

"Rabbi Phineas" ventured Joel, respectfully. "Is that not the wood you charged me to save so carefully?"

Phineas gave a start as he saw what he had done, and threw down his saw.

"Truly," he said, smiling, "I am bound myself with the saw. I have heard, I just now walked ten cubits past my own home, unknowing where I was, so deeply was I thinking upon 'Abraham' he asked, 'do you remember my friend in Nazareth whom I so often speak of the son of Joseph the carpenter? Last week he was bidden to a marriage in Cana. It happened, before the feasting was over, the supply of wine was exhausted, and the mortified host knew not what to do. Six great jars of stone had been placed in the room, to supply the guests with water for washing; He changed that into wine."

"I cannot believe it!" answered Abigail, simply. "But Ezra ben Jared told me so. He was there, and drank of the wine," insisted Phineas.

"He could not have done it," said Abigail, "unless he were helped by the evil one, or unless he were a prophet. He is too good a man to ask help of the powers of darkness; and it is beyond belief that a son of Joseph should be a prophet."

To this Phineas made no answer. His quiet thoughts were shaken out of their usual routine as violently as if by an earthquake.

Joel thought more of the journey than he did of the miracle. It seemed to the impatient boy that the next day never would dawn. Many times in the night he wakened to hear the distant crowing of cocks. At last, by straining his eyes he could distinguish the green leaves of the vine on the lattice from the blue of the half-opened blossoms. By that token he knew it was near enough the morning for him to commence saying his first prayers.

Dressing noiselessly, so as not to disturb the sleeping family, he slipped out of the house and down to the well outside the city-gate. Here he washed, and then ate the little lunch he had wrapped up the night before. A meagre little breakfast,—only a hard-boiled egg, a bit of fish, and some black bread. But the early hour and his excitement took away his appetite for even that little.

Soon all was confusion around the well, as the noisy drivers gathered to water their camels, and make their preparations for the start.

Joel shrank away timidly to the edge of the crowd, fearful that his friend Phineas had overlooked himself.

In a few minutes he saw him coming with a staff in one hand and a small bundle swinging from the other.

Joel had one breathless moment of suspense as he was helped on to the back of the kneeling camel; one desperate clutch at the saddle as the huge animal plunged about and rose to its feet. Then he looked down at Phineas, and smiled blissfully.

Oh, the delight of that slow easy motion! The joy of being carried along without pain or effort! Who could realize how much it meant to the little fellow whose halting steps had so long been taken in weariness and suffering?

Swinging along in the cool air, so far above the foot-passengers, it seemed to him that he looked down upon a new earth. Blackbirds flew along the roads, startled by their passing. High overhead, a lark had not yet finished her morning song. Lambs bleated in the pastures, and the lowing of herds sounded on every hill-side.

Not a slight or sound escaped the boy; and all the morning he rode on without speaking, not a care in his heart, not a cloud on his horizon.

At noon they stopped in a little grove of olive trees where a cool spring gurgled out from the rocks.

Phineas spread out their lunch at a little distance from the others; and they ate it quickly, with appetites sharpened by the morning's travel. Afterwards Joel stretched himself out on the ground to rest, and was asleep almost as soon as his eyelids could shut out the noontide glare of the sun from his tired eyes.

When he awoke, nearly an hour afterward, he heard voices near him in earnest conversation. Raising himself on his elbow, he saw Phineas at a little distance talking to an old man who had ridden one of the foremost camels.

They must have been talking of the miracle, for the old man, as he stroked his long white beard, was saying, "But men are more wont to be astonished at the sun's ebbing, than at his daily rising. Look, my friend!"

He pointed to a wild grape-vine clinging to a tree near by. "Do you see those bunches of half-grown grapes? There is a constant miracle. Day by day, the water of the dew and rain is being changed into the wine of the grape. Soil and sunshine are turning in a fragrant juices. Yet you feel no astonishment."

"No," assented Phineas; "for it is by the hand of God it is done."

"Why may not this be also?" said the old man. "Even this miracle at the marriage feast in Cana?"

Phineas started violently. "What?" he cried. "Do you think it possible that this friend of mine is the One to be sent of God?"

"Is not this the accepted time for the coming of Israel's Messiah?" answered the old man, solemnly. "Is it not meet that he should herald his presence by miracles and signs and wonders?"

Joel lay down again to think over what he had just heard. Like every other Israelite he knew that a deliverer had been promised his people.

Time and again he had read the prophecies that foretold the coming of a King through the royal line of David; time and again he had pictured to himself the mighty battles to take place between his down-trodden race and the haughty hordes of Caesar. Somewhere, somewhere, a universal dominion awaited them. He firmly believed that the day was near at hand; but not even in his wildest dreams had he ever dared to hope that it might come in his own lifetime.

He raised himself on his elbow again, for the old man was speaking.

"About thirty years ago," he said slowly, "I went up to Jerusalem to be registered for taxation, for the emperor's decree had gone forth and no one could escape enrolment. You are too young to remember the taking of that census, my friend; but you doubtless heard of it."

"Yes," assented Phineas, respectfully. "I was standing just outside the Joppa gate, bargaining with a man for a cage of goldfinches he had for sale, which I wished to take to my daughter, when we heard some one speaking to us. Looking up we saw several strange men on camels, who were inquiring their way. They were richly dressed. The trappings and silver bells on their camels, as well as their own attire, spoke of wealth. Their faces showed that they were wise and learned men from far countries."

"We greeted them respectfully, but could not speak for astonishment, when we heard their question."

"Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." The bird-seller looked at me, and I looked at him in open-mouthed wonder. The man rode on before we could find words wherewith to answer them.

"All sorts of rumours were afloat, and everywhere we went next day, throughout Jerusalem, knots of people stood talking of the mysterious men, and their strange question. Even the king was interested, and sought audience with them."

"Could any one answer them?" asked Phineas.

"Nay! but it was then, impressed on me so surely that the Christ was born, that I have asked myself all these thirty years, 'Where is he that is born king of the Jews?' For I too would fain follow on to find and worship him. As soon as I return from Damascus, I shall go at once to Cana, and search for this miracle-worker."

The old man's earnest words made a wonderful impression on Joel. All the afternoon, as they rose higher among the hills, the thought took stronger possession of him. He might yet live, heinous little cripple as he was, to see the dawn of Israel's deliverance, and a son of David once more on his throne.

Ride on, little pilgrim, happy in thy day-dreams! The time is coming; but weary ways and hopeless heart-aches lie between thee and that to-morrow. The king is on his way to his coronation, but it will be with thorns.

Ride on, little pilgrim, be happy, whilst thou can!

(To be continued.)

What Was It?

Guess what he had in his pocket? Marbles and tops, and sundry toys Such as always belong to boys; A bitter apple, a leathern ball? Not at all.

What did he have in his pocket? A bubble pipe and a rusty screw, A brass watch key broken in two, A fishhook in a tangle of string? No such thing.

What did he have in his pocket? Gingerbread crumbs a whistle he made, Buttons, a knife with a broken blade, A nail or two, and a rubber gun? Neither one.

What did he have in his pocket? Before he knew, it slyly crept Under the treasures carefully kept, And away they all of them quickly stole.

'Twas a hole.

—The Independent.

OUR PERIODICALS:

PER YEAR—POSTAGE FREE.

Table listing various periodicals and their prices, including Christian Guardian, Methodist Magazine, and others.

WILLIAM BRIGGS,

Methodist Book and Publishing House, Toronto. C. W. COATES, 216 St. Catherine St., Montreal. S. F. HIGGINS, Wesleyan Book Room, Halifax, N.S.

Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK. Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, MAY 16, 1896.

THE FRESH-AIR BOY.

"Betsy Ann, don't you know we're too poor to take fresh-air children? Why, they wouldn't say 'thanky' for our little one-story house, rag carpets, little tucked-up-under-the-roof room, and straw bed!"

"We can't do more than we can," said Betsy Ann, "and we ought to do all we can, and there's the room, such as it is, and there's air plenty, and grass, and wild flowers, and milk, and potatoes, and bread, too."

So the fresh-air boy came, and if Betsy Ann and Thomas had lived in a palace he might not have been half so well suited. A meek-faced, nice little man he was, too; his mother dead, and he left with grandma and daddy—grandma supported them by scrubbing, nursing, mending."

"And what does your daddy do?" asked Thomas.

"Nothin', mostly, 'cept earn enough for his drink, and then he sleeps. He don't fly out and hit, like Tim's dad." The little man evidently thought this very virtuous. "Grandma used to live in the country," he said, "and I want to send her something from the country. If I can pick a lot of those wild sunflowers, and you'll lend me a basket, I'll ask Dick, the brakesman, to take them to her; she does his washing, and it was Dick got me my ticket, and told me to come here to you. I can walk over to the station by seven in the mornin', 'tain't far."

No; only three miles, and he rose before three to get his flowers and send them to poor, tired, heart-sick old grandma. The great, bright yellow

flowers, full of memories of his child hood, and of her straying son's clink hood. What tears they brought, and a grandma rocked to and fro, hugging the flowers, she sobbed and sobbed, and she prayed—oh, how she prayed for her son! He heard her, waking out of his heavy sleep. He saw the flowers, and was; boy again, young and innocent. How he loathed that horror of sin and drunkenness he had become.

"Mother," he said on his knees beside her, "let us go back! Let us go to the country. I'll work there, and I'll hate this cursed stuff that makes a brute of me! Speak to God for me! Say you don't hate me! I'll be a good father, and a good son. Dick told me of a place right out there where I could get to work on a stock farm. I'll go out there to-day. Say you'll go with me, and just wait a few weeks, and I'll take care of you all. We'll keep the boy among the flowers, he'll love them so well."—The Temperance Banner.

A NOBLE CHOICE.

A young man in a London omnibus noticed the blue ribbon total abstinence pledge on a fellow-passenger's coat, and asked him in a bantering tone "how much he got" for wearing it.

"That I can't exactly say," replied the other, "but it costs me about twenty thousand pounds a year."

The wearer of the badge was Frederick Charrington, son of a rich brewer, and the intended successor of his father's business. He had been convinced of the evil of the ale and beer trade, and refused to continue in it, though it would have brought him an income of twenty thousand pounds a year. He preferred a life of Christian philanthropy to a career of money making; and his activity soon made him known through the kingdom as a most successful temperance evangelist. His work, organized in the tent meeting on Mile End Road, has grown steadily for twenty years, and now fills "the largest mission hall in the world."—Selected.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

MAY 21, 1896.

The Word which God gave.—Psalm 19. 7-11.

These words are a description of the Holy Bible which God has given to man as the rule of faith and guide of his conduct. There are six descriptive titles of the Bible which we want all our young friends to commit to memory and often repeat to themselves so that they may never in all their future life forget them,

ENUMERATE THEM.

The law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the commandment of the Lord, the fear of the Lord, and the judgments of the Lord. Read verses 7-9. How beautifully descriptive they are!

THE ISRAELITE'S HIGH ESTIMATE.

Verse 10: Gold, neither in the mine, nor after it has passed through the refinery, is to be compared unto the precious Bible. Nothing earthly is so valuable as gold, it is the highest standard. Nothing is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, and yet the Bible is sweeter than they. To possess money is the highest ambition of men in mature life, to enjoy pleasure is the principal thing which young people desire to possess, hence the suitability of the Bible for both classes.

WARNING AND REWARD.

Men need warning because they do not always see the danger which besets their path, and even when convinced of the perils to which they are exposed, they often rush forward regardless of consequences. As though our heavenly Father would allure us to true obedience, hear this concluding sentence of our lesson. "In keeping them, there is great reward." God blesses them who fear him, and keep his commandments. What a delightful sentence will be pronounced at the last great day, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The pleasure and enjoyment which those receive who peruse the Holy Scriptures exceeds the power of the most sublime language to express.