

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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Mother's Boys.

Yes, I know there are stains on my carpet,
The trace of small muddy boots;
And I see your fair tapestry glowing,
All spotless with blossoms and fruits.

And I know that my walls are disfigured
With prints of small fingers and hands,
And that your own household most truly
In immaculate purity stands.

And I know that my parlor is littered
With many old treasures and toys;
While your own is in daintiest order,
Unharm'd by the presence of boys.

And I know that my room is invaded
Quite boldly all hours of the day;
While you sit in yours unmolested
And dream the soft quiet away.

Yes, I know there are four little bedsides

Where I must stand watchful each night;
While you can go out in your carriage,
And shine in your dresses so bright.
Now, I think I'm a neat little woman;
I like my house orderly, too;
And I'm fond of all dainty belongings,
Yet would not change places with you.
No! Keep your fair home with its order,
Its freedom from bother and noise;
And keep your own fanciful leisure—
But leave me my four noble boys!

THE BOY DISCIPLE.

BY

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON.

CHAPTER VI.

Next morning a gaily train set out from the gates of Nathan ben Obed. It was near the time of the feast of the Passover, and he, with many of his household, was going down to Jerusalem.

The family and guests went first on mules and asses. Behind them followed a train of servants, driving the lambs, goats, and oxen to be offered as sacrifices in the temple, or sold in Jerusalem to other pilgrims.

All along the highway, workmen were busy repairing the bridges, and cleaning the springs and wells, soon to be used by the throngs of travellers.

All the tombs near the great thoroughfares were being freshly white-washed; they gleamed with a dazzling purity through the green trees, only to warn passers-by of the dead within. For had these on their way to the feast approached too near these homes of the dead, even unconsciously, they would have been accounted unclean, and unfit to partake of the Passover. Nothing escaped Joel's quick sight, from the tulips and marigolds flaming in the fields, to the bright-eyed little viper crawling along the stone wall.



SHEIK'S TOMB—"A WHITENED SEPULCHRE."

But while he looked, he never lost a word that passed between his friend Phineas and their host. The pride of an ancient nation took possession of him as he listened to the prophecies they quoted.

Every one they met along the way coming from Capernaum had something to say about this new prophet who had arisen in Galilee. When they reached the gate of the city, a great disappointment awaited them. He had been there, and gone again.

Nathan ben Obed and his train tarried only one night in the place, and then pressed on again toward Jerusalem. Phineas went with them.

"You shall go with us next year," he said to Joel; "then you will be over twelve. I shall take my own little ones too, and their mother."

"Only one more year," exclaimed Joel, joyfully. "If that passes as quickly as the one just gone, it will soon be here."

"Look after my little family," said the carpenter, at parting. "Come every day

to the work, if you wish, just as when I am here; and remember, my lad, you are almost a man."

Almost a man! The words rang in the boy's thoughts all day as he pounded and cut, keeping time to the swinging motion of hammer and saw. Almost a man! But what kind of one? Crippled and maimed, shorn of the strength that should have been his pride, beggared of his priestly birthright.

Almost, it might be, but never in its fulness, could he hope to attain the proud stature of a perfect man.

A fiercer hate sprang up for the enemy who had made him what he was, and the wild burning for revenge filled him so he could not work. He put away his tools, and went up the narrow outside stairway that led to the flat roof of the carpenter's house. It was called the "upper chamber." Here a latticed pavilion, thickly overgrown with vines, made a cool retreat where he might rest and think undisturbed.

Sitting there, he could see the flash of white sails on the blue lake, and slow moving masses of fleecy clouds in the blue of the sky above. They brought before him the picture of the flocks feeding on the pastures of Nathan ben Obed.

Then, naturally enough, there flashed through his mind a thought of Buz. He seemed to see him squinting his little eyes to take aim at a leaf overhead. He heard the stone whir through it, as Buz said. "I'd blind him!"

Some very impossible plans crept into Joel's day-dreams just then. He imagined himself sitting in a high seat, wrapped in robes of state; soldiers stood around him to carry out his slightest wish. The door would open and Rehun would be brought forth in fetters.

"What is your will concerning the prisoner, O most gracious sovereign," the gaoler would ask.

Joel closed his eyes, and waved his hand before an imaginary audience. "Away with him,—to the torture! Wrench his limbs on the rack! Brand his eyelids with hot irons! Let him suffer all that man can suffer and live!

Thus shall it be done unto the man on whom the king delighteth to take vengeance!"

Joel was childish enough to take a real satisfaction in this scene he conjured up. But as it faded away, he was man enough to realize it could never come to pass, save in his imagination; he could never be in such a position for revenge, unless—

That moment a possible way seemed to open for him. Phineas would probably see his friend of Nazareth at the Passover. What could be more natural than that the old friendship should be renewed. He whose hand had changed the water into wine should finally cast out the alien king who usurped the throne of Israel, for one in whose veins the blood of David ran royal red,—what was more to be expected than that?

The Messiah would come to His kingdom, and then—and then—the thought leaped to its last daring limit.

Phineas, who had been his earliest friend and playfellow, would he not be lifted to the right hand of power?

Through him, then, lay the royal road to revenge.

The thought lifted him unconsciously to his feet. He stood with his arms outstretched in the direction of the far-away Temple. Like some young prophet, David's cry of triumph rose to his lips.

"Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle," he murmured. "Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me!"

A sweet baby voice at the foot of the steps brought him suddenly down from the height of his intense feeling.

"Joel! Joel!" called little Ruth, "where is you?"

Then Jesse's voice added, "We're all a-coming up for you to tell us a story."

Up the stairs they swarmed to the roof, the carpenter's children and half a dozen of their little playmates.

Joel, with his head still in the clouds, told them of a mighty king who was coming to slay all other kings, and change all laws.



MOONLIGHT OVER GALILEE. TERRACE IN THE FOREGROUND.