome food, the uneventful, patriarchal life, may form a vivid conception of the manner in which Jesus lived. Nothing can be plainer than those houses with the doves sunning themselves on the white roofs and the vines wreathing about them. Near the door stand the large common water-jars of red clay, with a few twigs and green leaves—often of aromatic shrubs—thrust into their orifices to keep the water cool.

A PROBLEM SOLVED.

Among the ancients, a satisfactory definition of the word "man" was long striven for in vain. "A biped without feathers" was a favourite, until some scoffer suggested that a plucked fowl answered to the same description. Then they gave it up. A more puzzling question still, and its solution by a childish mind, are thus set forth by The Golden Rule:

"What is a skeleton? Can you tell me, children?" asked the teacher. The infant class looked troubled. The question passed down the class until it reached the foot, where the smallest tot of all stood. "Pleathe, mth," she replied, "it ith a man without any meat on it."

"I know the Lord is always on the side of the right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation shall be on the Lord's side."—Lincoln.