

THE STORY OF RUTH.

Some Useful Lessons are Drawn from It.

Trouble Develops Many Virtues—The Beauty of True Friendship—The Importance of Gleaning—Rest and Reward Will Surely Follow.

The subject of Dr. Talmage's latest sermon was gleanings and the text on which he based his remarks was Ruth 2: 3: And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

The time that Ruth and Naomi arrive at Bethlehem is harvest time. It was the custom when a sheaf fell from a load in the harvest field, for the heapers to refuse to gather it up; that was to be left for the poor who might happen to come along that way.

It was love at first sight. Boaz forms an attachment for the womanly gleaner—an attachment full of undying interest to the church of God in all ages; while Ruth, with an ephah, or nearly a bushel of barley, goes home to Naomi to tell her the successes and adventures of the day.

I learn, in the first place, from this subject how trouble develops character. It was bereavement, poverty and exile that developed, illustrated and announced to all ages the sublimity of Ruth's character.

Misfortune and trials are great educators. A young doctor comes into a sick room where there is a dying child. Perhaps he is very rough in his prescription, and very rough in his manner, and rough in the feeling of the pulse, and rough in his answer to the mother's anxious question; but years roll on, and there has been one dead in his own house; and now he comes into the sick room, and with tearful eye he looks at the dying child, and he says: "Oh, how this reminds me of my Charlie!"

Greecian mythology said that the fountain of Hippocrene was struck out by the foot of the winged horse Pegasus. I have often noticed in life that the brightest and most beautiful fountains of Christian comfort and spiritual life have been struck out by the iron-shod hoof of disaster and calamity. I see Daniel's courage best by the flash of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. I see Paul's prowess best when I find him on the foundering ship under the glare of the lightning in the breakers of Melita.

When amid the storms they sang, And the stars heard, and the sea; And the sounding aisles of the dim wood Rang to the anthems of the free.

It took all our past national distresses, and it takes all our present national sorrows to lift up our nation on that high career where it will march long after the foreign aristocracies that have mocked and tyrannies that have jeered shall be swept down under the omnipotent wrath of God, who hates despotism, and who, by the strength of His own red right arm, will make all men free. And so it is individually, and in the family, and in the church, and in the world, that through darkness and storm and trouble men, women, churches, nations are developed.

richest man in Uz; but when his property went and the trials came, then there were none so much that pestered as Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Life often seems to be a mere game, where the successful player pulls down all the other men into his own lap. Let suspicions arise about a man's character, and he becomes like a bank in a panic, and all the imputations rush on him and break down in a day that character which in due time would have had strength to defend itself.

In this world, so full of heartlessness and hypocrisy, how thrilling it is to find some friend as faithful in days of adversity as in days of prosperity! David had such a friend in Hushai; the Jews had such a friend in Mordecai, who never forgot their cause; Paul had such a friend in Onesiphorus, who visited him in jail; Christ had such in the Marys, who adhered to Him on the cross; Naomi had such a one in Ruth, who cried out: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Again, I learn from this subject that paths which open in hardship and darkness often come out in the places of joy. When Ruth started from Moab toward Jerusalem, to go along with her mother-in-law, I suppose the people said: "Oh, what a foolish creature to go away from her father's house, to go off with an old woman toward the land of Judah; they would live to get across the desert. They will be drowned in the sea, or the jackals of the wilderness will destroy them." It was a very dark morning when Ruth started off with Naomi; but behold her in my text in the harvest field of Boaz, to be affianced to one of the lords of the land, and become one of the grandmothers of Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. And so it often is that a path which often starts very darkly ends very brightly.

When you started out for Heaven, oh, how dark was the hour of conviction—how Sinai thundered, and devils tormented, and the darkness thickened! All the sins of your life pounced upon you, and it was the darkest hour you ever saw when you first found out your sins. After awhile you went into the harvest field of God's mercy; you began to glean in the fields of divine promise, and you had more sheaves than you could carry, as the voice of God addressed you, saying: "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered." A very dark starting in conviction, a very bright ending in the pardon and the hope and the triumph of the gospel.

So, very often in our worldly business or in our spiritual career, we start off on a very dark path. We must go. The flesh may shrink back, but there is a voice within, or a voice from above, saying: "You must go;" and we have to drink the gall, and we have to carry the cross, and we have to traverse the desert and we are pounded and flailed of misrepresentation and abuse, and we have to urge our way through 10,000 obstacles that have been slain by our own right arm. We have to ford the river, we have to climb the mountain, we have to storm the castle; but blessed be God, the day of rest and reward will come. On the tip-top of the captured battlements we will shout the victory; if not in this world, then in that world where there is no gall to drink, no burdens to carry, no battles to fight. How do I know it? Know it! I know it because God says so: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes."

It was very hard for Noah to endure the scoffing of the people in his day, while he was trying to build the ark, and was every morning quizzed about his old boat that would never be of any practical use; but when the deluge came, and the tops of the mountains disappeared like the backs of sea monsters, and the elements, lashed up in fury, clapped their hands over a drowned world, then Noah in the ark rejoiced in his own safety and in the safety of his family, and looked out on the wreck of a ruined earth.

Christ, hounded of persecutors, denied a pillow, worse maltreated than the thieves on either side of the cross, human hate smacking its lips in satisfaction after it had been draining His last drop of blood, the sheeted dead bursting from the sepulchres at His crucifixion. Tell me, O Getsemane and Golgotha, were there ever darker times than those? Like the booming of the midnight sea against the rock, the surges of Christ's anguish beat against the gates of eternity, to be echoed back by all the thrones of Heaven and all the dungeons of hell. But the day of reward comes for Christ; all the pomp and dominion of this world are to be hung on His throne, crowned heads are to bow before him on whose heads are many crowns, and all the celestial worship is to come up at His feet, like the humming of the forest, like the rushing of the waters, like the thundering of the seas, while all Heaven, rising on their thrones, beat time with their scepters: "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

That song of love, now low and far, Ere long shall swell from star to star; That light, the breaking day which tips The golden-spired Apocalypse.

long-continued strains of Jubal's harp and Jubal's organ. It seemed to be a matter of very little importance that Tubal Cain learned the uses of copper and iron; but that rude foundry of ancient days has its echo in the rattle of Birmingham machinery, and the roar and bang of factories on the Merrimac.

It seemed to be a matter of no importance that Luther found a Bible in a monastery; but as he opened that Bible, and the brass-bound lids fell back, they jarred everthing, and the rustling of the worm-eaten leaves was the sound of the wings of the angel of the Reformation. It seemed to be a matter of no importance that a woman, whose name has been forgotten, dropped a tract in the way of a very bad man by the name of Richard Baxter. He picked up the tract and read it, and it was the means of his salvation. In after days the man wrote a book called "The Call to the Unconverted," that was the means of bringing a multitude to God, among others Philip Doddridge. Philip Doddridge wrote a book called "The Rise and Progress of Religion," which has brought thousands and tens of thousands into the kingdom of God, and among others the great Wilberforce. Wilberforce wrote a book called "A Practical View of Christianity," which was the means of bringing a great multitude to Christ, among others Leigh Richmond. Leigh Richmond wrote a tract called "The Dairyman's Daughter," which has been the means of the salvation of unconverted multitudes. And that tide of influence started from the fact that one Christian woman dropped a Christian tract in the way of Richard Baxter, the tide of influence rolling on through Richard Baxter, through Philip Doddridge, through the great Wilberforce, through Leigh Richmond, on, on, on, forever. So the insignificant events of this world seem, after all, to be most momentous.

Again, I see in my subject an illustration of the beauty of female industry. Behold Ruth toiling in the harvest field under the hot sun, or at noon taking plain bread with the reapers, or eating the parched corn which Boaz handed to her. The customs of society, of course, have changed, and without the hardships and exposure to which Ruth was subjected, every intelligent woman will find something to do.

I know there is a sickly sentimentality on this subject. In some families there are persons of no practical service to the household or community; and though there are so many woes all around about them in the world, they spend their time languishing over a new pattern, or bursting into tears at midnight over the story of some lover who shot himself! They would not deign to look at Ruth carrying back the barley on her way home to her mother-in-law, Naomi. All this fastidiousness may seem to do very well while they are under the shelter of their father's house; but when the sharp winter of misfortune comes, what of these butterflyes? Persons under indulgent parentage may get upon themselves habits of indolence; but when they come out into practical life their soul will recoil with disgust and chagrin. They will feel in their hearts what the poet so severely satirized when he said: "Fools are so awkward, things so impolite, They're elegantly poised from morning until night."

Through that gate of indolence how many men and women have marched, useless on earth, to a destroyed eternity. Spinola said to Sir Horace Vere: "Of what did your brother die?" "Of having nothing to do," was the answer. "Ah!" said Spinola, "that's enough to kill any general of us." Oh! can it be possible in this world, where there is so much suffering to be alleviated, so much darkness to be enlightened, and so many burdens to be carried, that there is any person who cannot find anything to do?

Once more I learn from my subject the value of gleanings. Ruth going into that harvest field might have said: "There is a straw, and there is a straw, but what is a straw? I can't get any barley for myself or my mother-in-law out of these separate straws." Not so, said beautiful Ruth. She gathered two straws, and she put them together, and more straws, until she got enough to make a sheaf. Putting that down she went and gathered more straws, until she had another sheaf, and another and another, and another, and then she brought them altogether, and she threshed them out, and she had an ephah of barley, nigh a bushel. Oh, that we might all be gleaners!

Elihu Burritt learned many things while toiling in a blacksmith's shop. Abercrombie, the world-renowned philosopher, was a philosopher in Scotland, and he got his philosophy, or the chief part of it, while, as a physician, he was waiting for the door of the sick room to open. Yet how many there are in this day who say they are so busy they have no time for mental or spiritual improvement; the great duties of life cross the field like strong reapers, and carry off all the hours, and there is only here and there a fragment left, that is not worth gleaning. Ah, my friends, you could go into the busiest day and busiest week of your life and find golden opportunities, which, gathered, might at last make a whole sheaf for the Lord's garner. It is the stray opportunities and the stray privileges which, taken up and bound together and beaten out, will at last fill you with much joy.

There are a few moments left worth the gleaning. Now, Ruth to the field! May each one have a measure full and running over! Oh, you gleaners, to the field! And if there be in your household an aged one or a sick relative that is not strong enough to come forth and toil in the field, then let Ruth take home to feeble Naomi this sheaf of gleanings: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him."

May the Lord God of Ruth and Naomi be our portion forever!

IDOLS FOUND WANTING.

Thrown Into the Fire For Failing to Respond to Prayer.

A missionary of the Basel society in India gives an account of a lad 18 years of age named Velayuthan, whose father sought to take him away from the Christians, whom he had joined. The lad stood firmly, but efforts to shake his resolution were continued.

In the middle of July his mother came and told her son, with many tears, that his father was dangerously ill and wished to see him once more before his death. This message melted the heart of Velayuthan, and, wishing to see his father, he was permitted to accompany us on our tour. How glad he was in the anticipation of seeing his parents and brothers and sisters again his face clearly indicated. We heard no sound as we entered the compound, the door of the house was ajar, and Velayuthan's father, who was lying on a mat behind the door, was heard groaning as if with great pain. His son rushed into the house, stooped down over his father and asked him how he was.

All of a sudden the seemingly dying man jumped up, clasped his son in his arms and dragged him into an inner room, trying to fasten the door, raising at the same time such a howl that I felt quite stunned. When the missionary tried to prevent the door being shut, the father, brandishing his long knife, wounded his arm and forced him to let the door go. The howling ceased for a few seconds, and a voice was heard screaming in piercing accents: "Don't kill him! Don't kill him!" We shuddered and feared the worst. But a few moments afterward there was a shout, "He is gone!" and the lad was seen running like a chased deer across the compound, followed by his enemies, his mortal fright giving him strength to leap the hedges. In a few minutes he had reached the missionary's house and was safe.

We learned afterward that Velayuthan's father, when he had his son in his power inside the room, had uttered some threats which made the lad fear that he was about to be killed. Filled with apprehension, he inwardly called upon the Lord for help, when suddenly he saw an opening below the wall plate and escaped thereby. The father, who now feared we should bring an action against him, made two deep gashes across his chest with his knife, ran to the magistrate and accused us of having broken into his house and wounded him.

But the magistrate asked some trustworthy witnesses and rejected the complaint. Next day the mother and brother of Velayuthan came to ask our pardon and told us that his father, after his return from the magistrate, had kindled a fire, taken his idols and thrown them into the fire, with the words: "You did not help me. You may burn."—Parish Visitor.

NAIL CHARACTERISTICS.

They Are an Aid in Diagnosis of Diseases and Traits.

It is said that the moon at the base of the nail is simply an indication of good health and excellent circulation, while the white spots are always the accompaniment of an impaired nervous system. The common idea that an external application of vaseline will cure the white spots is erroneous, and those afflicted with the little "story tellers" would far better turn their attention to securing perfect physical health, in the assurance that the spots will disappear with improved circulation.

It is not possible to create moons at the base of the nails. Frequently the moon is there, but through negligence it is covered by skin, which, without attention, will grow upward over the base of the nail.

It is not generally understood that the shape and appearance of the finger nails are carefully considered and form an important factor in the diagnosis of disease. Long nails are said to indicate physical weakness and tendency to lung trouble, and this tendency is aggravated where the nails are corrugated, and yet more aggravated if they curve from the top back to the finger and across. Where the nails are long and bluish they indicate bad circulation. This same type of nail, but shorter, denotes tendency to throat affection, bronchitis and the like.

Short, small nails indicate heart disease. Where they are short, flat and sunken you may look for nervous disorders. The short nailed woman will criticize her friends and her foes, but she will criticize herself with the same severity. She is apt to be sarcastic and sometimes so quick at repartee that she appears almost brutal. The best dramatic and literary critics possess this type of nail.—Exchange.

A Mussulman's Ideas.

A respectable and honest Mussulman—and of course there are millions of Mussulmans entitled to that description—will not swallow alcohol if he knows it, even for the good of his health; will not lift "the harem veil," even if lifting it is essential to the life of his wife or daughter; will not take out an insurance, even when failure to do so is ruinous to him in a business competition, and will not in a country ruled by Mussulmans from any motive whatever freedom of will accord equality to men of any other faith. In these respects he is a "fanatic"—that is, he will act upon the precepts of his creed, as interpreted by his doctors, without reference to any other consideration, and especially without reference to convenience or to the opinions, moral or otherwise, of men of any other faith.

A Mussulman's creed is for him the operative law, as custom is for a Chinaman, or a caste rule for a Hindoo, or duty for a good Englishman, or that which is convenient for a respectable Frenchman, and though there are points upon which he will break the law, especially for gain, there are also points, especially those we have mentioned, upon which he will not—rather will be chopped in pieces or chop you and take all consequences serenely.—London Spectator.

ALL MEN LOVE BEAUTY.

Mrs. Pinkham Counsels Young Wives to Keep Their Attractiveness—A Letter From a Young Wife.

Seven-eighths of the men in this world marry a woman because she is beautiful in their eyes.



What a disappointment then to see the fair young wife's beauty fading away before a year passes over her head!

I feel as if I would like to say to every young woman who is about to be married—"Strengthen yourself in advance, so that you will not break down under the new strain on your powers." Keep your beauty, it is a precious possession! Your husband loves your beauty, he is proud to be seen in public with you; try to keep it for his sake, and your own.

The pale cheeks, the dark shadows under the eyes, the general drooping of the young wife's form, what do they mean? They mean that her nerves are failing, that her strength is going and that something must be done to help her through the coming trials of maternity.

Build her up at once by a course of some tonic with specific powers. Such as Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. You can get it at any druggist's.

Following we publish by request a letter from a young wife—of her own accord she addresses it to her "suffering sisters," and while from modesty she asks to withhold her name, she gives her initials and street number in Chambersburg, Pa., so she can easily be found personally or by letter:

To my Suffering Sisters:—Let me write this for your benefit, telling you what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me. I am but nineteen and suffered with painful menstruation, leucorrhœa, dizziness, burning sensation back of ears and on top of my head, nervousness, pain and soreness of muscles, bearing-down pains, could not sleep well, was unable to stand without pain, and oh! how I longed to be well!

One day I wrote to Mrs. Pinkham telling her all, knowing I could do so in perfect confidence.

She wrote me a lovely letter in reply, telling me exactly what to do. After taking nine bottles of the Compound, one box of Liver Pills, and using one-half package of Sanative Wash, I can say I am cured. I am so happy, and owe my happiness to none other than Mrs. Pinkham.

Why will women suffer when help is near? Let me, as one who has had experience, urge all suffering women, especially young wives, to seek Mrs. Pinkham's advice.—Mrs. R. S. R., 113 E. Catherine-St., Chambersburg, Pa.

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