



THE BEAUTIFUL GLEANER

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Seven Churches in Asia

The
Beautiful Gleaner

A STUDY IN THE PRINCIPLES OF
BEAUTEOUS CHARACTER

By
LESLIE G. THOMAS

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1961

To
METTA

Whose Companionship is an Inspiration, and
Whose Love I Have Never Doubted.

"We Have Loved, We Love Now,
We Shall Love Forever."

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*The
Beautiful Gleaner*

PREFACE

These are days that try the souls of all men; and since there are so many things to attract the attention and consume the time and talents of the younger generation, many among the older people have raised their voices in protest against the evil tendencies and gross sins of modern youth. That there is cause for serious alarm is freely admitted; and the author of this book believes that the situation demands the best thought and talent on the part of the most devout people in an attempt at dealing with this most complexing problem.

One of the things that he believes is needed most is something to stimulate the thinking of these younger people, for "as he thinketh within himself, so is he." And again, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you." The author, therefore, believes that if wholesome ideals are placed before the younger people, their thinking will, to some extent at least, be directed along the channels which will ultimately lead them to a higher plane of living.

The lessons contained in this book were prepared while teaching groups of young people in Greenville, Texas, and Dickson, Tennessee. The Book of Ruth, of course, served

as a basis for this study. Those young people were in the author's mind while he was preparing the lessons and before him when he taught them; and he is, therefore, grateful to each member of those groups for the inspiration given him in this work.

It would be impossible to give credit to all to whom credit is due, for "I am a part of all that I have met." The known works from which suggestions, inspirations, and materials have been drawn are listed in the bibliography following each chapter. There is also a complete and alphabetically arranged bibliography at the close of the book. Gratitude is hereby acknowledged in each case. Nothing new or original is claimed for this work, except the arrangement; and if every one had access to the books listed in the bibliography and the time and the disposition to "glean" from their pages the many valuable lessons contained in them, one reason for the appearance of this book would be removed. However, the author hopes that those who read his book will become interested in those he mentions.

A list of questions has been added to each chapter, in the hope that this book will be used as a study course, especially by and for young people. The wide-awake teacher can easily present more questions as the discussion progresses. The list of "Topics and Questions for Discussion" may be used as the basis for short talks by members of the class, or for more formal discussions, after the regular lesson has been finished.

The author is also profoundly grateful to a kindly Providence for giving and preserving the Book of Ruth, and for guiding him into this study; for, as has already been indicated, he believes that high and noble ideas

and ideals, if placed before young people, and older ones, too, will have a powerful effect in influencing their lives.

“If just one soul were brought to Christ—just one,
By any effort I have made, or work have done—
That’s worth a life of earnest toil or sorrow,
To waken to the gladsome light of such a morrow.
If just one soul were saved to Christ from evil’s blight,
And that soul leading to the light still other souls—
Father, mother, children win—each to the end of time,
Leading souls to him—
It makes one’s heart to yearn and eyes grow dim
To think of saving just one soul for him.”

—Leslie G. Thomas.

Chattanooga, Tennessee.

PART I
EMIGRATION AND BEREAVEMENT
RUTH 1:1-5

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION—THE BOOK

A Brief Resume.

The little Book of Ruth consists of only eighty-five verses, but they inclose a garden of roses, as fragrant and full of mystic calyxes, as those which the modern traveler still finds blooming and twining about the solitary ruins of Israel and Moab, this side of the Jordan and beyond. This delightful little volume describes the pastoral life among the Hebrews during a time of peace and order, and its contents may be briefly summarized in the following words: A man of Bethlehem-judah, named Elimelech, with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left his country in the time of a famine, and went to sojourn in the land of Moab. Sometime after arriving there, he died, and his sons married Moabitish women. Mahlon married Ruth, the principal character of this book, and Chilion married Orpah. Both of these young men died within about ten years, and their mother, having heard that plenty was again restored to her country, determined to return to the land of Judah. At the beginning of her journey she was accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, but after they had gone some distance, she urged them to return to their own country, and to their kindred. Orpah, after an affectionate farewell, returned, but Ruth insisted on going all the way with her mother-in-law, which she was finally permitted to do. They arrived in Bethlehem about the time of barley harvest, and Ruth went into the fields to glean for their support. The field into which she happened to go belonged to Boaz, a near kinsman of Elimelech, her father-in-law, and a prominent man of the city. When Boaz learned who she was, he ordered that she be

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treated kindly, and appointed both her food and drink with his own servants. And when it was made known to him that she was by marriage his near kinswoman, he purposed to marry her himself, if a nearer kinsman who was then living should refuse to take her. The matter was placed before this kinsman, and he, after declining to take her for himself, surrendered his rights to her, according to the customs of the times, before the elders at the gate of the city. Boaz then married Ruth, and she became the mother of Obed, who in turn was "the father of Jesse, the father of David."

The Type of Literature.

During the period of his enthusiasm for the East, Goethe spoke of the Book of Ruth "as the loveliest specimen of epic and idyl poetry which we possess."

"This story of Ruth," says Richard G. Moulton, "is the very ideal and type of the Idyl: so delicate in its transparent simplicity that the worse service one can do the story is to comment on it. Suffice it to say, that the warp and woof of the tale is a friendship between two women, and the grand climax up to which all is working is the birth of a baby. Instead of war and national strife, of political struggle, we have here great harvest festivals, ceremonial transfers of land, family contingencies such as hard times and emigration, marriage and the strange process by which an extinct family might be restored to the genealogies of Israel: such little things as are great to the little man of everyday life. Even in the little there are gradations: in this book are found such minutiae as attention shown to a shy stranger girl at the harvest feasts, petty contrivances for giving her unfair advantages in the gleaning field; details still more minute—how Ruth pockets the scraps at the feast to bring home to her mother-in-law, who has been sitting solitary at home while she herself has had the excitement of the harvesting. Trifles like these, fitted into their natural frame the idyl, have kept afloat over some thirty centuries of time; and this story has done more to enable

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us to live over again in remote Hebrew antiquity than all the heroic achievements of **Joshua** and **Judges** put together."

The Purpose of the Book.

The significance and beauty of this brief narrative cannot be too highly estimated, whether viewed from the standpoint of the thought which fills it, the historical value which marks it, or the pure and charming form in which it is set forth. That the book came from God's chosen people, and has found its way into the sacred canon, are facts important enough to justify the effort at stating, in so far as it is humanly possible, the divine purpose in giving the book to us. The question as to the design of the narrative has often been raised, and various answers have been given. Some have thought that the genealogical table at the end, showing David's descent from Ruth, and the example which it supplies of the reception of a Gentile into the family of Israel, are sufficient reasons for its presence in the Scriptures. Others think that since the Bible is a very human book, just because it is a divine one, that surely it would be no unworthy object to enshrine in its pages a picture of the noble working of that human love which makes so much of human life. They further think that the hallowing of the family is a distinct purpose of the Old Testament, and that the beautiful example which this narrative gives of the elevating influence of domestic affection entitles it to a place in the Canon.

In seeking to give an answer to this question, the eminent Hebrew scholar, S. R. Driver, says: "The narrative is told with much picturesque and graceful detail, and affords an idyllic glimpse of home life in ancient Israel. . . .

"The Books of Samuel contain no particulars respecting the ancestry of David, merely giving the names of his father and his brethren (I Sam. 16:1-13, etc.); hence the aim of the book appears to have been partly to fill

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up this deficiency, and partly (and perhaps particularly) to show how Ruth, a daughter of Moab, and a native therefore of a country hostile theocratically to Israel, obtained an honorable position among Jehovah's people, and became an ancestor of the illustrious king, David.

“The narrator manifestly takes delight in the graceful and attractive details of his picture. His principal characters are amiable, God-fearing, courteous, unassuming; and all in different ways show how a religious spirit may be carried unostentatiously into the conduct of daily life.”

A Worthy Example of Admiration.

Ruth is the kind of woman that draws the world after her, though not by a baleful gift of beauty, for there is no hint that she was fair to look upon, but by the lasting qualities of unselfish devotion, of lowly serviceableness, of maidenly modesty. She is one of the characters that humanity takes delight in remembering. Men enjoy studying this story because it touches them with the mystery and charm of early love; women delight in reading it because in it they recognize the best and loveliest type of womanhood.

Bereft of her husband and without material resources of any kind, she was face to face with the hard and bitter lot of biting poverty. But in spite of all this, she felt that it was her duty, as well as her privilege, to follow her mother-in-law, who also was in a like sorry plight, into a strange land and among an alien people.

Hers, indeed, was a gloomy situation, and if the future promised her anything better, there is no hint of it, so far as the record goes. If she shed any tears, there is nothing said of that fact, either. She did not pity herself, and neither did she utter any scorching words of blame for other people, because of her sad lot in life. Instead, there is a poise, a serenity, and a cheerfulness about her which are remarkable. But she does not appear as one

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who is doing something unusual. She just does the right thing in the most natural manner. She did Naomi a great favor, but she made it appear that it was Naomi who did her the favor. Ruth was not only able to carry her own burden, but she became responsible for the burden of an older and weaker woman, too. She did not deal in words only, but expressed her feelings in deeds, as well. In reading the narrative one is made to feel that here is a young woman who is absolutely dependable when things are in the worst possible condition. Here is seen "a dependable independence of the right sort."

Orpah's condition was similar to that of Ruth's, but she looked at, and acted about, it in a very different manner. She was free with her demonstrations of affection, and, no doubt, she kissed her mother-in-law passionately. She was very fond of her, in her own way, and was greatly moved by the prospect of being separated from her—but that was all. She may go sobbing on her way back home, but she goes, nevertheless. Women of this type may go a step further, and, under pressure and stress of good feeling, promise any and all kinds of service, but when it comes to performance, they turn back with Orpah.

Lange's Commentary, *in loco*.

Adam Clarke's Commentary, *in loco*.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*. Vol. III, 3.

H. T. Sell: *Studies of Famous Bible Women*, p. 45ff.

S. R. Driver: *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 453ff.

Richard G. Moulton: *The Modern Reader's Bible*, p. 1375f.

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Questions

Part I—Chapter I

1. Tell something of the size and coverage extent of the Book of Ruth.
2. Give a brief resume of the book.
3. What can you say of the type of literature employed by the author?
4. Why do you think the book was written?
5. Why is Ruth so greatly admired?
6. Why do men enjoy reading and studying the story of Ruth?
7. What appeal does it have for women?
8. Tell something of the sad lot of Ruth.
9. How did she feel toward her mother-in-law and herself?
10. When she did her mother-in-law a favor, how did she make the latter feel?
11. What can you say of the dependability of Ruth?
12. How did Orpah compare with her in this respect?
13. Which character does the world admire more? Why?
14. Are tears under such circumstances, that is, those of Orpah, always the sign of genuine grief? Give reason for your answer.
15. What do women of the type of Orpah sometimes do?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Wherein Does the Value of the Book of Ruth Lie?
2. Are Admirable Traits of Character Inherited or Acquired?
3. Discuss the Difference that Love and Love-Stories Have on Men and Women.
4. Are We Ever Justified in Seeking to Bring Others Under Obligation to Us by Our Good Deeds?
5. What Is the Relative Value of "Dependability" in Character Building?

CHAPTER II

THE TIME—WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED

The Time of Action and Composition Uncertain.

The time when the actions recorded in the Book of Ruth took place is not given, except as stated in the first verse—namely, “And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged.” The period of the judges extended over several hundred years, and, as C. von Orelli notes, “it is not certain as to what period of the era of the judges Ruth belongs. According to the genealogy of Ruth (4:18 sqq.), she lived about 100 years before David. The history of David’s family could have been of general interest only after his accession to the throne. Philological evidence points to a much later date of the writing of the Book of Ruth, probably after the exile.”

Speaking of the author and the date of the book, and its place in the Hebrew and English Bibles, **The Encyclopedia Americana** says: “The date of the little history contained in this book cannot be precisely fixed. Who the writer of the book was is also unknown. Some have ascribed it to Samuel; others have placed it as late as the Babylonish captivity; whilst several of the best modern scholars regard it as post-exilic. On the one hand, the style of the narrative connects it with the period when the Hebrew language and literature were still in full vigor and freshness, not with the period of their decay. On the other hand, it is evident that it cannot be placed earlier than the time of the kings, first from the way in which the judges are mentioned in chap. 1; secondly, from the change in the customs of the people that must have taken place between the date of the events and that of the narrative that records them (chap. 4:7); and

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thirdly, from the mention of the name of David. In the Hebrew Bible the Book of Ruth now stands among the Hagiographa immediately after the Song of Solomon as one of the five Megilloth, or sacred roll, read on the occasion of the principal Jewish solemnities. But there can be no doubt that originally in the Hebrew Scriptures, as in the Septuagint and in the English Bible, it followed the Book of Judges, and was sometimes even reckoned part of it."

The Occasion of Action—A Famine in the Land.

"And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab." (Verse 1.) The reason for this famine is not given. It may have been caused by the sins of the people. Jehovah had promised his people plenty, if they would obey his laws; but had warned them of famines, in case they chose to disobey him. "If ye walk in my statutes," he had said through Moses, "and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. . . . But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall reject my statutes, and if your soul abhor mine ordinances, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant; I also will do this unto you: I will appoint terror over you, even consumption and fever, that shall consume the eyes, and make the soul to pine away; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. . . . And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass; and your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruit." (Lev. 26:3-5, 14-16, 19, 20.)

THE TIME WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED

Again, through the prophet Malachi, Jehovah said: "From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightful land, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Mal. 3:7-12.)

However, it is common now, when the Old Testament is read, to hear people who claim to be God's people exclaim: "Why, that is in the Old Testament, and it does not apply to us!" They, evidently, do not realize the significance of Paul's statement, when he said: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." (Rom. 15:4.) Few, if any, of the commandments of the Old Testament were given arbitrarily. Practically all of them were based on principles—principles upon which Jehovah governs the world, and especially his people. Such principles are eternal; they never die. They may, and often do, have various applications, but they never die nor become obsolete. The principles of the Old Testament are as much alive today, as they were at the time they were first announced. Many of the commandments or statutes, by which those principles were applied to the people of former dispensations, have passed away, but not the principles themselves.

In discussing the relationship of the Old and New Testaments, and their application to people today, David Lipscomb says: "When we dissever and dissociate the teachings of the New Testament and those of the Old, we dis-

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join what God has joined. He has given the two as successive and united developments to man. No man from the Old Testament can learn the full and perfect lesson that God has conveyed to man. Neither if he takes the New Testament alone can he ever fully appreciate the will of God as revealed to man and his dealings with man. They are complements one of the other, and as necessary to each other as the two blades of a pair of shears.

“We believe that there is not an example nor a circumstance nor a principle related in the Old Testament but that it is intended to bear a lesson of instruction and wisdom to us. Many things were done by God in his dealings with the Jews that are not recorded; but those recorded as ensamples to us. They are for our instruction, our guidance, to teach us how we should walk before God acceptably and well pleasing to him. The specific commands of the Old Testament are not binding on us, save as reiterated in the New; but the lessons are for our instruction, the principles for our guidance. If it were not so, Christ and the apostles would not have so constantly appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures, to the lessons that they taught, to the promises made. They continually refer to the promises made under the Old Testament as grounds for our hoping for blessings—temporal blessings, too, under the new dispensation.”

The New Testament, however, is not without teaching with reference to the bestowing of temporal blessings, dependent upon our obedience to God. The converse of the proposition, of course, is also true. If he bestows blessings upon the obedient, he will withhold them from the disobedient. But hear the great Teacher and his inspired apostle: “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things [temporal blessings—see verses 19-34] shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6:33.) “And my God shall supply every need of yours [that is, the obedient ones—see context] according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19.) “Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail

THE TIME WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED

thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." (Heb. 13:5.)

There is nothing more plainly taught in the Bible than that God rewards obedience with his blessings—temporal blessings as well as spiritual blessings—, and that when disobedience is rampant in the land, he, to a certain extent, withholds his blessings from men. It is true, so far as this world goes, that the wicked often seem more prosperous than the righteous (cf. Eccl. 8:9-13), but their prosperity is only apparent. The mere possession of material wealth is no guarantee of true prosperity. Material possessions are ephemeral, and the prosperity they bring is, in the very nature of the case, but temporary. True prosperity does not depend wholly upon the things of this world. Possibly it would be too much to say that every famine can be traced directly to the wickedness of the people at a given time; yet, in the light of the general teaching of the Bible on this question, there is sufficient reason, during times of depression, for people to examine their conduct before God.

The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. X, p. 125f.

David Lipscomb: *Queries and Answers*, by Lipscomb and Sewell (Kurfees), p. 681.

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Questions

Part I—Chapter II

1. What can be said regarding the time element of this book?
2. Who were the “judges” and what were their principal duties?
3. Who wrote the Book of Ruth?
4. Has its place among the books of the Old Testament always been the same?
5. What occasion gave rise to the events recorded in this book?
6. Is there any difference between an “occasion” and a “cause”? Give reasons for your answer.
7. What use did Jehovah frequently make of famines during Old Testament times?
8. Is there any reason for believing that he makes a similar use to-day?
9. How do the Old and New Testaments stand related in the scheme of human redemption?
10. Is there any difference between a “principle” and a “statute”? Give reasons for your answer.
11. Does God teach that he rewards obedience and punishes disobedience in this life?
12. What can you say regarding the argument that the wicked are often more prosperous than the righteous?
13. What is true prosperity?
14. What are some of the promises the Lord has made regarding material blessings to those who serve him?
15. Is the fact of poverty always an indication that one is not in the favor of God? Give reasons for your answer.

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. How Many Books of the Bible Are the Known Works of Certain Authors? Name Them.

THE TIME WHEN THE JUDGES JUDGED

2. How Did the Books of the Bible Come to Be Included in the Sacred Volume?
3. What Are the "Apocryphal Books" of the Bible, and What Is Their Relative Importance, If Any?
4. Name Some Abiding Values of the Old Testament Scriptures.
5. Wherein Does the Power of Promises to Move Men Lie?

CHAPTER III

THE PERSONS—A CERTAIN MAN OF BETHLEHEM- JUDAH AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

The Man and His Family.

This household consisted of the husband and father, Elimelech—meaning, God is King; the wife and mother, Naomi—pleasant; and the two sons, Mahlon—sickness, and Chilion—pining. They were “Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah.” The sons must have been young men when they left their homeland, for it appears that they were married soon after reaching Moab.

Bethlehem-Judah—The House of Bread

The home of Elimelech and his family was one of the most interesting cities in the land of Palestine. Every lover of the Bible, and of Jewish antiquities, loves to linger in the little town of Bethlehem. We read in Smith's **Dictionary of the Bible** that it was “one of the oldest towns in Palestine, already in existence at the time of Jacob's return to the country. Its earlier name was EPHRATH or EPHRATAH (see Gen. 35:16; 48:7; Josh. 15:60. LXX.), and it is not till long after the occupation of the country by the Israelites that we meet with it under its new name of Bethlehem. Here, as in other cases (comp. Beth-meon, Beth-diblathaim, Beth-peor), the ‘Beth’ appears to mark the bestowal of a Hebrew appellation; and if the derivations of the Lexicons are to be trusted, the name in its present shape appears to have been an attempt to translate the earlier Ephratah into Hebrew language and idiom, just as the Arabs have in their turn, with a further slight change of meaning, converted it into Beit-lahm (house of flesh). . . .

THE PERSONS

"After the conquest Bethlehem appears under its own name Bethlehem-judah (Judg. 17:7; I Sam. 17:12; Ruth 1:1, 2), possibly, though hardly probably, to distinguish it from the small and remote place of the same name in Zebulun."

Situated on its high ridge overlooking the Judean wilderness, the little city never had much part in the eager life of the Hebrew people, yet age after age some event notable in history, some death or birth, or some prophetic word drew the eyes of Israel to it in affection or in hope; and to us the Saviour's birth there has so distinguished it as one of the most sacred spots on earth that each incident in the field or at the gate seems charged with predictive meaning, and each reference in psalm or prophecy has a tender significance. As the company of Jacob journeyed through the land of promise, it halted by the way near Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, and from the tents there came the sound of wailing. The beloved Rachel was dead. Yet she lived in the new-born child, the mother's Son of Sorrow, but, who became to the father, Benjamin—Son of the Right Hand. The sword pierced a loving heart, but hope sprang out of the pain, and life out of death. Generations passed by, and Ruth the Moabitess came to glean in those same fields of Bethlehem. Later, there was born within the walls of the city one who was long despised by his brethren, but who became to Israel a poet and a king—the sweet singer of divine psalms, and the hero of many battles. It was there that three of the mighty men of David's troops broke through the Philistine host to bring for their chief a draught from the cool spring by the gate. Prophecy, too, left Israel looking to this city on the hill. Micah grasped the secret of the ages when he exclaimed: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." For centuries there was suspense, and then over the quiet plain below the city the voice of the angel was heard as he spoke to the lowly shepherds these words: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good

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tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”

Remembering the glory which belonged to Bethlehem, we turn again with deep and renewed interest to the story of humble life there in the days when the judges ruled.

* Robert A. Watson, *The Expositor's Bible—Judges and Ruth*, p. 364f.

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Questions

Part I—Chapter III

1. How many were in the family that left Bethlehem?
2. What were their names?
3. Give the meaning of each of their names.
4. Where was Bethlehem situated?
5. Give some facts regarding its name, age, etc.
6. What are some of the principal events that transpired there?
7. How did Bethlehem compare in size with other towns in Palestine?
8. What is the condition of Bethlehem to-day?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. What Are Some of the Responsibilities a Man Owes to His Home Community?
2. Did Names Have Any More Significance in Old Testament Times Than They Did in New Testament Times?
3. Discuss Bethlehem's Place in Subsequent Literature—In Songs, for Example.
4. How Does the Present-Day Village Compare with the Bethlehem of Bible Days?
5. Is There Any Indication That Bethlehem Will Ever Play Any Further Role in the Scheme of Redemption?

CHAPTER IV

THE PLACE OF SOJOURN—THE LAND OF MOAB

The People of Moab.

From Genesis 19:30-38 we learn that Moab was the son of Lot by his older daughter. The descendants of that son were called Moabites. Some of the prominent people of Moab, besides Ruth and Orpah, whose names are recorded in the Bible, are Balak (Num. 22:2ff), Eglon (Judg. 3:12ff), and Mesha (2 Kings 3:4ff), three kings of Moab.

The language of the Moabites has been described as being "merely 'transjordanic Hebrew,' differing from Biblical Hebrew only in some comparatively trifling details." They were idolatrous in their worship, and had as their national deity the god Chemosh. Smith's **Dictionary of the Bible** notes that "with regard to the meaning of the name, and the position which Chemosh held in mythology, we have nothing to record beyond doubtful and discordant conjectures." From the meager information which we possess, it seems that at times the people of Moab worshiped Chemosh with human sacrifices, as is probable from 2 Kings 3:27, where the king of Moab offered his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead as a burnt-offering, and thus forced the Israelites to raise the siege against the city.

The Moabites were mortal enemies of the Israelites throughout their history, and took advantage of the opportunities for harassing and abusing them. The attitude that the Lord's people were instructed to take toward them and their near kinsmen, the Ammonites (the Ammonites were the descendants of Lot by his younger daughter), is expressed in Deut. 23:3,4, which says: "An

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Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of Jehovah for ever: because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee." It is possible that this law applied only to the males, and did not disqualify them from being proselytes.

From the foregoing facts it can easily be seen that Elimelech assumed a fearful responsibility in taking his family into such an environment.

The Land of Moab.

The territory of Moab, according to Hastings' **Diction-ary of the Bible**, "was the high tableland east of the Dead Sea and the southernmost section of the Jordan. Its western frontier is clearly defined by these natural boundaries: to the south lay Edom and the desert; to the east, Ammon and the desert; to the north, before the conquest by the Israelites, probably Ammon, after the conquest Israel. Towards the desert there could be no clearly defined boundary, and the frontiers between Moab, Edom, Ammon, and Israel shifted with the balance of power; but, roughly speaking, the territory inhabited by Moabites, and forming the Moabite state when not encroached upon by foreign aggression, was the cultivated plateau from the southern end of the Dead Sea to a line some miles beyond its northern extremity. Kir of Moab is nearly as far south as the southern end, and Heshbon and Jazer are some distance beyond the northern end of the Dead Sea. This plateau is divided by the deep chasm of the Arnon. The northern part of this territory is claimed by some documents for Reuben and Gad, and was at time under dominion of Israel. The extreme area of Moab might be reckoned at 50 miles long by 30 broad, 1,500 sq. miles, about as large as Hampshire [in England], but the cultivated plateau is only about 10 or 12 miles broad."

The plains of Moab, over against Jericho, was the scene of Israel's last encampment before they entered the land

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of Canaan. It was from there that Moses ascended the heights of Pisgah to view the promised land and to die; and from there Joshua, Moses' successor, led the hosts of Israel across the river Jordan into the land toward the setting of the sun.

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Questions

Part I—Chapter IV

1. Who was Moab?
2. Briefly sketch his background. Cf. history of Lot.
3. Give the names of and some facts concerning some prominent people of Moab, other than Orpah and Ruth.
4. What was the language of the Moabites?
5. Who was their god?
6. What can you say of his origin?
7. Tell something of their religion.
8. What was the relation between the peoples of Moab and Israel?
9. What law did Jehovah give Israel concerning Moab?
10. What can you say of the responsibility which Elimelech assumed when he took his family into such an environment?
11. Give a brief description of the land of Moab.
12. What part did this land play in Israel's march to the land of Canaan?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. What Can You Say of the Relative Effect of "Heredity" and "Environment" on Character Building?
2. How did Different Nations Come to Have Different Gods?
3. Are Modern-Day Gods More Effective in Their Influence on People Now Than the Gods of Old Testament Times Were Then?
4. How Do Christian Parents, As a Rule, Seem to Feel Toward the Religious Welfare of Their Children? Give Reasons for your views.
5. What Are the Most Potent Agencies for Imparting Religious Instruction? Indicate Their Relative Importance.

CHAPTER V

THE MOVE—INTO AN ALIEN LAND

The Significance of This Move.

When Elimelech and his family left the land of their nativity, they went to an alien land. There were not many miles between the two countries, so far as distance goes, but that journey represented a transition which meant much more than a modern emigration from America to England. Those two countries are divided by the Atlantic Ocean; but Israel and Moab were separated by something to which the great Atlantic is but a mill-pond, namely, a difference in religion. To the Jew there was no land so far away as the land of a foreign worship. He measured all distance by the distance from his God. It was, therefore, a tremendous journey which this family of Bethlehem took, a journey not to be estimated in miles, not to be gauged by the intervention of lands or seas; but to have its boundaries determined by the whole length and breadth of a universe of mind.

It seems that in these times emigration is forced upon many, the compulsion coming, not from Providence, but from man and his own laws. It is also an outlet for the spirit of adventure which characterizes some races, and has made them the heirs of the continents. It would be folly to speak against emigration as such, but great is the responsibility of those by whose action or want of action it is forced upon others. May it not be said that in many civilized lands there are persons in power whose existence is like a famine to a whole countryside? Emigration is talked of glibly, as if there were no loss, but always gain, and as to the mass of men the traditions and customs of their native lands were nothing more than rags to be parted with. But it is clear from a great num-

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ber of examples that many lose that which they never find again, of honor, seriousness, and faith.

The Danger of Such Moves.

It has always been a serious thing for anyone to go away from God, his people, and his worship. There seems to have been no absolute necessity for Elimelech's move. Others tided over the period of depression, and so might he have done. The man left Bethlehem with his family in the time of famine, in order that during its continuance, they might sojourn in the fertile land of Moab, where the calamity did not extend. For this the Jewish expositors justly blame him. He left his relatives and neighbors in distress, in order to live amid plenty in the land of the enemy; he forsook his home, in order to reside as a stranger in the land of Moab. If what he did was right, then all Bethlehem should have done the same. Prior to this, as if to instruct him, and others as well, sacred history had recorded the unfortunate sojourn of Abraham in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20), and the disastrous move of Lot to Sodom (Gen. 13:1-13; 19:1-38). And besides, as has already been noted, Elimelech's very name meant "God is King," and it was precisely in a contest with a king of Moab, Eglon, that the Israelites had experienced that God is King (Judg. 3:12-20); and yet, Elimelech withdraws himself from the favor of God, in order to live in Moab! If he had been as diligent in learning the law of Jehovah as he should have been, he ought to have known these things, and to have been influenced by these divinely given examples.

In discussing a similarity of moves of this kind and the nature and method of spiritual backsliding, William Evans observes that "the story of this Jewish family and its migration from Bethlehem to Moab is a striking picture of the nature and method of backsliding and the loss of fellowship with God. Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two children, Mahlon and Chilion, fearing famine and want in their native city, Bethlehem, hear of the prosperity with which the people of Moab are being

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blessed. Fearing lest they soon be brought to a point of starvation, they evidently mortgage their home and journey to Moab. It may have been their intention simply to make a visit there until the famine had passed in Bethlehem, and then return home. It is hardly likely that Elimelech and Naomi, children as they were, and possessing the knowledge of the true God, would make up their minds right off to locate permanently in the heathen and idolatrous country of Moab. Gradually, however, they became more and more settled in that foreign land, until at last we find them residing there for the space of ten years."

Of course, it is not possible for us to know, but, so far as the record goes, there is no indication as to how long they might have remained away from God and their native land, had misfortune not come upon them. That which the world calls a calamity is sometimes the rarest blessing of God in disguise; and that which is often looked upon as disastrous may be the goodness of a kindly Providence attempting to lead a recreant child back to his Father's home.

A Present-Day Practice.

It is not uncommon now for Christian people, those who wear the name of Christ, even as Elimelech wore the name of his God, to place themselves under conditions which practically rob the Lord's cause of their influence and services. Sometimes this is done under the pretext of "making a living," or to gain educational advantages. It is perfectly proper for one to provide for his own needs, and those of his household, but not to the extent that evil is done that good may come. Christian parents and young people should always consider the effects of such moves, for, as Bishop Oxenden remarks, "it is a fearful thing to set little store by our religious advantages and blessings, when God has given them to us. It is of the greatest importance, in choosing a place where you may perhaps dwell for years, to consider well whether you are likely to meet with help, or hindrances,

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on your way to heaven. If you should ever be called upon to make such a choice, I advise you to let it be a matter of earnest prayer to God, that he would guide and direct your steps."

It is far better for one to serve in spiritual things, than to live a life of mere personal ease and comfort. We usually count up our pleasures and possessions and gains and then think that in them we have evidence of divine favor. Do we as often reckon the opportunities that are given us of helping our neighbors to believe in and serve God, of showing patience and fidelity, of having a place among those who labor and wait for the eternal kingdom of our Father? It is here that we ought to trace the gracious hand of God preparing our way, and opening for us the gates of life. When shall we come to understand that the circumstances which remove us from the experiences of poverty and pain, also remove us from precious means of spiritual service and profit? Too many have the idea that success and happiness in this life consist in getting along comfortably; in making money—perhaps in some instances a great deal of money; in keeping trouble at a distance, if possible; and in surrounding themselves with those things that are pleasant and agreeable. They, seemingly, have not learned that to be in close personal touch with the poor, the ignorant, and the burdened, is to have simple every-day openings into the regions of highest power and gladness. We do something that endures, something that engages and increases our best powers when we guide, enlighten, and comfort even a few souls, and plant but a few flowers in some neglected corner of the world.

Something more, then, than personal gain and selfish ambition should be required to induce us to make a move similar to the one made by Elimelech and Naomi, when they left their home in Bethlehem to sojourn in the land of Moab.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, 5.

Robert A. Watson: *The Expositor's Bible—Judges and Ruth*, pp. 366, 369.

William Evans: *Naomi of Ruth*, 15f.

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Questions

Part I—Chapter V

1. What was one of the most important things involved in the move of Elimelech and his family from their home to Moab?

2. Why is the difference in religion so far reaching?

3. What are some of the principal causes of emigration?

4. What are some of the far-reaching effects of emigration as seen in human experience? Give reasons for your answer.

5. Point out some of the chief dangers the Christian is likely to encounter in leaving his home and religious environment.

6. What were some of the influences that should have restrained Elimelech in this move?

7. How does this practice compare with religious backsliding?

8. What are some of the motives that prompt many people to go to places where their religious influence is no longer felt?

9. Name some things that should be uppermost in one's mind in seeking a new home, especially if he expects to remain there very long.

10. What should be the ruling motive in every Christian's life?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Is It Possible for a Normal Person to Be Entirely Irreligious?

2. Give Some of the Relative Advantages and Disadvantages of Emigration.

3. How Should One Regard That Which Is Usually Looked upon as "Misfortune"?

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4. What Are Some of the Elements of True Success?
5. Are Material Wealth and Higher Education Antagonistic to the Principles of Christianity? Why?

CHAPTER VI

THE CONSEQUENCES—SORROW AND DISAPPOINTMENT

The Death of Elimelech.

Of course, he might have died at the time he did had they remained in Bethlehem. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; his pails are full of milk, and the marrow of his bones moistened. And another dieth in bitterness of soul, and never tasteth good. They lie down alike in the dust, and the worm covereth them." (Job 21: 23-26.) "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." (Job 14:1, 2.) "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." (Job 7:6.) "Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:13, 14.) It matters not when one may die, whether in youth or in old age, he would much rather die in the service of the Lord than out of duty in some "far country."

Mixed Marriages.

This question is not always seriously considered by young people of matrimonial intentions and those who should be directly interested in them; but it remains a truth that the marriage of Christians to those who are not in covenant relationship with the Lord is fraught with grave dangers, the consequences of which may lead a multitude of souls to perdition. But young people are

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not always to be blamed for such marriages: their parents frequently encourage them in such unions. According to Josephus, the marriages of Mahlon and Chilion took place during the lifetime of their father, and with his consent and arrangement. "And upon the happy prosperity of his affairs there [that is, in Moab], he took for his sons wives of the Moabites, Orpah for Chilion, and Ruth for Mahlon," (Antiquities 5:9, 1.)

Dr. Evans again speaks to the point when he says, "But, like many parents today, Elimelech and Naomi wanted their children 'married off.' How many there are who are so anxious to have their daughters 'married off' that they seem not to care anything about the moral and spiritual condition of the men seeking the hand of the daughter; if only they have money, position, standing. And so many a sweet, trusting Christian girl has had her life blighted and blasted and her faith ruined by such an ungodly and unforbidden alliance. It is a fatal mistake you make, young woman, when you marry a man to convert him. It is not worth the venture. It usually works the other way.

"Tennyson, in **Locksley Hall**, is speaking to a young woman who is about to do this very thing. You may recall what he says:

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize
with clay.
As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a
clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag
thee down.
He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its
novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his
horse.

"But then what could we expect in the way of influence from parents who themselves had lost their grip on God and were out of fellowship with him? How can we lead

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our children to anything higher than that which we ourselves have attained? Christ said to Peter: 'And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.' A man must be right with God himself if he is to be used in bringing others to Christ. If we do not have Christ in our own hearts, how can we plead with our children to let Christ have control of their lives?

"What influence did Lot have with his family when he was told by the angel to warn them to flee from the doomed city? 'He seemed to his sons-in-law as one that mocked.' His daughters laughed in his face as from behind painted cheeks, penciled eyebrows and frozen hearts, they doubtless said: 'Why didn't you tell us this before; it is quite late now that the city is burning.' O, the anguish of those parents whose lives are of such a nature that they can no longer influence their children for God! How they will start and shrink at the throne when they hear the word, 'Depart from me,' addressed to their children, and their children look with anger into their faces and say: 'Father, Mother, why didn't you tell me this before so that I might not have met this doom?' But backsliders are poor soul winners!"

A settled conviction with reference to mixed marriages is sadly lacking among those who ought to know Jehovah's law regarding this question. Many seem to think that those who speak against such unions have no scriptural authority on which to base their teaching, but that the whole matter is left up to the individual taste. Consequently, so far as the Bible is concerned, there is a general indifference regarding this question. But, contrary to general opinion, the Bible clearly teaches that Jehovah has had a uniform law on mixed marriages in every age of the world. This law is not based on statutes arbitrarily imposed, but on the fundamental principles of the kingdom of heaven.

At the time of the marriage of Isaac, Abraham and his family were living among people who were not in covenant relationship with Jehovah; and for that reason, Abraham strictly charged his servant not to take a wife

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for Isaac from among the Canaanites. (See Gen. 24:1-8.) Furthermore, the servant was forbidden to take Isaac to Mesopotamia, the land of Abraham's own people, in search of a wife for him. To permit Isaac to marry into the families of the Canaanites, among whom they were then living, would bring him into such close touch with them socially, that he would likely be corrupted by them. His wife, too, would be directly under the influences of her people, and former customs and worship, where it would be well-nigh impossible to reform her. Had Isaac gone to his idolatrous kindred in Mesopotamia, the same difficulties would have been met. This Abraham well understood, and for that reason he sent his servant in search of a wife for his son. The servant was instructed to bring her away from her social and religious influences, which were corrupting, so that in her new surroundings, and under true religious conditions, she might be a true and helpful companion to her husband.

Later, when Esau married into the families of the Canaanites, Rebekah, Isaac's wife, said unto her husband: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth [Esau's wives]; if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" (Gen. 27:46.) Although she was trying to get Jacob away to her former home because of the anger of Esau, yet she was speaking her sincere feelings regarding the daughters of the land. Immediately after she spoke these words, Isaac called Jacob, blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him: "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan." In saying that, Isaac was only speaking the law of Jehovah on that point.

Just before the children of Israel were ready to enter into the land of Canaan, Moses, after charging them to make no covenant with the people of the land, said: "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For he will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of Jehovah be kindled against

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you, and he will destroy thee quickly." (Deut. 7:3, 4.)

After many centuries had passed, and the Israelites were returning from Babylon, where they had spent seventy years in captivity because of their sins, the princes informed Ezra that the people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, had not separated themselves from the idolatrous people of the land, but were doing according to their abominations, and they added: "For they have taken their daughters for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of the land: yea, the hand of the princes and the rulers hath been chief in this trespass." (Ezra 9:2.) Ezra then made earnest prayer and confession. The people were greatly stirred, and made oath that they would put away their foreign wives. (See Ezra, chapters nine and ten.)

Nehemiah met practically the same situation. With such transgressors he made no compromise, but "contended with them, and cursed [reviled, margin] them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon, king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, and he was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless, even him did foreign women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to trespass against our God in marrying foreign women?" (See Neh. 13:23-31.)

Thus, the teaching of the Old Testament on this subject is very plain, but is the New Testament silent regarding it? Is there no law regarding mixed marriages in the New Covenant? Some are wont to say that we are not under the old law, and that that which prevented mixed marriages then is not effective for that purpose now. It is true that we are not under the statutes of the Old Testament, but the principles on which those laws were based are eternal, and as such they have not been abolished.

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But aside from the question of our responsibility to the laws of the Old Testament, are not the evil influences of mixed marriages as harmful now as they were during the former dispensations? Is not the marriage tie as close now as it was then? Are we not as liable to be led astray by an unbelieving and godless companion now as they were then? The marriage law to people of former times was not arbitrarily given—there were reasons for it, and the same reasons are as urgent now as they were then. A disregard for these principles has been the source of much evil among Christians. Many of the Lord's people have grown cold and indifferent through the blighting influence of an unbelieving companion. How many such marriages have been a cross to believers all the days of their lives! The Christian needs help, and most of all does he need the sympathetic help and encouragement of his companion; but the influence of the unbelieving companion is usually the other way. The Christian cannot bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as he is commanded to do, without the pious assistance of his companion. (See Eph. 6:1-4.)

But again, Is there no New Testament law regarding mixed marriages? The Apostle Paul asks: "Have we no right to lead about a wife **that is a believer**, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. 9:5.) It is implied here that Christians have the right to marry only believers.

Concerning the Christian widow, the same apostle says: "She is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." (1 Cor. 7:39.) This does not signify that the restriction, **only in the Lord**, is a regulation meant solely for widows. The general statement that "she is free to be married to whom she will" might lead her to think that she was at liberty to marry without being restricted, as she had evidently been with reference to her first marriage; and the apostle adds, "only in the Lord," to show her that the same restrictions were still binding.

Paul's injunction in 1 Cor. 7:12-15 to the effect that

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a believer should not forsake an unbelieving companion, has been thought by some to justify mixed marriages; but a careful consideration of this passage will reveal that the opposite is true, else why should a believer think that he should leave his unbelieving companion? The force of the apostle's reasoning will be more apparent if the background of his remarks is duly considered. The idea is that if two unbelievers marry, and later on one of them becomes a Christian, the thought would naturally come to the mind of the believer: "If it is wrong for a Christian to marry an unbeliever, is it right for him to live with one? With any other view of the matter, how could such a question as is discussed in this passage arise?"

In 2 Cor. 6:14 we read: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." While this does not refer directly to the marriage relation, it does prohibit Christians joining with unbelievers in such a way as to make common cause with them. Marriage is the joining together in the closest possible way, and there is no other relationship where the contracting parties have so much in common. How, then, can a Christian make common cause with an unbeliever in a relationship where the two become one flesh, without violating the spirit, if not the letter, of Paul's solemn injunction?

The Relation of True Love and Religion.

"May we," asks Dr. Watson, "depend upon love in the absence of religious faith." This question is not to be dismissed with a nod of the head. Love is real only when it is pure and true; the rest is mere desire and passion. Why should a young woman think that because an insincere worldly man has a selfish passion for her that she would be safe with him? Or why should a young man suppose that if a worldly woman loves him in a worldly way that his soul and his future would be safe with her? Let each seek for a companion who fears God, one whose virtues are rooted in faith, where alone they can grow, or live without a wife, a husband. Of course, no one

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should demand in another those moral and religious qualities which he does not himself possess. However, if such should be the case, the one making the demand is the one to be shunned. A materialist living in time and sense, and yet looking for spiritual graces and superhuman fidelity in a prospective companion, is not worthy of the love and confidence of those whose hearts are set on the higher things of life.

It is true that not all the so-called Christian homes are happy; but, other things being equal, the husband and wife whose love is centered on something great and noble above and outside of themselves will love each other more, and will live more happily together. It is a principle of psychology, as well as a fact of human experience, that the highest friendship is formed, not by the love that two people have for each other, but in the common love both have for something else—something outside of themselves. And what is there that can be greater than the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is this religion that makes our earthly friendships eternal; and love, which is the soul of friendship, is the fruit of religion. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God." (1 John 4:7.)

William Evans: *Naomi of Ruth*, 30f; 42f.

C. R. Nichol and R. L. Whiteside: *Sound Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 57ff.

Robert A. Watson: "*The Expositor's Bible—Judges and Ruth*," p. 406.

James Hastings: *The Great Texts of the Bible—Deuteronomy to Esther*, p. 230f.

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Questions

Part I—Chapter VI

1. What does the Bible teach regarding the uncertainty of man's life?
2. Where should one strive to be when death overtakes him?
3. What importance do you attach to the question of "mixed marriages"?
4. What constitutes such a marriage?
5. Give a brief resume of the teaching of the Bible on this subject.
6. Is the "principle" which underlies this "law" the same in all ages of God's dealings with his people? Give reasons for your answer.
7. How do you account for the lack of teaching on this subject among the Lord's people to-day?
8. On whom does the responsibility for this instruction rest?
9. What would you suggest as an effective remedy for correcting this lack of teaching?
10. How do true love and religion stand related?
11. Is the greatest degree of marital happiness possible in the absence of true religious faith? Give reasons for your answer.
12. Name some traits of character which one should desire in a prospective companion.
13. What is your idea of a person who demands more in this respect than he is willing to give?
14. Why aren't all so-called Christian homes happy?
15. On what basis does the highest type of friendship rest?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Does Mankind Have Anything to Do with the Length of the Span of His Life?

THE CONSEQUENCES — SORROW AND DISAPPOINTMENT

2. Name Some Reasons, Aside from God's Law, Why Mixed Marriages Are Often Undesirable.
3. The Most Effective Methods of Teaching God's Will on Mixed Marriages.
4. What Are the Elements of True Love and Religion?
5. The Most Effective Means of Developing the Highest Type of Character.

GLEANINGS FROM PART I

CHAPTER VII

GLEANINGS FROM PART I

The Bible as Literature.

The Bible is the one outstanding book of the ages. Considered from any point of view, it has no equal. The love of its friends for it has steadily grown stronger, while the combined efforts of its enemies have been unable to overthrow it. Its contents are so varied, and its influence so far reaching, that it is impossible for one to know the history of the nations of the earth, without some knowledge of the Bible. Aside from its greatest value to man, that of the divine revelation regarding his eternal welfare, the Bible is pre-eminently a book of the world's greatest literature. One of the professors of English in Harvard University, in speaking of the Old Testament, said: "It has preserved for us the history, the poetry, the wisdom, the religious ideals and national hopes of a people whose individuality and tenacity of thought are perhaps the strongest known in history."

"The Bible thoroughly known," says James A. Froude, "is a literature of itself—the rarest and richest in all departments of thought or imagination which exists."

"I am heartily glad," remarked Landor, "to witness your veneration for a Book which, to say nothing of its holiness or authority, contains more specimens of genius and taste than any other volume in existence."

"The Bible," observes Richard Cecil in his *REMAINS*, "resembles an extensive garden, where there is a vast variety and profusion of fruits and flowers, some of which are more essential or more splendid than others; but there is not a blade suffered to grow in it which has

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not its use and beauty in the system. Salvation for sinners is the grand truth presented everywhere, and in all points of light; but the pure in heart sees a thousand traits of the Divine Character, of himself, and of the world; some striking and bold, other cast as it were into the shade, and designed to be searched for and examined."

Charles A. Dana, the famous journalist, said: "Of all books, the most indispensable and the most useful, the one whose knowledge is most effective, is the Bible. There is no book from which more valuable lessons can be learned. I am considering it now not as a religious book, but as a manual of utility, of professional preparation and professional use for a journalist. There is, perhaps, no book whose style is more suggestive and more instructive; from which you learn more directly that sublime simplicity which never exaggerates; which recounts the greatest events with solemnity, of course, but without sentimentality or affectation; none which you open with such confidence and lay down with such reverence. There is no book like the Bible."

Helping Others to Bear Their Burdens.

No one can truthfully claim to be independent of his fellow men, for "none of us liveth to himself;" while on the other hand, no normal person can be wholly dependent, for "each man shall bear his own burden." Instead of seeking either of these extremes, we should endeavor to bear "one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Frequently one is willing to help another with his burdens; but in many instances he makes the load heavier by adding to it an additional burden, namely, that of a feeling of obligation for the service rendered. The Master Teacher and Burden Bearer taught that men should not seek to do that which will cause the recipients of their favors to feel that a recompense should be made; but that they should help those who would be unable "to return the favor." The reward for such services will not come from men, but from the Lord himself.

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(See Luke 14:12-14.) In addition to his teaching, Jesus showed by his example the attitude that men should manifest toward those whom they befriend. He bore man's greatest burden—the sin of his soul—but he does not parade that fact before him in order to make him feel obligated to him. Instead, he endeavors to get him to see that what was done for him was done in love, and for his own best interest. He then leaves it to man's own sense of honor to realize that the least he can do in return for this great sacrifice is to yield his all to Christ. And, even in doing this, man is made to see that he is benefiting himself, rather than his Benefactor.

Keeping One's Self Saved.

From the example of Elimelech and Naomi we have seen something of the nature and method of backsliding; but it seems that the seriousness of this possibility means little to the average person. Thousands, it seems, are depending upon what they **have been and have done** to take them to final glory. They, evidently, do not feel the necessity of learning "more about Jesus," or of growing "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Paul was made to realize his lost condition before he became a child of God, and because of that, he could and did appreciate a Saviour. Out of his deep appreciation for his salvation from his past sins grew his determination to "remain saved;" and he expressed that determination, along with his sense of need, in the following words: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may **lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus.**" (Phil. 3:12.) If the Lord was willing to save him, the least he could do himself was to try to remain saved. Gratitude, to say nothing of duty, should cause everyone who has been saved from his past sins to remain with the Lord, and give his best efforts in his service. If there are no blessings with Christ, then certainly there is none away from him. If good cannot be found at home with Jesus, then there will be no need to go elsewhere. But "blessed be the God

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and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3.) And again, "His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, **having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.**" (2 Pet. 1:3, 4.) Not only will the spiritual blessings be granted unto them that serve him, but if they seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, the material blessings they need will be added, as well. (See Mat. 6:33.)

J. Gilchrist Lawson: *Greatest Thoughts About the Bible.*

GLEANINGS FROM PART I

Part I—Chapter VII

Questions

1. What place does the Bible occupy in the world of literature?
2. What has been the constant attitude of its friends and enemies toward it?
3. In what does its greatest value to man consist?
4. Give some idea of the contents of the Bible.
5. What can you say of the interdependence of the human race?
6. What do you think of one who endeavors to make another feel obligated to him because of a favor done him?
7. How does the Lord feel about such a situation?
8. How do people, as a rule, seem to feel about the seriousness and possibilities of backsliding?
9. From outward indications, what are many depending on for their ultimate salvation?
10. How did Paul feel about this matter?
11. What effect would true gratitude have on a man who has been saved from his sins?
12. Where are all spiritual blessings to be found?
13. What has God given us to aid us in becoming like him?
14. How does one escape "from the corruption that is in the world by lust"?
15. What promise has been made regarding material blessings?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Should the Bible Be Taught in the Public Schools?
2. The Most Effective Methods for Getting the Bible before the General Public.
3. Motives That Should Govern People in Helping Others Bear Their Burdens.
4. The Effect of Backsliding on Character Building.
5. The Effect of Promises on Character Building.

PART II
FROM MOAB TO BETHLEHEM
Ruth 1:6-22

CHAPTER VIII

THE CALL OF HOME

The Essential Elements of Home.

The essence of home is to be found in persons, rather than in locality. When, therefore, one has the presence and fellowship of those who are nearest and dearest to him, it is easy to be at home anywhere. But when the ones he loves are gone, the fairest surroundings will not fill the void which their absence has made. It is then that the heart longs for that which strangers cannot give, and old memories create a yearning for the old home of earlier days. It was natural, therefore, that Naomi, after the death of her husband and sons, should be drawn again toward Bethlehem. So strong was her longing for the home of her fathers that she determined to return there at once. Forlorn, widowed, desolate, and destitute, she longed for that which Moab could not give. A famine in the fields of Bethlehem had taken her to Moab; but now a famine in the heart sends her home again. Having heard "that Jehovah had visited his people in giving them bread," she arose, and set out for her native place.

The Feeling of Loneliness.

Naomi's desolation must have made her very lonely. Her husband and children were gone; poverty was extreme; the place of her sojourn was a place of strangers; and the voice of the old sanctuary was silent. Her heart and spirit were broken, and her conscience was up in arms. She felt that the God of her fathers had deserted her, because she had deserted him. And now, in her extreme loneliness, she felt that she must retrieve the past; she must go back—back to the old soil, back to the favor of her God.

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Such a feeling of loneliness as must have been hers is described in the following words of Dr. MacGregor of St. Cuthberts (p. 131): "There is nothing the human heart so much dreads as the thought of being utterly alone. I have felt it when walking about amid the surge and roar of London. To think of these dense masses of human beings utterly cut off from you makes you feel as if you were in the midst of perfect solitude. It is the thought of utter loneliness which gives its power and pathos to Hood's **Bridge of Sighs**. You remember the picture of the poor unfortunate alone on the bridge on that wild March night. The lines are among the most mournful ever penned. I learned them many long years ago from the lips of a Scone weaver, before I had ever heard of such a man as Hood. The sentiment of **loneliness** gives them their power. It is the same sentiment that gives its awfulness not only to Christ's death but to all death—that we must all leave the world **alone**; as De Quincey says: 'King and priest, warrior and maiden, philosopher and child—all must walk these mighty galleries alone.' We all like to have a human hand in ours and a human heart beating for our own, at least in the great crises and troubles of life. There is One, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, who has promised that he will never leave us, never forsake us, not even when heart and flesh do faint and fail. Let us seek a closer interest in him, the Holy Lamb of God. It will brighten every joy God may give us in life. It will soothe whatever sorrow he may send us to know and feel that in Christ we have a Brother and a Friend."

The Kind of Woman Naomi Was.

Naomi is pictured in the Scriptures as a practical woman, a woman with faith and courage. There was much in her to be admired and imitated. Her life and character are sketched in a few master strokes, but from them the world has learned to love her. Her lot in life was a sad one, but she took a very common-sense view of it. To her there seemed to be no need in remaining longer in a country where there was little or nothing to be

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hoped for. She had better return to her home and to her God. Her griefs were deep and she felt them keenly; but she would not be mastered by them. And so, learning that the famine in her own land had ceased, she prepared to return there at once. That seemed to be the only practical thing for her to do, and her fine example should teach us some very valuable lessons. For example, if by any means our hearts have become alienated from God, or present material interests have drawn us away from the means of ministering to the higher needs of our spiritual nature, the first sanctifying influence of affliction should be seen in a return from the Moab where God is not, to the Bethlehem where he may yet be found. Naomi did not sit down to brood over her sorrows and disappointments, or plunge into Moabitish follies and sins, in order to try to forget them. Instead, whatever ties had been formed during a residence of many years in the land of her adoption were promptly broken, and she set her face again toward the land of her nativity.

Someone has said that what we do in our bereavement is very momentous. We can sit down and mope in ever deepening melancholy, or we can arise and take up our appointed work. Indeed, one's faith and loyalty to God are involved in his reaction to such circumstances, though heartrending as they are. It seems that some people feel that they are exempt from service to God when great sorrows come upon them because of bereavements. There is no doubt but that God takes into account our human weakness in this respect; but we should always remember that "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37.) The attitude that we should assume amid such trying experiences is expressed in that great, deep and loyal word of Ezekiel (24:18): "At even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded."

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 18.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 6.

Isaac Errett: *Evenings with the Bible*, p. 282f.

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Questions

Part II—Chapter VIII

1. What is the essence of home?
2. What caused Naomi to turn her thoughts to Bethlehem again?
3. Contrast the motives that prompted her to go to Moab and then to Bethlehem.
4. What was Naomi's condition when she resolved to return home?
5. What can you say of the feeling of loneliness and the effect it has on the normal human being?
6. What divine assurance do we have for such a situation?
7. What kind of a woman was Naomi?
8. What practical lessons for our own application may we learn from her?
9. Why is what one does in his bereavement so momentous?
10. Can you explain why people seemingly forget their responsibility to God when such sorrows come to them?
11. What does the Lord teach on this subject?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. What Are Some of the Essential Elements of a Real Home?
2. The Place and Power of Motives in Human Experience.
3. The Effect of Early Training in Meeting Life's Later Situations.
4. Name Some Benefits Which Come from the "Gift of Sorrow."
5. What Is the Best Assurance That One Will Do God's Will under All Conditions? Cf. Psa. 119:11.

CHAPTER IX

THE DECISIONS OF ORPAH AND RUTH

Filial Devotion.

Naomi, in all probability, explained her situation to her daughters-in-law before she made her final preparation to leave Moab. However, when the day came for her to start, she began her journey back home with a heavy heart. But Orpah and Ruth would not let her go alone. Apparently, she did not request them to accompany her, but they of their own accord chose to make the journey with her. This was equally honorable to her and them. Her life with them in their native land had been one of harmony and love. They had grown into her affection, and she had become very dear to them. In the delicate relationship that existed between them, she had so conducted herself toward them, with reticence, wisdom and kindness; and they had so borne themselves to her, with deference, reverence, and affection, that they could not think of parting with her. They insisted, therefore, on going with her, and for a time she permitted them to be her companions. But, in her judgment, it was necessary, above all things, that she should be honest with them, and for that reason she put before them fully the real status of the situation.

Maternal Generosity.

“And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother’s house: Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. . . . For it grieveth me much for your sakes.” (Ruth 1:8, 9, 13.)

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It may appear strange, upon first thought, that Naomi would encourage them to go back to their own people and worship idols again; but, upon a more mature consideration, it will appear evident that her suggestion was very wise and prudent. She did not want them to remain with her merely because of their affection for her. If she should encourage them to go on with her to Bethlehem, they might be influenced by hopes that could not be realized; and they might be led, under temporary excitement, to take a step which they might later regret. Furthermore, her action in discouraging them would thoroughly test the sincerity and strength of their conversion to the true religion which she had taught them.

Orpah and Ruth, it would seem, were inexperienced in the ways of life, especially away from their own homes. They had, in all probability, thought little of the difficulties which they would most certainly encounter; and Naomi, therefore, was put to the necessity of speaking very plainly to them. In the grief of bereavement and the desire for a change of scenery and general surroundings, they had doubtless formed the hope of going where there were other good men and women like the Hebrews they had known, and of placing themselves under the protection of the gracious God of Israel. Perhaps, they thought that unless they did these things life would be practically at an end for them. But Naomi could not think of taking upon her the responsibility of letting them drift into such a hazardous position; and she, accordingly, forced them to make a decision of their own in full view of the facts. That was true kindness, no less than wisdom. The age had not yet dawned in which women could attempt to shape or defy the customs of society; nor was any advantage to be sought at the risk of moral compromise. These things were well understood by Naomi, and she acted accordingly.

Tears, all the while, fell thick and fast from all their eyes, and most of all from hers who had known the greatest sorrow, for she virtually said: "It is far more bitter for me than it is for you, for the hand of the Lord is against me." It was harder for her to part with them

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than it was for them to leave her. If they should go back, never again would there be one beside her to call her mother, and she would go into the dreariest of solitudes, while they would each be in her mother's house, and might look forward to finding rest beneath a husband's roof. Hers would be the greatest sacrifice, if they should go back; but she could not be so selfish as to allow them, simply on her own account, to bring upon themselves the privations that were inevitably before them, if they should continue the journey with her.

Decision and Character.

How deeply solemn are the moments when one finally decides upon a complete revolution in life and in character! These two young women who then stood, as it were, at the forks of the road, represent two types of character, which are as much in evidence now as they were the day Orpah and Ruth made their momentous decisions. "Do we not often see," asks Isaac Errett, "just such types of character? There are those who, upon impulse, seem ready to follow what are, for the moment, the heart's strongest pleadings, but who, when tested by the stern exactions of duty—when they 'count the cost' of their conversion—find there is something stronger and deeper in their hearts than the momentary impulse to which they were about to yield—and so turn back 'to their people and their gods.' They go, like Orpah, never to be heard of again. Then there are those who, like Ruth, give room in their heart for all the truth they can gather, and nurse it with religious care, who 'buy the truth and sell it not,' and who, when the time of trial comes, are equal to the test—calmly, bravely, even joyfully surrendering everything in the world for the sake of that truth which is above all price."

And then, to view the matter from a slightly different angle, we read in the words of Dr. Ross C. Houghton that "these two young women appear here as representative of two classes of friends. When we are in adversity one friend will weep and sympathize with us, and pour out

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a profusion of regrets and protestations of love, and even kiss us passionately, but after all is said and done will deliberately leave us to our fate and turn away to seek his own fortunes; while another friend will cling to us in life and death. Such a friend is Christ. May God help every weary soul buffeted by the storms and bowed down by the burdens of life, to take this Friend of friends by the hand, keep close by his side, that he may guide thee by his counsel, and afterward receive thee to glory. These two young women represent also two sorts of Christians. The one gives to Christ and the church what is comparatively cheap and easy, and gives it honestly, no doubt, thinking for the time, that he is entirely devoted to the Master; but when a sacrifice is demanded he shrinks and fails. The kiss of public profession is easily given in these days, and in the eyes of the world, even, is rather an honor than a reproach; but to be a devout, cross-bearing follower of Christ, to cleave to him through evil as well as good report, and to lead a life of simple self-forgetfulness and hard labor for the truth and the good of souls is not so easy or so attractive to one whose heart God has not touched. It cost something for Ruth to cleave to Naomi."

As we go through life we journey along with others for a while, enjoying their fellowship and sharing their hopes, yet with thoughts and dreams of our own that must sooner or later send us on a separate path. But decision is so difficult to many that they are glad of an excuse for self-surrender, and are only too willing to be led by some authority, deferring their own personal choice as long as possible. Let some religious leader or a strong-minded companion lay down for them the law of right and wrong, and point out the path of duty, and they will obey, welcoming the relief from moral effort on their part. Not seeing clearly, and not disciplined in judgment, they long for some external human guidance. The teachers of submission find many disciples, not because they speak the truth, but because they meet the indolence of human will with a crutch instead of a stimulus. They succeed by pampering weakness, and making ignorance

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a virtue. The time comes, however, when such a method will not serve. There are moments when one's own will must be exercised in making a choice between one path and another; and the alternative is too sharp to allow any escape. If the person is to live at all like a human being, he will have to decide whether he will go on in such a company, or turn back; and he will have to declare who or what has the strongest hold upon his mind. Such an occasion came to Orpah and Ruth when they reached the border of Moab.

Orpah, like Ruth, was face to face with all it meant to carry out that journey to its end—all that it meant in the surrender of worldly prospects, in the severing of old ties, in running new and incalculable risks. She had to face it, for Naomi herself, in her faithful witness to the truth, had put it before them both quite plainly, and each in turn was put to the necessity of making the great decision. Orpah, who is thought by some to have been the elder, was the first to disclose her choice. What it was Naomi records in the sacred text: "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her god: return thou after thy sister-in-law." (Ruth 1:15.) Ruth's life had now reached its most decisive moment. It was the moment when the great choice had to be made on which everything, as regards her fulfillment of God's purpose, must depend. What a crisis it was! And how isolated, how seemingly alone, it found her! So far in life's experience she had moved step by step with Orpah. Now Orpah her sister-in-law—Orpah, side by side with whom she had accepted the hand of her Israelite husband; Orpah, who with her had bowed under the stroke of widowhood; Orpah, who with her had started to accompany Naomi on her return to Bethlehem—now Orpah had gone.

Behind Ruth, in the sweet light of reminiscence, was Moab, the home of her childhood, of her father and mother: the scene of her friendships, and the center of her interests. Before her was Israel with its dark, forbidding hills, its alien faces, and its unknown and undreamed of trials. What called her there? To outward

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appearance, there was little. Ease, pleasure, and even common prudence, as Naomi had already pointed out, bade her return to that land where love and hope were waiting for one so winning. But she heard a voice that we cannot hear. It was the voice of duty, of compassion, of faith, and of love. That voice called her on, and it would not let her go. That desolate widow before her struck her heart with an heroic note. And not only that, for it was no mere Naomi that she saw standing before her in piteous farewell. It was her dead husband's mother; nay, more, it was her dead husband's faith, her dead husband's Jehovah. Can she go forward to make these her own? She can, and even now she will. With a resolution conveyed in suppressed fire, Ruth refused to quit the side of her mother-in-law. The words in which the resolution was uttered constitute the most determined, the most decisive, and the most unhesitating confession of love in all literature.

The immortal words with which Ruth gave voice to the thoughts and determination of her heart are:

Intreat me not to leave thee,
And to return from following after thee,
For whither thou goest, I will go;
And where 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:
Jehovah do so to me, and more also,
If aught but death part thee and me.

Ruth's choice was not an easy one. If we would understand the situation, and especially the stress laid on young widows of that day in finding new husbands, we must keep in mind that in the East of antiquity, as in many Eastern lands to this day, the position of an unmarried woman, whether maid or widow, was a very unhappy and perilous one. It was only in the home of a

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husband that a woman could be sure of respect and protection. Hence, the Hebrews spoke of the husband's house as a woman's **menuchah**, or "rest"—her secure and happy asylum from servitude, neglect, and license. It was such an "asylum" of honor and freedom that Naomi desired for Orpah and Ruth. But, as she had explained to them, such an "asylum", while it might be open to them in their own land, would be fast closed against them in the land of Israel. Her sons, in marrying them, had sinned against the law of the Hebrews, and that sin was not likely to be repeated by Israelites living in their own country. Yet, how was Naomi to tell them of this fatal separation between the two races? How was she to make these loving women understand that, if they continued their journey with her, they must give up all hope of honor and regard? Her task, indeed, was a difficult one, but she discharged it with infinite delicacy. Her words to them were: "Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight, and should also bear sons; would ye therefore tarry till they were grown? Would ye therefore stay from having husbands? nay, my daughters, for it grieveth me much for your sakes, for the hand of Jehovah is gone forth against me." (Ruth 1:11-13.) Samuel Cox thinks that they, of course, had no thought of marrying any sons that might thereafter be born to the widowed Naomi. Such a thought could not possibly have entered their minds. Why, then, he asks, did Naomi lay such emphasis on the utter unlikelihood of her having sons and of their waiting for them even if she had them? Simply to convey to them that, if they went with her, **they would have no hope but in herself.**

From the time that Ruth uttered the memorable words of her decision a charm lingers about her, and she becomes dearer to us than any woman of whom the Hebrew Scriptures tell. Her first characteristics were dignity and affection, and close beside them we find a firm

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conviction of duty. It is good to be capable of clear resolve, and to be able to distinguish between this and that of opposing considerations and differing claims. One should not rush at decisions and act in mere wilfulness, for wilfulness is the extreme of weakness; but there should be sound judgment on this side and on that, until he is able to say: "This is the path for me to follow, and along it and no other will I go." Unreason decides by tastes, by momentary feeling, and often out of mere spite and antipathy. But the resolution of a wise and thoughtful person, even though it may bring temporal disadvantage, is a moral gain and a step toward salvation.

There is no escape from personal decisions in the Christian religion. No one can drift to salvation with companions or with a church. In art, in literature, or in ordinary morality, it is possible to possess something without any special effort. The atmosphere of cultural society, for example, holds in solution the knowledge and taste which have been gained by a few, and which may pass in some measure to those who are associated with them, though these last, so far as personal efforts are concerned, have studied and acquired very little. Anyone who observes how a new book is talked about will readily see the process at work. But the supreme nature of religion, and its unique part in human development, are different. The Christian religion demands high and sustained personal effort, and the constant action of the will. Indeed, every spiritual gain must result from the vital activity of the individual mind choosing to enter and to enter yet farther into the kingdom of divine revelation, grace, and obedience. The idea is expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews in these words: "And we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence unto the fulness of hope even to the end: that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb. 6:11, 12.)

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 18ff.

H. Leo Boles: *Elam's Notes on Bible School Lessons*, 1930, p. 205.

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Robert A. Watson: *The Expositor's Bible—Judges and Ruth*, p. 372ff.

Isaac Errett: *Evenings with the Bible*, p. 382f.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 7f.

James Hastings: *The Great Texts of the Bible—Deuteronomy to Esther*, p. 224f.

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Questions

Part II—Chapter IX

1. When Naomi decided to return home, what was the attitude of Orpah and Ruth toward her?
2. Is there any indication that Naomi requested them to return with her?
3. What did their attitude toward her in this respect reveal?
4. In view of their idolatrous surroundings in Moab, how do you account for Naomi's request that they return home?
5. Whose sacrifice would be greater, if they should return? Why?
6. Why does decision have such an effect on one's character?
7. Discuss the types of character represented by Orpah and Ruth.
8. In what way do they illustrate the Lord's people to-day?
9. When face to face with the necessity of making a choice, why is it that some people seek to defer their decision?
10. How do you think the decision of Orpah affected Ruth?
11. What caused Ruth to make a different choice?
12. What was her choice?
13. Was it easy for her to make? Give reasons for your answer.
14. What can you say of Ruth in comparison with other women of the Old Testament?
15. Can a Christian avoid personal decisions? Why.

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Should a Christian Ever Hesitate to Ask Any One to Give up a False Religion for Christianity?

THE DECISIONS OF ORPAH AND RUTH

2. Name Some Effective Ways of Leading People out of Error into the Truth.
3. Which Has the Greater Effect on the Other, Character or Decision?
4. What Are Some of the Elements to Be Considered in Making a Choice?
5. Some Great Decisions Which *Must* Be Made.

CAPTER X

LIFE'S HIGHEST PRIVILEGES—FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

The Relation of Confidence to Friendship and Love.

Friendship and love cannot be separated from confidence. If one would have the friendship and love of another, then he must win his confidence; and if he would hold the friendship and love of another, then he must make sure that that person keeps his confidence in him. There are no greater gifts than friendship and love. Do not trifle with them. Before Ruth made her immortal decision she had been influenced by one whom she loved dearly—one in whom she had perfect confidence. She loved her mother-in-law and her mother-in-law loved her. They were bosom friends. In their relationships with each other, there is not the slightest trace of selfishness recorded against either of them. Naomi, being the older and the mother of him who had loved Ruth and to whom she had given her heart, perhaps had greater opportunities for wielding influence; and having a knowledge of the true God, she made use of her opportunities. First, she gained Ruth's confidence, and on the strength of that confidence, she led her to repose her love and confidence in Israel's God. Thus, in that simple but powerful way she was led to embrace the true religion of her day. Someone has said that "religion is sometimes made most unattractive by those who profess it. Attractiveness is not the sole or even the chief virtue in religion; but we may be sure that people will not permanently choose to embrace it unless it has that grace. Blessed are those people who are not only good, but whose goodness is human enough and cheerful enough to attract others."

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The "In-Law" Problem.

This classic example of devotion between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law should put to shameful silence the disrespectful remarks made by so many thoughtless people with reference to this sacred relationship. However, it must be acknowledged that the unpopularity of the mother-in-law is partly due to her own fault. She has done much to merit the unkind thrusts that the wits of the centuries have made at her. It must be admitted that she has to her credit the wrecking of not a few homes that might have remained happy, had she only stayed away. But, while this is true, it is only fair to say that the fault is not entirely hers. She has at times been as much sinned against as she herself has sinned. At times she has been in part, at least, the victim of circumstances. Her situation is more trying than that of the father-in-law, because her contact is more intimate. Even where she has been the direct cause of marital unhappiness, it is often due to a lack of thoughtfulness, of tact, and of understanding, rather than to innate and deliberate wickedness. In proof of this contention, it is only necessary to call attention to the fact that the mother and the mother-in-law are after all one and the same person. Every woman who is a mother-in-law must of necessity be a mother first. Therefore, if the mother is all that is winsome, and tender, and lovable, it is not necessary to claim that the mother-in-law is always the opposite, since they are one and the same woman. The only difference between them is this: the mother as mother-in-law is acting in a new role, and she is being seen through different eyes.

Her new role, indeed, is often a very delicate and difficult one. She is called upon to be a mother to one who is really not her own. Her task requires a large capital of tact, forbearance, broadmindedness and good sense which every woman does not, unfortunately, possess. It often demands a love great enough to cover a multitude of faults. And there are countless women who are playing this difficult part with most charming success. It is not unusual to find those who regard the parents of their

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husband or wife with an affection little less than that with which they gave to their own father and mother. But such is not always the case. It often happens that a very successful mother makes a very blundering mother-in-law.

Not only is the mother-in-law playing a new role, but, as has already been suggested, she is also being seen through different, and often unfriendly, eyes. As a mother she has been seen through the kind and loving eyes of her own children, but as a mother-in-law she is being viewed through the eyes of one who has or has had another mother. She is also being constantly compared with that other mother, and it is not at all surprising that she sometimes suffers by the comparison. Furthermore, it is no cause for wonder if the mother-in-law does not seem so agreeable nor so winsome nor so lovable as the mother who looked the love-light into their eyes during their young and tender years. Many a woman who seems all but faultless when looked upon through the eyes of her own children, appears very faulty when seen through the eyes of the wife of her son or the husband of her daughter.

After speaking at length of the position of the mother-in-law, it should be remembered that not every daughter-in-law is as considerate of her mother-in-law as Ruth was. It is often true that with the daughter-in-law there is little love and small room for the mother-in-law. Many young men and women consider themselves fully justified in entering into another family, and picking the choicest flower from it, without giving a thought to the parents of the one they love. Our parents-in-law have given to us that which we value more than life itself; and, so far as our part is concerned, we cannot show them too much love and consideration. The young man or the young woman is very foolish who will consent to marry a person who does not show the proper respect for the members of his or her family.

True Friendship.

The words with which Ruth tells of her determination

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to remain with Naomi speak of a rare devotion. They are an expression of the tenderest and most faithful friendship; and, as such, they are unrivaled. Someone has said that it may be doubted whether in all the crowded records of womanly heroism and self-sacrifice we anywhere meet a courage and devotion surpassing hers. This is, indeed, high praise, for this one utterance would place Ruth on a pedestal by herself, making her worthy to stand near the front rank of that great company of witnesses whose words and examples have proved an inspiration to succeeding generations.

In Ruth's attachment to her mother-in-law we see opened up before us some of the possibilities of human love, namely, the might of a true and noble attachment, which shows itself in that love to the individual which may overcome the more general love, even to relatives and friends and country. It is an illustration of the power one heart may have upon another. This is worthy of our most serious thought, for it is one of those things that adds glory and solemnity to human life. Naomi's personality was everything that a human personality could be to Ruth. Ruth knew that if Naomi had not come to her land her own life would have been very different—in thoughts, purposes, and realizations—from what it was then.

The influence of true friendship does not end with the friend, nor is the love which is drawn forth confined to the one who draws it forth. Every true and ennobling love that is kindled within us, while finding its focus in the friend that kindled it, also casts a warm and gentle glow over all that is associated with that friend. Men have loved a whole nation for the sake of one man in that nation. Many have delighted to look at the son of a great man whom they have honored and loved. They rejoice to look at the house where that man lived, and to tread the paths which he walked. The books that he wrote, the deeds that he did, and, in fact, everything that pertained to him became more sacred to them, because of the love they had for him. A great, loving per-

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sonality draws out the love of men, not only toward himself, but toward his people, as well. Such was Naomi's love to Ruth.

The Relationship of Love and Religion.

Ruth's passionate outburst of tenderness is immortal. It has put into fitting words for all generations the deepest thoughts of loving hearts, and it comes to us over all the intervening centuries, as warm and living as when the words were first spoken by that gentle, loving, and heroic soul. The two strongest emotions of our nature—love and religion—are blended in it, and each gives to it a portion of its fervor. To love is to give one's self away, therefore, all lesser givings are its food and delight; and, when Ruth threw herself upon Naomi's withered breast, and sobbed out her passionate resolution, she was speaking the eternal language of love. She was also claiming Naomi for her own, while in the very act of giving herself to Naomi. We also hear in Ruth's words that forsaking of all things which is an essential of all true religion. Her declaration closes with a vow to Israel's God. It dethrones Chemosh forever, and by it Jehovah is exalted as her future guide and shield. As such, we need not scruple to call it her **conversion**. In her example we can see how human love works self-sacrifice. But it was not human love alone that did it. The cord that drew Ruth was twisted of two strands, and her love to Naomi melted into her love for Naomi's God.

In thinking of Ruth's love for Jehovah, do we not find here a venture of faith that reminds us of, and which may be favorably compared with, that of Abraham when he went forth, not knowing where he was going? Ruth had listened to Naomi's words of warning which reminded her that hardships and persecutions and privations awaited her and Orpah, if they continued their journey with her. They would be going among a people who did not take kindly to foreigners, and who treated them as aliens; and while they would, doubtless, be a comfort to their mother-in-law, they would at the same time mar their own future. Ruth heard Naomi's ar-

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guments and warnings, and her answer was: "Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee." But what are bonds and imprisonments to a soul of this heroic type? Her words remind us of those of Paul, when he said, "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13.) There is a gulf of centuries between Paul's words and those of Ruth, but they vibrate with the same emotions, and the same passion pulsates in them both.

We learn from Ruth's experience that God not only knows human sorrow, but that he can also transmit through a human heart something of his own power to alleviate and heal the afflictions of the soul. Ruth's love was in this one instance to do for Naomi what his own was in the fulness of time to do universally in Christ Jesus, that is, she was to give rest to one who was weary and heavy laden. They who can be to any lonely and ailing heart what Ruth was to Naomi are akin to the Divine. Such love never fails. Its strength is unconquerable. All such love will overcome when it is reinforced by the Divine. But that it may retain its virtue, and possess the power of an endless life, it must be continually renewed and purified in the love of God.

Algot Theodore Lundholm: *Women of the Bible*, Vol. I, p. 106f.

Clovis G. Chappell: *Home Folks*, p. 118ff.

James Hastings: *The Great Texts of the Bible—Deuteronomy to Esther*, pp. 222, 229.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, 9.

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Questions

Part II—Chapter XII

1. What effect did the coming of Naomi and Ruth have on the people of Bethlehem?
2. In what sense were they "moved"?
3. What did Naomi request the women to call her? Why?
4. What trait of character did she manifest in her sufferings?
5. What were her former neighbors seemingly unable to see, both in themselves and in Naomi?
6. What important effect does time have on a normal man's attitude?
7. Does the thoughtful man really see the hand of Providence in many of his sorrowful experiences? Give reasons for your answer.
8. Did Naomi manifest the correct attitude in asking that she be called Mara instead of Naomi? Why?
9. Wherein does the real benefit in an afflicted state lie?
10. In view of the usual experiences of life, which is likely to bring the greater degree of real happiness, Naomi or Mara? Give reasons for your answer.
11. What is usually meant by a "pleasant and happy life"?
12. What will submission to the will of God always bring one?
13. Can you think of a classic example that illustrates the principle herein set forth?
14. About what time of the year did Naomi and Ruth reach Bethlehem?
15. How long did it probably take them to travel from Moab to Bethlehem?

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Questions

Part II—Chapter X

1. In what way are friendship and love related to confidence?
2. Show that this was true in the case of Naomi and Ruth.
3. Trace the steps that Naomi took in leading Ruth to embrace the true religion.
4. Is the same principle true in the case of Christianity? Why?
5. In what way is the "in-law" relationship a problem?
6. Why has so much been said about the "mother-in-law"?
7. Why is her role such a difficult one?
8. Discuss Ruth as a daughter-in-law.
9. What is your impression of the courage and devotion expressed by Ruth?
10. What caused her to be so devoted to Naomi?
11. Show something of the extent of the influence of true friendship.
12. What are the strongest emotions of our nature?
13. What does true love always involve?
14. Discuss Ruth's devotion in the light of the faith of Abraham and Paul.
15. What can such love do when it is reinforced by the Divine?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. What Are the Elements of Confidence?
2. The Best Means of Winning and Holding One's Confidence.
3. How Can a Mother-in-Law Exercise Her Greatest Influence? A Daughter-in-Law?
4. Name Some Classic Examples of Friendship and Tell Something about Them.
5. Is Genuine Love Possible in the Absence of True Religion?

CHAPTER XI

THE MEANING OF RUTH'S CHOICE

What the Choice Involved.

There were three things involved in the act of the will by which Ruth made her choice. For convenience, we may call them docility, detachment, and determination.

1. **Docility.** Docility is a desire and a readiness to learn. The words spoken by Saul of Tarsus during his vision near Damascus exactly express this frame of mind. His words were: "What shall I do, Lord?" This attitude was, without a doubt, present also in the case of Ruth; this readiness to learn from others, and to give due place to the effect of the influence under which she had been brought. She had learned much from Naomi, and now she felt that she could not cut herself off from the opportunity of learning more. This attitude, of course, is just as important for us as it was for her. Although it is a hard thing to do, since it often humbles us and makes us feel our own ignorance, still it is all bound up with a converted heart. "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." We must be teachable—ready to learn—and this in many ways. Recognizing, under the hand of God, for example—(what we are so apt to miss), the true meaning of things in our own lives, when seen in their relation to his providence. Or again, under the influence of others with whom we have to do; not, of course, in a sense which would be weakness, surrendering ourselves to every influence that comes our way, or easily led by anyone who might seek to gain a hold upon us; but a readiness to be taught by others, as against an obstinate persistence in thinking that we are always right, always know what is best, and have nothing left to learn. And once more, under the voice of conscience,

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learning to recognize the harm which we do ourselves by all our little resistance to its voice, and the risk which we run thereby of silencing it altogether.

2. Detachment. This crisis put a tremendous strain upon Ruth. She was compelled, in order to make the choice she did, to detach herself from her home, with all its associations; her religion, which had been no heathenism to her, but rather her sincere idea of truth. And then there was Orpah, the one person whose experience had been most like her own, to whom, therefore, she must have been bound by the ties of closest sympathy—all of these hallowed relationships had to be sacrificed, and she had to detach herself from every one of them in the great act of her choice. And this may well come home, in its degree, to us. How strong are the ties of old associations, old ideas, old sympathies, and the friendships we value so dearly! And yet at times we may find that it is just these things which may be holding us back from making a right choice, in simple faithfulness to our conscience and to God. It is when we realize all this that we shall learn the cost of true conversion, and the need that we have of that detachment from all else but him who enables us to say: "Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

3. Determination. Naomi saw that Ruth was "steadfastly minded to go with her." And it was no less than the plain truth, as her whole after life plainly declared. Ruth went as far as she knew how when she said: "Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." However, the Apostle Paul lifts our assurance to a higher point, when he says: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38, 39.)

All heaven is blazing yet

With the meridian sun:

Make haste, unshadowing sun, make haste to set;

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O lifeless life, have done,
I choose what once I chose;
What once I willed, I will;
Only the heart its own bereavement knows;
O clamorous heart, lie still.
That which I chose, I choose;
That which I willed, I will;
That which I once refused, I still refuse:
O hope deferred, be still.
That which I chose and choose
And will is Jesus' Will:
He hath not lost his life who seems to lose:
O hope deferred, hope still.

—Christina Georgina Rossetti.

What the Choice Was.

Ruth herself tells us what her choice was. The way which Naomi went would be her way; and Naomi's abode, her abode. Naomi's people would be her people; and Naomi's God, her God. In the place where Naomi died would she die, and there would she be buried. This may not name all that the Christian's choice involves, but it is certainly full of instruction.

Whither thou goest, I will go. That was a brave thing to say. She had never been in the land of Israel, and she knew nothing of its nature. For aught she knew, it might involve her in hardships to live there. But it mattered little to Ruth which way Naomi went; all the points of the compass were alike to her. The loadstone of grace had touched her heart, and so long as she could go where the Lord and his people were, she was not concerned about the direction. The soul that is really converted to Christ will know how to keep by the footsteps of his people. After we once understand the Lord and our relation to him, the world loses its charm to us.

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Ah, the Master is so fair!

His smile so sweet on banished men,
That they who meet him unaware,
Can never rest on earth again.

And they who see him risen afar,
On God's right hand, to welcome them,
Forgetful stand of home and land,
Desiring fair Jerusalem.

Where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Ruth named no conditions; her statement was without reservations. The house might be small and uninviting, the accommodations meager and uncomfortable, yet if Naomi lived there, so would she. This is a remarkable statement, when considered in its full force. Not everyone is willing to dwell where conditions are not as he would like to have them.

Thy people shall be my people. Naomi's people were the very people that Ruth had been taught from infancy to hate. Her brothers or her cousins, in all probability, had in times past gone to war with Israel. But notwithstanding all that, she is here throwing her lot with a people that hitherto she had looked down upon, and whom, up to the present, her family had opposed. Indeed, there are closer ties than the ties of nationality, or even blood. Those who are endeavoring to serve the Lord should cling to those who are disciples of the same great Teacher. The law of dependence, as it acts upon the world of human beings, and resolves itself into other laws of influence and sympathy, is found in all the relations of men. It is in itself a beautiful thing, this leaning of one upon another, this clasping of hand with hand in the great circle of human brotherhood, and feeling the electric spark, as the touch of a single finger sends a thrill through the multitude.

And thy God my God. Ruth would not think of being a secret idolater in the Lord's land, as all too many are. She possibly could have gone with Naomi to Bethlehem, and have been introduced into the society of Israel; and

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yet all the while, in the secret shrine of her heart, continued to worship her old gods.

There are two thoughts involved in this part of Ruth's resolution that are worthy of our special attention:

First, there are some people in the world who are called **Christian** that would drive us away from God, if we did not have his Book to guide us. There is a piety abroad that is repellent; and if we had no other light than the light which their example gives, we would say: "Give us any god rather than theirs." There are others, as they charm us by their meekness and gentleness, of truth and grace, as well as by their strength and courage, make us exclaim: "Oh, that their God may be our God!"

And in the second place, love between man and man, parents and children, or between husband and wife, can reach its highest and fullest attainment only when it is cemented by love to God.

Where thou diest, will I die. There was no thought of returning, so far as she was concerned. She had no idea of going to see how she would like the new land, and then, perhaps, return to her native land later.

We are told that when Christiana Mackintosh was invited to go to Africa to become the wife of Coillard, the missionary, she at first yielded to the opposition of her family, and declined to go. Two years later Coillard wrote her once more, and in the second appeal she felt that it was not only a call from the missionary, but, in a higher sense, a call from God. Feeling that way, she could not resist it, although it was a terrible ordeal to leave everything that was dear to her. She was no longer in her first girlhood, and she had no illusions whatever as to the kind of life that awaited her in the dark continent. Furthermore, it was not the kind she liked, since she now preferred civilization to the wilds. Besides, going to Africa was very different then from what it is now: it meant exile for life. Her widowed mother had become reconciled to the step that she was taking, and wrote her intended son-in-law that she "would rather see her daughter a missionary than a princess." Although Miss Mackintosh

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encountered much opposition of another kind, yet the choice was deliberately put before her, and as deliberately made. While her intended husband did not know all about it, yet he did know something of what she was renouncing when he wrote: "I do not know that I could do what you are doing, giving up all for an unknown country and an almost unknown husband."

Later, when they first met in Cape Town, her first words to him were: "I have come to do the work of God with you, whatever it may be; and remember this—Wherever God may call you, you shall never find me crossing your path of duty."

Love loves forever,
And finds a sort of joy in pain,
And gives with nought to take again,
And loves too well to end in vain:
Is the gain small then?

Love laughs at "never,"
Outlives our life, exceeds the span
Appointed to mere mortal man:
All which love is and does and can
Is all in all then.

—Christina Georgina Rossetti.

And there will I be buried. This is not a useless addition to Ruth's resolution to die with Naomi. To be buried in the sepulchre of some family is to be recognized as belonging to the family kinship. Perhaps there is no other recognition that is so hard to obtain or so difficult, to lose. When she said: "And there will I be buried," she cast her lot with Naomi and Naomi's people fully and finally. To offer to be buried with Naomi's kinsfolk was the last and most wholehearted act of surrender.

Dr. Cassel points out that hers is a love outliving the grave, and sustained by no fleshly relationship, for when her husband was dead, no living person, mutually dear, existed to connect her with Naomi. Neither self-interest, nor hope, nor vanity, mixed themselves with this love.

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It was a purely moral and spiritual love, and there is no other instance of it on record.

James Hastings: *The Great Texts of the Bible—Deuteronomy to Esther*, p. 225ff.

Lange's commentary *in loco*

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Questions

Part II—Chapter XI

1. What three outstanding things did Ruth's choice involve?
2. What is docility and how may the principle be applied in our lives?
3. Why is detachment necessary in every choice?
4. How strong must one's determination be, if he is to be successful in his choice?
5. Give the facts of Ruth's choice.
6. Considering the love that Ruth had for Naomi, could she be happy without being with her?
7. Why does the world lose its charm to those who really love the Lord?
8. Was Ruth concerned about the kind of lodging place they might have, if only Naomi was there? Why?
9. Can one really love the Lord without loving his people?
10. Can the true worshipper of Jehovah have any other god? Give reasons for your answer.
11. What effect can religious people have on others, as it respects the Lord?
12. When can human love reach its highest and fullest attainment? Give reason for your answer.
13. Why did Ruth say what she did about dying?
14. What does the Lord say about those who turn back from following him?
15. What is involved in her resolution to be buried with Naomi?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Can One Make a Choice Effectively without Being Properly Motivated?
2. Did Ruth's Choice Involve More Than Was Necessary in Order to Be Truly Devoted to Naomi and Her God? Why?

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3. Compare Her Choice with the One That Must Be Made To-day by Him Who Accepts Christ.
4. What Is the Essence of Idolatry and May It Be Practiced To-day?
5. Is Soul-winning an Obligation, or Is It Merely a Privilege?

CHAPTER XII

THE ENTRANCE INTO BETHLEHEM

A City Moved.

When Naomi and Ruth entered Bethlehem "all the city was moved about them," but, so far as the record goes, none was moved in the direction of their needs. It is possible that when she told her former friends and neighbors of her sad experience and lamentable condition, the ardor of their welcome for her was somewhat dampened. The record does not indicate that anyone invited her into his home, or offered her any hospitality.

Not Naomi, but Mara.

"And the women said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty; why call ye me Naomi, seeing Jehovah hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

Naomi recognized the hand of God in her afflictions, but she did not complain. Unselfishness is one of the signs of true love. Being the kind of woman that she was, she did not try to fasten the blame for her present condition on those she loved. She did not endeavor to make it appear that it was her husband, as the head of the family, who was responsible for her leaving her native land, and, subsequently, her lot of sorrow and distress. Such love is always ready to ascribe ills to self and blessings to others. Her old neighbors could see the changes in Naomi, but, seemingly, they were not conscious of their own changes. She might have said to them, "Yes, I have changed, I am aware of that; but the

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deepest change is one that you do not see, for my heart is heavy." The more important changes that come to anyone are not those which are seen with the physical eye—not those which the curious and unsympathetic onlooker understands. But even the outward changes of the physical body—a wrinkled face or a stooped form—have the power to call forth the sympathy of the thoughtful.

Ten years constitute a considerable portion of every man's life. Ten years in sharp conflict with the world, with its labors, laws, and ways, will give any normal man a very different opinion of life from that which he entertained in the days of his youth. When he took his departure into the far-away land to seek a place in the battles of life, he was carried along with the crowd of money-getters, pleasure-seekers, and ambition-hunters; but at the end of ten years, if not before, he will be ready to admit that affliction, barrenness, and want underlie all its outward glories and tempting delights. Ten years will be enough to change its pleasant things into bitterness; and it may be, under God's grace, to bring back the soul from the land of bondage, and to fill it with the sense of the great importance of living for that which is beyond. Man goes away, but God brings him back home. The departure into Moab is all our own, but the return is his with whom we have to do.

"Call me not Naomi," she wails, for I am no longer pleasant, either to myself or to my friends; but call me Mara, a name more in keeping with my present condition." Many that are debased and impoverished still want to be called by the empty names and titles of honor they formerly enjoyed. Naomi did not feel that way. Her humility did not regard a glorious name in a dejected state. If God dealt bitterly with her, she would accommodate herself to the dispensation, and be willing to be called Mara, bitter. It well becomes anyone to have his heart humbled under humbling providences. When our condition is brought down, our spirit should be brought down with it. It is then that our troubles are sanctified to us, for it is not our affliction itself, but our affliction rightly borne, that does us good.

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But after all, so far as this life is concerned, is it not better to be called Mara than Naomi? Is there nothing good in this change of names? Which one will likely bring more future blessings? We should not, of course, seek trouble merely for the sake of enduring it; but in this study we are endeavoring to deal with what is likely to come in an average life. In order for life to be pleasant and sweet to a man, as we ordinarily understand those terms, he must always have his own way. He must be at full liberty to select his studies, pursuits, pleasures, and companions. He cannot endure to be disappointed, thwarted, or foiled. He must be free to enter the land of Moab and drink deeply of its snares, lusts, and temptations. And what is the inevitable result? In his abundance he forgets the God who gives all, and who intends that his blessings be used in a different way and for a different purpose. But when disappointment, failure, and affliction confront him, it is then that he learns that it was never intended for him to have his own way in life. And in this experience he sees two wills in conflict, the divine and the human, God's and his. He realizes that he has been walking in the light of his own eyes, and not after the will of the Almighty. He sees that if he continues to follow this course the conflict must end, as far as he is concerned, in future and unutterable loss. But perceiving the vanity and emptiness of earthly things, he comes to himself and discovers that it is far better to submit his will to that of God's, than it will be for him to continue to have his own way. He then, accordingly, leaves the land of his Moab and returns to his Father's house.

The Beginning of Barley Harvest.

The barley harvest, according to Smith's **Dictionary of the Bible**, Robinson's **Biblical Researches**, and other similar works, takes place in Palestine in March and April, and in the hilly districts as late as May; but the period, of course, varies according to the localities where such grain grows. The barley harvest always precedes the wheat harvest, in some places by a week, while in other places

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by fully three weeks. These facts give us some idea of the time of the year in which Naomi and Ruth reached Bethlehem.

The Expositor's Dictionary of Texts, Vol. I, p. 196f.

Matthew Henry's Commentary, in loco.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 26.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 11.

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Questions

Part II—Chapter XII

1. What effect did the coming of Naomi and Ruth have on the people of Bethlehem?
2. In what sense were they "moved"?
3. What did Naomi request the women to call her? Why?
4. What trait of character did she manifest in her sufferings?
5. What were her former neighbors seemingly unable to see, both in themselves and in Naomi?
6. What important effect does time have on a normal man's attitude?
7. Does the thoughtful man really see the hand of Providence in many of his sorrowful experiences? Give reasons for your answer.
8. Did Naomi manifest the correct attitude in asking that she be called Mara instead of Naomi? Why?
9. Wherein does the real benefit in an afflicted state lie?
10. In view of the usual experiences of life, which is likely to bring the greater degree of real happiness, Naomi or Mara? Give reasons for your answer.
11. What is usually meant by a "pleasant and happy life"?
12. What will submission to the will of God always bring one?
13. Can you think of a classic example that illustrates the principle herein set forth?
14. About what time of the year did Naomi and Ruth reach Bethlehem?
15. How long did it probably take them to travel from Moab to Bethlehem?

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Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Why Is It Easier to See Changes in Those from Whom We Have Been Separated Than It Is to See Them in Those with Whom We Live?
2. In What Way Is Unselfishness a Sign of True Love?
3. The Kind of Life That Is Calculated to Bring the Greatest Happiness to Man? Cf. Prov. 30:8, 9.
4. How Much of a Man's Life Is Covered by the Law (Will) of God?
5. The Agricultural Life of the People of Palestine.

GLEANINGS FROM PART II

CHAPTER XIII

GLEANINGS FROM PART II

Providential Guidance.

We should learn that the hand of the Lord is in everything that pertains to his children. We may not always be able to recognize that fact, however. "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28.) "And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God. . . . And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." (Gen. 45:5, 8; 50:20.) There are secondary causes, to be sure, which help to bring about a given condition, as seen in the experience of Joseph, but the hand of the Lord is always in them working out his purposes through their operations. Not even a sparrow "shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (Matt. 10:29, 30.)

Thus, by accepting the doctrine of providential guidance, we have an antidote both to pride in the time of prosperity, and to despondency in the season of adversity. For if prosperity comes, we may be sure, that it came from God; and if adversity befalls us, we likewise may know that it, too, has been sent from God. And since God is love, and has demonstrated his love by the sacrifice of his Son upon the cross, we may be sure that if we are his people in Christ, he cannot mean anything but love to us, no matter what he may permit to come upon us. Naomi was right, therefore, in tracing all her changes in life to God, but she erred in ascribing any bitterness to him in his treatment of her. Then, "rest in Jehovah,

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and wait patiently for him." Let him finish his work in us before we presume to say that he is dealing bitterly with us or testifying against us, for this is one instance in which the otherwise most questionable doctrine is true, that "the end justifies the means;" and when we get to the end of the way, we will exclaim, "He hath done all things well."

Frankness with Others.

Young people, and all others, as for that matter, should learn to be frank in dealing with one another. Naomi, of course, wanted her daughters-in-law with her; but she preferred to place the darker side of the picture before them, so that if they were disappointed it would be because things were not as bad as they had expected. Naomi, therefore, could not think of permitting her daughters-in-law to go on with her, without telling them what was before them. If she had not done that, and they had continued their journey with her, then on their first experience of hardship they might have upbraided her for her selfishness and cruelty in dealing with them. She, accordingly, put everything aside and told them the truth. She told them the worst, so that if they should go on with her and were compelled to endure that, they could not say that she had painted things all too rosily. If they were to be disappointed at all, she preferred that it should be in finding things better, and not worse, than she had indicated. This question, therefore, is one of great importance, which is not, in all probability, sufficiently considered by most people. When two people are in negotiation, it frequently happens that one of them is determined simply and only on the success of his proposition. And, acting like some attorneys, he exaggerates all that will count, as he thinks, for his side, while at the same time keeping altogether out of view or depreciating everything that would be against it. The result, therefore, if he carries his point, is sure to be disappointment and estrangement.

GLEANINGS FROM PART II

The Value of Decision.

Look at these words: "And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking unto her." Thus, Ruth's firmness put a stop to Naomi's entreaties. That is usually the case. When Paul expressed his determination to go up to Jerusalem, despite the tears of his friends, they ceased their importunity and said: "The will of the Lord be done." And if a man is known to be determined in his stand for Christ, his antagonists will no longer assail him. There is, perhaps, nothing in the use of which men are more discriminating than in entreaty, argument, or influence. So long as the object of their solicitude is wavering, they will bring all their batteries to bear upon him, for there is still the hope that he will yield to them; but when he comes out openly and determinedly for Christ, they will waste no more effort on him. They will leave him henceforth alone, and attack someone else. It requires an effort to make a decision, but after it is made, it will act as a safeguard against assault. The attack is reserved for those who are as yet undecided, but decision silences all further importunity. So long as a vessel has no flag at her masthead, the sea-robber may think it safe to attack her; but let her hoist the flag of this nation, and that will make the would-be assailant hesitate. In like manner, the hoisting of the banner of the cross over us, being the symbol of decision, is an assurance of our protection against the evil one.

Amiability versus Devotion.

The story of Ruth shows us the difference between mere amiability and true devotion. Orpah was a good, kindly dispositioned young woman, thoroughly amiable, very friendly to her mother-in-law, but she was not willing to make any great sacrifice for her. When it came to the point where she had to choose between the utter sacrifice of herself for Naomi and the return to her mother's house, then, though amiable as she was, she went back to Moab. But Ruth's devotion was free from

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all selfishness, and, at whatever sacrifice, she was determined to go with Naomi to Bethlehem. Now, without pronouncing any condemnation upon Orpah, the two widowed sisters may be taken as types of two classes in their relation to Christ. On the one hand there are some who allege that they are not opposed to the gospel. Rather, on the whole, they think well of it. They attend its ordinances. They are its friends up to a certain point. But after a time they come to the forks of the road, the place where they must either part with Christ and his salvation, or give up some heart-idolatry which they have long cherished, and there they halt. They are not willing to give up that, even for the Son of God. They have amiability, but not devotion—their center is self, instead of Christ. But there are others who will follow the Lord, no matter what the cost or sacrifice may be; for it is the Lord they are thinking of and are devoted to, and not themselves. Now, to which of these classes do we belong? Are we unwilling to renounce self for Christ? Then let the words of Ruth help us. Let us cleave fast to Christ, for he is going to a land—the home of joy and love. His lodging is in a chamber whose window opens toward the sunrising, the name of which is Peace. His people are a happy people; his God is a faithful God; his death is a glorious death; his burial is a hopeful burial, to be followed by a glorious resurrection. There is not another concerning whom these things can be said with truth—therefore cleave to him through good report and through evil, and he will give you an abundant entrance into his Father's house on high.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 28ff.

GLEANINGS FROM PART II

Questions

Part II—Chapter XIII

1. How far-reaching is the operation of "Providence" in the lives of the Lord's people?
2. Show the effect the acceptance of that doctrine has on both our pride and despondency.
3. Was Naomi right or wrong in ascribing all the changes that came in her life to God? Give reason for your answer.
4. What is the value of frankness in dealing with others?
5. What can you say of the wisdom, or lack of wisdom, displayed by Naomi in placing the real facts before her daughters-in-law regarding their proposed journey with her? Discuss fully.
6. How are matters of this kind frequently handled by many people today?
7. What effect does decision have on one's self? On those about him?
8. What is the difference between "amiability" and "devotion"?
9. In what way is "selfishness" related to them?
10. What may we learn from the attitude of Orpah and Ruth regarding the relation of many toward Christ?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Bible Doctrine of Providence.
2. Why Are So Many People Unwilling To Be Frank with Others in Matters Pertaining To Their Vital Welfare?
3. The Value of Decision in Character Building.
4. The Merits, or Demerits, of Repetition in Discussing and Learning Bible Truths, Such as Those Contained in the Chapters on "Gleanings"?
5. Effective Methods of Bringing One from Mere "Amiability" to True "Devotion".

PART III
AMONG THE GLEANERS
RUTH 2:1-23

CHAPTER XIV

ADJUSTING ONE'S SELF TO CONDITIONS

Meeting an Emergency.

When Naomi said that the Lord had "brought her home empty" she was using no figure of speech, for she was destitute and without means of support. Her only hope was in her daughter-in-law, now a stranger in a strange land. But Ruth was a beautiful character, as beautiful away from home as she was at home, as winning in Bethlehem as she was in Moab. No sooner was she settled in Bethlehem than she was found in the fields of Boaz, gleaning after the reapers. Not only is there romance here, but romance wedded to reality, a combination of Mary and Martha. It was Ruth herself who suggested that she go out in the fields to glean, a very lowly task, indeed. It was not the honorable task of the reaper, but that of following the reaper and gathering up the fragments, the humble place of the widow and the orphan and the very poor.

Thus, a new honor was assigned to Ruth for entering those harvest fields. She took her place among the old and the sad and the poor. She was evidently too proud to beg, but proud enough not to grumble. However, she was not too proud to do the bit of honest work which the great Taskmaster seemed to have assigned her in his great household, wherein he bids everyone work, with heart or brain or brow of sweat. She was meek and lowly in heart, and accepted the position of one of God's poor, and her eyes waited upon the Lord her God, until he had mercy on her.

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What if thy plot in the garden of life
Is stony and poor and small?
What if it will not yield for thee
Roses and lilies tall?

'Tis the plot the Gardner gave to thee:
Tend it with loyal care;
And in the wonderful harvest time,
Who knows what it may bear?

If only one fair, immortal fruit
Perfects beneath thy touch—
He that is faithful in that which is least
Is faithful also in much.

—Selected.

Gleaning.

“And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleaning of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am Jehovah your God.” (Lev. 19:9, 10.) “When thou reapest thy harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be for the sojourner, for the fatherless, and for the widow; that Jehovah thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands. When thou beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the sojourner, for the fatherless and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it after thee: it shall be for the sojourner, for the fatherless, and for the widow.” (Deut. 24:19-21.)

Thus, the law of Moses provided for a liberal treatment of the poor at the seasons of harvest and ingathering. The privilege of gleaning after the reapers was conceded, it seems, not as a matter of right, but as a favor

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granted to particular persons whom the owner desired to befriend. It did not, however, require any special interest to obtain this favor, for Naomi could scarcely have suggested it in the first instance, and Ruth might after that have hesitated to apply for it to a stranger. Dr. Robinson, on two occasions, speaks of witnessing interesting illustrations of harvest scenes similar to those recorded in the Book of Ruth; and in the latter he says that he frequently saw the process of women beating out with a stick handfuls of grain which they seem to have gleaned.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 11.

McClintock and Strong: *Cyclopedia*, Vol. III, p. 883.

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Questions

Part III—Chapter XIV

1. What was the condition of Naomi and Ruth when they reached Bethlehem?
2. How was this situation met?
3. Do you see anything here that adds more luster to the already beautiful character of Ruth? What?
4. Give some facts regarding the status of the gleaner.
5. What attitude of mind is necessary in order for one to adjust himself to his circumstances in life, especially if they are not as he would like to have them?
6. What law did Jehovah give regarding gleaning?
7. Did the owner of the field have anything to say about who might glean after his reapers?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Traits of Character Which Will Enable One To Meet an Emergency Successfully.
2. The Possibilities of "Developing" the Combination of "Romance" and "Reality" in the Life of the Average Person.
3. Why Is One Faithful, or Unfaithful, in Much, If He Is Faithful, or Unfaithful, in Little?
4. Is the Principle of Gleaning Practiced Today? Is It Desirable?
5. The Effects on Society (All Classes) Which Result from Legal Means of Caring for the Needy.

CHAPTER XV

THE WORKINGS OF PROVIDENCE

Definitions.

It is believed that all of God's works may be arranged under three separate headings, namely, natural, miraculous, and providential. It is evident, when all the facts in the case are considered, that God works no miracles today, but that all his works are in the realms of nature and providence. Hall L. Calhoun points out that a work of nature may be defined as an effect produced without a special act of God's will, being simply the result of natural laws; while the work of providence is an effect produced by a special act of God's will through the use of natural means.

Testimony.

"And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28.) This should be enough to convince all who accept the Bible as a divine revelation that God providentially works for the best interest of his people. Men may differ as to the extent of these workings, but surely not as to the workings themselves. "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15:1.) "The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." (Psa. 34:7.) "He is a shield unto them that take refuge in him." (Prov. 30:5.) "But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, persecutions, sufferings; what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered

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me." (2 Tim. 3:10, 11.) It would be difficult, indeed, for one to accept these statements as being true, without believing that Providence protects all those who truly trust God and lovingly obey him, just as surely as Jehovah was the shield and deliverer of Abraham, Peter, and Paul.

Yes, men may differ in their opinions as to how, in what sense, and to what extent, the Lord cares for, guides, and protects his children; but that he does thus care for them is not in the realm of opinion, but is a matter of faith, pure and simple. There can, therefore, be no difference of sentiment on that question, except that some may believe it, some may not believe it, and some may disbelieve it.

Every trusting child of God, then, even though profoundly ignorant of the philosophy of special providence, may still believe in the subject, simply because the Bible teaches it. **Faith is not knowledge, but belief, trust, confidence.** Faith accepts the statements of the Holy Spirit, not because of the ability to fathom the depths of the philosophy thereof; but because the Spirit of the Lord has spoken. Faith that falters where philosophy fails and human reason rebels is not the faith that honors God, moves mountains, and saves souls.

J. C. Ferdinand Pittman illustrates the subject of divine providence with these words: The mind of a pious workman, named Thierney, was much occupied with the ways of God, which appeared to him full of inscrutable mysteries. The two questions, "How?" and "why?" were constantly in his thoughts—whether he considered his own life, or the dispensations of Providence in the government of the world. One day, in visiting a ribbon manufactory, his attention was attracted by an extraordinary piece of machinery. Countless wheels and thousands of threads were twirling in all directions; he could understand nothing of its movements. He was informed, however, that all this motion was connected with the center, where there was a chest which was kept shut. Anxious to understand the principle of the machine, he asked per-

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mission to see the interior. "The master has the key," was the reply. The words were like a flash of light. Here was the answer to all his perplexed thoughts. Yes, the Master has the key. He governs and directs all. It is enough. What need I know more?

I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care.

O brother! if my faith is vain,
If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me that my feet may gain
The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on thee!

—John Greenleaf Whittier.

Her Hap.

The statement, "And she went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on the portion of the field belonging to Boaz," is of more than passing interest. After considering the teaching of the Bible on the subject of the providential care of God for his people, one might be made to wonder by beholding the word "hap" or "happen" in the text. However, it should be borne in mind that the author of the Book of Ruth is describing human actions. It is well for one to be pious enough in his speech for his fellows to be able to recognize evidences of his faith in God, but it is gratifying, indeed, when the language of common life gives proof of that confidence. No one who reads the Book of Ruth would, for a moment, think that the hand of the Lord was not in the events described in that volume.

It is interesting, in passing, to observe the minute providence which led Ruth to the part of the field which belonged to Boaz. She knew nothing of his relationship

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to her husband; it had even escaped Naomi's recollection, until it was brought back to her memory in the evening by Ruth's report of the day's proceedings. But, all unconsciously to herself, she was drawn to the very place out of which her help was to come. The record says, "Her hap was to light on" the Boaz part of the field, or as it might be more literally rendered, "Her hap happened," or "Her lot met her." But the sacred historian would not have us believe that it was all by chance. On the contrary, the great lesson of the book is that "the Lord is ever mindful of his own," and that he leads them through ways that they know not, and to the end which he has designed for them. The writer is simply speaking after the manner of men. He describes all that men see. They cannot trace the workings of the divine hand; they perceive only that which takes place before human eyes; and so the writer says of Ruth that "her hap happened," her lot met her," or "her hap was to light" on the part of the field that belonged to Boaz, but he means for every reader to infer that God had turned her steps there.

"The Portion of the Field."

The field to which Ruth went to glean, though apparently one large and undivided area, was really made up of the aggregate portions of land possessed by those who lived in Bethlehem. Just as, even in modern times, in some parts of Switzerland, the agricultural population live in the villages around which their several patches of land lie—not cut up by hedges or fenced off by stone walls—but forming what appears to be one immense field, though it is very carefully mapped out and divided by landmarks which are perfectly recognizable by the inhabitants themselves; so it was, in the days of Ruth, in Bethlehem. To a casual visitor there would seem to be but one field. However, the portion of each proprietor was sometimes marked by heaps of small stones, and sometimes by single upright stones placed at short but regular intervals from each other. This enables us to understand the Old Testament precept against the removal of a neighbor's landmark, and explains why in the narrative before us the word "field" is in the singular;

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and why it is said that Ruth found her place of privilege in the "portion of the field belonging unto Boaz."

T. B. Larimore: *Letters and Sermons*, Vol. III, p. 155f.

J. C. Ferdinand Pittman: *Bible Truths Illustrated*, p. 250.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 38ff.

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Questions

Part III—Chapter XV

1. Carefully define what is meant by "Providence".
2. What does the Bible teach on this subject?
3. How much knowledge of the question must one possess in order to believe in the reality of "Providence"? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Is what is said regarding "her hap" inconsistent with the teaching regarding God's providential care for his people? Why?
5. How did Ruth come to glean in the field of Boaz, that is, what steps led her there?
6. What can you say of the agricultural life of the people in Palestine during the time of this narrative?
7. What is the meaning of the Old Testament precept against the removal of a neighbor's landmark?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Effect of the Doctrine of Providence on Character Building.
2. Reasons Why This Teaching Is Not Stressed More.
3. Some Effective Means of Getting Others to See What the Bible Teaches on This Subject.
4. Relative Advantages, or Disadvantages, of the Agricultural System of Ruth's Day as Compared with That of Our Time.
5. Does the Law Regarding the Removal of the Landmark Have Any Significance for People Today?

CHAPTER XVI

A GREETING IN HARVEST

Boaz.

Among the farmers whose barley was falling before the sickle was the land-owner Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech, a man of material substance and social importance, one of those men who in the midst of their fruitful fields shine with bountiful good humor and by their presence cause their servants to work heartily. It must have seemed a wonderful thing to Ruth, in later days, that her first timid expedition into the harvest field led her to a portion of ground belonging to this man. From the moment he appears in the narrative we see in him a pleasing dignity and largeness of character. It may be only the easy kindness of a prosperous man, but these traits commend him to our good opinion. Those who have a smooth way through the world are nearly always kind and considerate in their attitude toward their neighbors and dependents. This, at least, is what the world expects of them; and men are always pleased to find a rich and powerful man discharging this obligation in this way.

The Setting .

As has already been indicated, this was the time of barley harvest. It was, in all probability, a beautiful April day, and the barley fields of Boaz near the town of Bethlehem were lying golden under the blue, cloudless sky, as the reapers with their sickles had begun to cut it down. It was, indeed, a picturesque sight, full of color and animation; the light blue and red dresses of the women—which are exactly the same now as they were in the days of Ruth—contrasting with the yellow grain and glowing

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with intense vividness in the brilliant and dazzling sunshine. It is a scene that any artist would love to paint; as, indeed, it has often been painted, for who does not remember some artistic representation of "Ruth among the alien corn?"

The Greeting.

When Boaz came along to join his company, he cried to them, "Jehovah be with you." Mark the courtesy of this great man. He is not above speaking kindly to his workmen. He does not hold himself stiffly aloof from them, nor order them around with haughty indifference, as if he were speaking to an inferior order of beings. He realizes that they, too, belong to the chosen people of God. All alike are children of Abraham and are included in the covenant. They are all members of the same spiritual household, and he, accordingly, treats them with respectful kindness.

But this salutation was no mere one-sided thing, for the reapers answered, "Jehovah bless thee." They did not look with suspicion upon their employer, as if he had been their natural enemy. They recognized that in his prosperity they would also prosper, and that in his adversity they could not but suffer with him. They, therefore, reciprocated his courtesy, and followed his prayer for them by their prayer for him. It was a beautiful sight. One almost feels as if he were transported three thousand years back to Bethlehem, and is permitted to see it with his own eyes. The portly proprietor coming with stately dignity along to his own field, and kindly saluting the laborers in Jehovah's name; and the reapers lifting themselves up simultaneously from their bending position, each with the sweat on his face and the sickle in his hand, returning the salutation with a hearty affection. This, as observed by another, is an intercourse between rich and poor, between master and servant, which we delight to think of in those patriarchal times, but which we so often weep the want of in our own time.

The intercourse between Boaz and his reapers reveals

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to us that the relation between them was not commercial, but patriarchal. He took a warm interest in them and their welfare, while they, in turn, were kindly affectioned toward him. Not only did he supervise the work of his servants, but he also gave them assistance in it. He partook of the same food with them, and quenched his thirst from the vessels which the young men had filled for common use. It was no niggardly hand that dispensed the provisions of the harvest-folk. And, upon seeing a stranger in the field, he gave instructions to the reapers to allow a poor, alien gleaner to glean even among the sheaves where the ears were more plentiful, and to let fall handfuls of grain on purpose that she might pick them up innocently and thus increase her store.

But how little regard some masters have for the feelings of their dependents! What rough and harsh language they sometimes address to them—a cowardly as well as an un-Christian thing; for the servants cannot retaliate, even if they should want to, without running the risk of losing their situation. It is the very essence of Christianity to be tender and considerate, and so regulate our speech and behavior toward them who may be under us, that they may manifest their individuality, act in character, and forget their inferior condition. And no one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, he who humbled himself and became our servant, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and so made service the highest dignity and blessedness of this life, can possibly act otherwise than in the same spirit of meekness and tender courtesy toward others; with that gentleness which makes those who serve us try to do their best; which makes them great and not mean in their own hearts; arouses them to truer self-respect, and leads them into a higher life. The master is as much indebted to the servant as the servant is to the master; even more, if we consider that the servant gives time and health and strength and skill, in return for wages—the life for the means of living—things for which no amount of money can be equivalent, and which can only be paid in kind

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by courteous treatment, kindly sympathy, and due consideration.

Boaz, as we can see in the course of the whole narrative, was habitually a devout man. He set Jehovah always before his eyes, and acknowledged him in all his ways. It was, therefore, a perfectly natural thing for him to introduce Jehovah's name into the midst of his ordinary pursuits. He felt that it was by Jehovah's blessings that the barley crop had grown and ripened under the favoring heaven, until the reapers were enabled to cut it down with their sickles and pile its golden sheaves on the field. And he, accordingly, with his own lips and language set before his servants an example of piety so beautiful that they could not but admire and imitate it.

Abraham, years before this, reckoned the servants of his household as so many "souls." He valued them by what was best in them—the distinctively human and immortal part. A modern master or farmer counts his servants as so many "hands." He values in them only that which serves his purpose, and holds the rest as of little account; therefore, it need not be wondered at that men so rated sometimes behave in a manner irrational, as if they were, indeed, hands and not souls, and break out in those lawless revolts which convulse industry and prove disastrous to all concerned. Long experience, as well as Scripture, teaches us that he who feareth not God regardeth not man; that the fear of Jehovah is the only sure foundation of truth among men in their dealings one with another; and that where this fear is not present the issue is invariably lacking in mutual confidence and is characterized by selfish alienation. The brotherhood of man must grow out of and be nourished by the same root as the fatherhood of God. The commandment is binding, is absolute beyond question, that he who loves God must love his brother also.

The world in these days is full of loud assertions about rights. But in the Bible we read not about rights, but about duties. He to whom all rights belong came not to assert any right, but to fulfill all duty, and he said, "I

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have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15.) Sin is the great divider between man and man, for its essence is selfishness. But Christ came to do away with sin by his own death, and to unite us to God and to one another in himself. He draws men to each other by drawing them to God in himself. Looking, then, on their servants, made in the image of God and redeemed by the blood of his Son, not as "hands," but as "souls," and regarding the workers themselves as more valuable than their work, their thoughtful minds and sensitive hearts as more precious than anything produced by the labor of their hands—let masters say, "We seek not yours, but you." And so the gracious greeting of the master to his servants, in the work shop, the market-place, and the field, will ever be, "Jehovah be with you," and the gracious response of the servants will inevitably be, "Jehovah bless thee."

Robert A. Watson: *The Expositor's Bible—Judges and Ruth*, p. 390.

James Hastings: *The Great Texts of the Bible—Deuteronomy to Esther*, pp. 238, 240ff.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 43ff.

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Questions

Part III—Chapter XVI

1. Give some facts regarding Boaz.
2. Why did his presence have such a wholesome effect on those about him?
3. Tell something of a typical harvest day in the time of Boaz.
4. How many artistic representations of this story can you think of?
5. In what way did Boaz greet those who were in his field?
6. How did they respond to him?
7. Why do you think that they felt as they did toward Boaz?
8. What does this intercourse between Boaz and his reapers reveal to us?
9. Instead of this ideal relationship between employer and employee, what does one often find today?
10. What is the teaching of the New Testament on this subject?
11. Why would Boaz want to introduce the name of Jehovah into the midst of his ordinary pursuits?
12. What difference do you notice in reckoning servants in Abraham's house and now? Why the difference?
13. What effect is often seen as a result of these two attitudes?
14. In considering the relationship now before us, should the emphasis be placed on "rights" or on "duties"? Why?
15. Who has the greatest responsibility in seeking to bring about this ideal situation?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Character and Influence of Boaz.

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2. The Influence of the Bible on Art.
3. What Are Some of the Outstanding Reciprocal Obligations of Employer and Employee?
4. What Is the Basis of Much of the "Labor Unrest" Today?
5. Ways and Means of Getting People to Realize Their Responsibility in the Relationship between Employer and Employee.

CHAPTER XVII

"ECHOES OF MERCY AND WHISPERS OF LOVE"

The Record.

"Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, Let me glean, I pray you, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. So she came, and hath continued even from morning until now, save that she tarried a little in the house.

"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither pass from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they should not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favor in thy sight, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner, And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people that thou knewest not heretofore. Jehovah recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. Then she said, Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord, for thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken kindly unto thy handmaid,

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though I be not as one of thy handmaidens." (Ruth 2:5-13.)

Heart-strings Entwining.

Ruth's modesty captured the heart of the God-fearing and prosperous Boaz—a modesty that was, indeed, the outcome of a genuine humility of heart. She asked him if she might glean and gather grain after the reapers among the sheaves, not claiming the privilege as a right, but looking upon it as a favor. Her grateful and graceful acknowledgment also of the kindness of Boaz when he took notice of the stranger and alien has a fine old-world flavor about it: "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favor in thy sight, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?"

Her love, willing sacrifice, her sublime, beautiful, womanly courage and daring; her devotion unto an aged woman who was bereaved, despoiled, homeless, and who felt herself put away by Jehovah—these drew out the fire and the strength of the soul of Boaz, and caused him to name upon Ruth the name of his God: "Jehovah recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge." Thus, he sets her devotion, the devotion of her pure and human heart, in the soft, rosy radiance of his religion, and it burns and shines with the light and color of all manner of precious stones.

The benedictions of Boaz fell on the heart of Ruth like the showers on the newly mown grass. Hitherto she had known only sorrow and shame. No Israelite had recognized her, or helped her, or shown either any appreciation of her noble love for her mother-in-law or any wish to welcome her to the faith and privileges of Israel. To all but Boaz she was simply "the Moabitess"—a stranger to the Covenant, and an alien from the Commonwealth. But now the valiant soldier whom all Bethlehem praised, who sat a judge and teacher among his people, blesses

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her for her goodness, and assures her of the protection and good will of the God of Israel.

Refreshments.

“And at meal-time Boaz said unto her, Come hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers, and they reached her parched grain, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left thereof.” (Ruth 2:14.) Such meals were in keeping with the spirit and circumstances of the occasion. The harvest season is the time for parched grain. There is nothing said in the text regarding the method of preparing this article of food, but we can get some idea of the process from those who have visited those lands and made a study of their customs. There were, doubtless, different ways of getting the grain ready for consumption, two of which are mentioned by two well-known authors who have written on this subject. According to W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, they first selected a quantity of the best ears, not too ripe and with the stalks attached. These were then tied in small parcels and held over a blazing fire, kindled with dry grass and thorn bushes, until most of the chaff was burned off. When the grain was sufficiently roasted, it was rubbed out in the hand and eaten as there was occasion. Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches*, says that in the season of harvest the grains of wheat, not yet fully dry and hard, were roasted in a pan or on an iron plate, and that they constituted a very palatable article of food, which was eaten with bread or instead of it.

Guarded Kindness.

When the simple meal was over, Boaz lingered behind to tell the young men to let Ruth glean, if she wanted to, even among the sheaves, without reproach, and to bid them let fall purposely a few handfuls, that she might, without the loss of self-respect or without feeling any undue dependence, obtain all the more for her labor. Here, again, we see the delicateness to which reference

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has already been frequently made. Many men spoil a kindness by the clumsy manner in which they do it; but Boaz saw to it that a good service would be rendered Ruth, while she was thinking that she was only helping herself. He managed the affair in such a way as to increase her gleanings, allowing her all the while to think that it was the result of her own industry. Thus, when even came and she beat out with a stick the grain from the ears which she had gathered, she found that she had nearly a bushel of barley to take home to Naomi.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, 12f.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 48f.

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Questions

Part III—Chapter XVII

1. Relate the facts contained in the scriptural setting of this chapter.
2. What did Boaz see in Ruth that caused him to feel toward her as he did?
3. Give a summary of the traits of character which were obviously manifested by Ruth.
4. In what way did Boaz link her devotion to his religion?
5. What lessons can we learn from this regarding our own efforts at leading those about us to Christ?
6. How must the benedictions of Boaz have affected Ruth?
7. Contrast his attitude toward her with the attitude of his fellow-townsmen.
8. What did the reapers and gleaners have for lunch?
9. In what way was it probably prepared?
10. How must Ruth have felt as she ate with them?
11. What effect does eating with others have on friendship?
12. What further instruction did Boaz give the young men regarding Ruth?
13. What additional light do his words throw on his character?
14. What effect did this have on Ruth?
15. Had Ruth's treatment of Naomi been anything like Boaz's treatment of her? When and under what circumstances?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Irresistible Effect of a Beautiful Character?
2. Recognizing the Relation between Beautiful Traits of Character and the Religion of Christ as a Means of Soul-Winning.

ECHOES OF MERCY AND WHISPERS OF LOVE

3. The Emphasis That Christians Should Place on Character Building, Their Own and Others.

4. What Effect Does "Eating Together" Have on Friendship and Character Building? Why?

5. The Effect That Our Kindnesses Should Have on Others.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN DAY IS DONE

Diligence and Rewards.

“So she gleaned in the field until even; and she beat out that which she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned; and she brought forth and gave her that which she had left after she was sufficed.” (Ruth 2:17, 18.) What satisfaction must have come to Ruth after the experiences of that day—her first day to glean in the alien corn-fields! She had worked hard, but her labors had not been in vain. She was lonely and had toiled among strangers, but now she has friends and the admiration of the master of the field in which she had gleaned. Not only did she have the barley, even more than would be expected from one day’s gleaning, to take to her mother-in-law, but she was also able to bring to her peace of mind and rejoicing of heart, food for the spirit, as well as sustenance for the body. Ruth’s own heart was gladdened, too, as they sat together that evening in their humble cottage and talked of the events of the day. A description of a typical day in the harvest field will increase our interest in the experiences of this beautiful gleaner.

During this season of the year one could see the reapers in the fields with their crooked sickles cutting the barley, and, following them, the women and children gleaning and gathering “after the reapers among the sheaves,” as the maidens of Boaz were doing when he came from the city to look after his harvest. And in the evening one might find some weary maiden, that had been permitted to glean on her own account, sitting under an olive tree or by the wayside, and beating out with a stick

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or a stone that which she had gathered, just as did Ruth the Moabitess. C. R. Nichol said that he saw near the city of Bethlehem gleaners in the fields, harvesting the grain in the same way as they did in the days of Boaz. Men with reap hooks gathering in one hand as many stalks as they could easily and rapidly, and then cutting them with the crooked blade; while others were crawling through the fields and literally pulling the grain, most of it breaking at the surface of the ground. In one field he saw women at some distance behind the harvesters, gathering the scattered grain. This, he said, made him think of Ruth, who, in those very fields about Bethlehem, gathered the grain left by the reapers.

A Star of Hope.

When Ruth told Naomi that she had gleaned in the field of Boaz that seemed to have caused Naomi to remember that Boaz was a near kinsman to them. The marginal reading in the American Standard Version of the Bible says, "one of them that hath the right to redeem us." The law of Moses provided that each family in Israel should receive a definite inheritance when the land of Canaan was allotted to the twelve tribes. They were not allowed to sell the land "in perpetuity;" but, "if thy brother be waxed poor, and sell some of his possession, then shall his kinsman that is next unto him come, and shall redeem that which his brother hath sold." (Lev. 25:25.) The land of Elimelech had evidently been mortgaged or sold on the condition just named; and Naomi's attention being called to Boaz, she saw in him the hope of redemption.

Fast by the Maidens.

"And Ruth the Moabitess said, Yea, he said unto me, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, and that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz, to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat

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harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law." (Ruth 2:21-23.) This was a prudent recommendation to Ruth to accept the generous invitation of Boaz to glean in his field throughout the harvest season. If she should be seen straying into other fields, she might not only run the risk of rude treatment, but also displease him by seeming indifferent to his kind liberality. Moreover, it is quite probable that the observant mind of the old matron had already discerned, in all of Boaz's attention to Ruth, the germs of a stronger affection, which she wished to increase. Ruth, on the other hand, was unspoiled by mixing with her new society, quietly pursued her task in the field, and attended her mother-in-law at home with the same fidelity with which she worked for her abroad.

Manners Make the Woman.

Manners mean customary mode of action, habit, or way of doing things. Good manners mean courteous behavior toward others and proper reverence for God. There is nothing that contributes more to the making of beautiful characters, except Christianity and morality, than do gracious manners. Genuine courtesy is admired by all, even by those who do not themselves possess it. Indeed, Christianity and morality, in their highest types, are always accompanied by good manners. These three agree in one. A person who is both Christian and moral but boorish and ill-mannered may be respected, but never admired nor loved. However, good manners do not imply the extreme finickyness or prudery practiced by some, nor the easy carelessness of the slouch, but that same courteous deportment that renders to all their dues in a spirit of graciousness which adds to an act what the perfume adds to the flower.

The Holy Scriptures enjoin courtesy upon all. It cannot, therefore, be neglected without serious loss to the one neglecting it. Good manners are the charm of lovely characters. They furnish the key which opens the door to success in almost all careers. Good manners, like charity, should always begin at home. Proper self-respect

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holds one above the doing of those things which lower him in his own eyes. One who does not respect himself will not have respect for others. Proper self-respect keeps one from doing little spiteful and unbecoming things. It causes one to cultivate a kindly and gracious spirit, which looks for and appropriates only the good and noble. It keeps him from being on the one hand an egotist, or on the other hand a mere groveler.

Manners show themselves most plainly in our conduct toward others. Proper courtesy toward others will protect us from the coarse familiarity which breeds contempt and also from the icy coldness that grows out of selfishness, or too much self-esteem. No young lady who makes herself common by allowing cheap liberties to young men will ever keep her own or their respect. An air of sacredness, forbidding familiarity, goes along with every well-bred girl. There is no other quality or trait of character quite so much admired by men as that modest reserve which every well-trained young woman has. Nothing else cheapens a young woman quite so quickly as that careless looseness of putting herself down on an equality with men and boys, and allowing them to treat her in a cheap and familiar way. Indeed, her very person should be too sacred to allow common contact with any part of her body, even her hands. Men usually value a woman as she values herself. If she holds herself in a cheap manner, they will hold her so, too. It is a great privilege for a girl to be trained where ladylike deportment is the practice of all. In no other way can she acquire that air of womanliness which is her greatest charm. Much of the ill manners is caused by ignorance of what is really proper. Ill-informed people like loud colors and noisy conduct; while on the other hand, cultured people are never flashy in dress nor loud in conduct. It is difficult to estimate in money the value to a girl of associating with really cultured people, until she herself becomes so habituated to that type of conduct that it will become natural to her. Such a girl is worth more than her weight in gold, and she will, indeed, be a thing of beauty and a joy forever to those about her.

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There is no finer work than that of training the future wives and mothers of our country to be moral, Christian, and courteous.

Hall L. Calhoun: *Manners Make the Woman.*

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary, in loco.*

Ellicott's *Commentary, in loco.*

WHEN DAY IS DONE

Questions

Part III—Chapter XVIII

1. What was the result of Ruth's first day's gleaning?
2. What else did she give her mother-in-law?
3. What effect did the day's experience have on Ruth?
4. Give a brief description of a typical day in the harvest field.
5. What came into Naomi's mind when she was told of Boaz?
6. What was meant by redeeming one?
7. What advice did Naomi give to Ruth and why?
8. What is meant by the term "manners"?
9. Discuss the effect that manners have on character building.
10. In addition to good manners, what else is necessary in order to have a beautiful character?
11. Where is the place to begin to develop good manners?
12. In what other relationship do manners show themselves?
13. Discuss the effect that manners have on those of the opposite sex.

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Place and Dignity of Honest Toil.
2. On Which Did the Day's Experiences Have the Greater Effect, Naomi or Ruth?
3. The Attitude of the Young toward the Advice of the Old.
4. The Law of Inheritance among the Hebrews.
5. The Most Effective Way of Developing Good Manners.

GLEANINGS FROM PART III

CHAPTER XIX

GLEANINGS FROM PART III

How a Change of Circumstances Reveals Character.

It might very properly be said that Ruth's poverty was an unveiling of her real nature. If she had always been prosperous in material things, we might never have known her as we do, and the world might never have loved her as it does. Unless the diamond is subjected to severe cutting, its purity will never be made manifest. However, not all people react to misfortune like Ruth did. Sometimes the very opposite is true. This is apparent on every hand during days of unemployment and trouble. If, during the days of prosperity, people do not give thanks to God and trace their blessings to him, no surprise should be occasioned if such people try to place the blame for their adversity on God and their fellow men. But, as has been observed, the finer the nature originally is, the more nobly does it come out when the individual is required to "take a lower place" at the world's banquet table.

The widow who, when bereavement has changed all her fortunes, goes forth to earn bread for her household with her own hands; the daughter who was once accustomed to all that wealth could purchase and the doubtful privilege of unbroken ease, turns her accomplishments into a means of support for her aged parents or other dependents; these, and such as these, reveal in new circumstances new graces—graces that are sturdy virtues, that shine with an unborrowed splendor, and are beautiful in the sight of God. There certainly is no humiliation in all this. The brave toilers have made the worst drudgery sublime, and they have risen to a grander dignity than all the wealth the world could confer.

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Their friends and neighbors may have considered their lot a misfortune, and they may call it the Valley of Humiliation; but they, like Christian, have met an Apollyon there and have seen a vision of angels, which caused them to lift their voices in happy song. Indeed, there are compensations even in this world of which we little dream, for God sets one thing, and frequently a better thing, over against another in human experience. Riches fly away, but character is developed. We are compelled to work, but out of work springs our truest joys. Our life is paradoxical, but without contradiction. We are made the least that we may become the greatest; and the way down, with God as the guide, is always the road to exultation.

Tho' many disappointments around my path may fall,
I'll call them "his appointments," for he is ruling all.
He notes the smallest sparrow, he hears his children pray;
And by and by, in mercy, he'll wipe all tears away.

—Mrs. J. M. Hunter.

But although the change in Ruth's circumstances here was from comfort to penury, one cannot help observing that there is a similar revealing power, so far as character is concerned, in a sudden rise from poverty to affluence. This latter condition, as in the case of Hazael, has shown a hard, ambitious cruelty in a man, in whom the existence of such a disposition was never even suspected. The acquisition has developed selfishness rather than liberality, and the possession of power has given opportunity for its arbitrary exercise. While again, in others it has seemed to sweeten them, and to bring out a spirit of kindness. It all depends, therefore, on the character of the person to begin with; and that, in turn, depends on the relationship between him and God in Christ. So then, if we would be prepared for anything that God's providence may bring us; if we would not be injured in that which is our truest self, either by sudden prosperity or by unexpected adversity, we need to look well to our piety; we need to cultivate close and intimate fellowship

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with the Lord; we need to have the equalizing influence within us of the Holy Spirit; we need, in one all inclusive phrase, to have the soul ballasted with Christ, and then no sudden squall or change of wind, whether from plenty to poverty or from poverty to plenty, will endanger or submerge us. Either condition will capsize us without him, but with Christ in the boat beside us we are always safe.

The Fellowship between Employer and Employee.

During these days of commercialism the question of the relation between capital and labor furnishes an ever-present topic for serious consideration on the part of those who would see Christ magnified among men. The questions of wages, hours, working conditions, etc., present problems, the solution of which demands the best that is in men on both sides. The teaching of Jesus, if followed, will bring about that ideal condition which existed in the fields of Boaz. The Apostle Paul expresses that teaching in the following words: "Servants, be obedient to them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not in the way of eye service, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men: knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him." (Eph. 6:5-9.)

Rights and Duties.

The revolutionary school of thought always forgets that right apart from duty is a compass with one leg. The action of mere right inflates an individual, fills him with thoughts of self and of what he thinks others owe him, while it ignores the other side of the question, and

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extinguishes his capacity for devoting himself to a common cause. (Amiel.)

Under His Wings.

“Jehovah recompense thy work, and a full reward be given you of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge.” (Ruth 2:12.) The faithful child of God can do no better now than commend to all who need such blessings the protection of those outspread wings. Everyone must trust somewhere and in something. The prime question, therefore, is, “In what am I trusting?” No wings but those of God can cover one in the time of trial and in the day of judgment. Therefore, it should be the privilege of everyone to get beneath them at once, while the opportunity is his. There should be no delay, for the time may come when he shall say, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. 23:37, 38.)

Under his wings I am safely abiding;
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild,
Still I can trust him: I know he will keep me;
He has redeemed me and I am his child.

Under his wings, what a refuge in sorrow!
How the heart yearningly turns to his rest!
Often when earth has no balm for my healing,
There I find comfort, and there I am blest.

Under his wings, O what precious enjoyment!
There will I hide till life's trials are o'er;
Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me;
Resting in Jesus I'm safe evermore.

—W. O. Cushing.

Confidences and Influences of the Home.

There are few things in this most interesting story that are more beautiful and beneficial than the frank

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and simple talks between Naomi and Ruth, in the confidence of domestic **abandon**, before they retired for the night. It was then that the daughter made the mother sharer in all her experiences of the day, and the mother followed up the communication with practical suggestions for the morrow. It is not necessary that one approve in every particular the counsels which Naomi gave Ruth, before he can see the value of such a household custom; and if one is allowed to speak alike from observation and experience, he would, doubtless, say that the happiest hours of home life are those in which parents and grown-up children sit together in winter evenings by a cheerful fire, and in the summer in the cool, dim twilight, and tell each other where they have gleaned, with whom, and with what success they have wrought throughout the day. Nor is the happiness of such fellowship all the good that there is in such an experience. It unifies the household, giving to all a deep and living interest in the experiences and successes of one another, and so helping to counteract that tendency to utter individualism which is one of the greatest evils of our modern life. Too often the members of the same family are nothing more to each other than sharers in the same abode. They go outside to have their confidences with strangers, the parents and brothers and sisters are among the last to know of any unusual experience through which they have been brought. Thus, the home becomes a little more than a small hotel, and the helpful counsel of the parents and other members of the family is entirely lost. It is certain that many of the young people who go astray in modern business and society might have been kept from evil courses, if they had only utilized the blessings of this home cabinet; while, on the other hand, the hearts of the parents would have been kept fresh and healthy, if their children had but made them partakers of the details of their doings of the day. The most natural thing in the world for a little child to do is to tell where he has been, and what he has been doing; and when he grows up into manhood there is something wrong with him, or something wrong at home, if that healthy custom is not continued. Either he has begun to

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go to places of which he is ashamed to speak, or his parents and the other members of the family have not been careful to maintain the happiness of the home to such a degree that it will be in his estimation more attractive than all other places that might claim his interest. Then, too, not everyone is as careful as he should be to manifest that sympathetic interest in the personal experiences of others, especially if they are such as do not please the ones to whom they are told. They may have been unavoidable and may have caused the one involved great concern. When, therefore, he relates what he has done or what has happened to him, if he is criticized or does not receive the proper interest, he may decide that it will be best not to say anything about it to others. If one is willing to make known what he has done or what has been done to him, the others should be willing to see that he is properly rewarded for his willingness to take them into his confidence.

Let everyone, then, who, like Ruth, must be away from home all the day, engage in nothing and go to no place of which he would be ashamed to speak in the evening to his father, mother, or sisters; and then let the parents and other members of the family vie with each other in their efforts to make home happy for those who are pulling at the business oar, and "toiling in rowing" all the day. Why should the members of the family reserve their winning smiles and patient attention for some outside party or the casual visitor, and show themselves petulant, discourteous, disobliging, and generally unamiable to those of their own household? Such people should realize that much of the moulding of the character of those they love are in their hands. If they should fall into evil ways, what will those who should have done better say to the Lord at the last day, when he asks, "Where are your brothers?" Perhaps if they had been willing to make themselves more attractive to them, they might not have been wanderers from their fathers' houses.

The young people who are still blessed with home life should be thankful that they still have their parents to whom they can go with all their problems, and who

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are still able and willing to be their advisers. Let all such see that they despise not their wisdom, nor trample upon their love. They will never know the worth of them until they lose them; and then what misery will come to them when they remember that they slighted their counsel and made light of their affection while they lived.

Parents, too, have a solemn responsibility here. They should not allow themselves to seem to be troubled when their young people come to them for advice, nor regard their affairs as too insignificant for them to be interested in. They should, therefore, hear them with patient and loving attention, and give them the best advice that they can command. Let them encourage them to come to them with all their problems, and beware of drawing the cord of authority so tight that it will snap, and leave them without so much as influence. They should remember that as young people grow to manhood and womanhood they must be guided rather than governed; and if they would gain their confidences and keep them, they will succeed best when they seem least eager to demand them as a right. Someone has wisely said that young people, conscious of growing personal responsibilities, will not tolerate being treated as mere children, and will resent what appears to them as unnecessary restraints. But it is possible by wise management to obtain all desirable information without a display of authority, and without arousing antagonism. Knowing the tender and sympathetic interest of their parents' hearts in all their experiences, sons and daughters will delight to return home and voluntarily tell all the story of the day, incidents humorous, vexing, or encouraging, and those fireside reviews of life will be the most delightful part of their time.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 49ff; 71ff.

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Questions

Part III—Chapter XIX

1. In what way does a change of circumstances reveal character?
2. Do all people react favorably to misfortune? Why?
3. If one doesn't recognize God in prosperity, what is likely to be his attitude toward him in adversity?
4. In view of the teaching of the Bible on the subject of God's care for his children, how should they regard what the world frequently calls misfortune and disappointment?
5. How does the opposite condition, the rise from poverty to wealth and influence, sometimes affect people?
6. How should one be prepared for any condition that may come upon him?
7. Why do we have a problem regarding the relationship between employer and employee?
8. What is the only sure way of solving that problem?
9. How do "rights" and "duties" stand related?
10. What is meant by being "under his wings"?
11. Why must everyone trust in something?
12. What do you think of the frank and simple talks that Naomi and Ruth had in their home?
13. What effect does such a practice have on the household?
14. If this practice is natural for a child, then why isn't it continued by older people?
15. How can parents best encourage this custom?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Place of "Trial" in Character Building. Cf. James 1:2-4.

GLEANINGS FROM PART III

2. In View of the Value of Adversity in Character Building, Why Do People, as a Rule, Feel as They Do toward It?

3. Have the Conditions Existing Between Employer and Employee Improved During the Past Generation?

4. Is It Possible for One to Be Wholly Without Religious Influence?

5. The Effect of Frank and Simple "Home Talks" on Character Building.

PART IV
AT THE THRESHING-FLOOR
RUTH 3:1-18

CHAPTER XX

SEEKING FOR REST

Unselfishness Reciprocated.

Naomi was profoundly impressed by the extraordinary favors shown to Ruth by her dead husband's kinsman, and she saw in them an answer to her prayers and a promise of future blessings. As the days of harvest passed, and evening by evening Ruth returned with her store of grain and with fresh stories of unflinching kindness which she had experienced, Naomi formed a resolution in her mind for the welfare of her devoted daughter-in-law who had followed her into a strange land, and was here toiling to maintain her. Boaz, she had already told her, was "one of them that had the right to redeem" them.

The unselfishness of these two women, in their consideration for each other, has been admired by all who have read this lovely story. While the women were in distress, it was Ruth who led the way; but when hope grew large, it was Naomi. When hardship was to be endured, the mother submitted her will to that of the daughter, for Ruth was not sent to glean in the fields, but went of her own accord; but now when the endeavor was to secure joy and happiness held out in prospect, the daughter yielded in all things to the direction of the mother. The thought of labor for the mother originated with the daughter; but it was the mother who formed plans for the happiness of the daughter.

A married life is, or should be, a state of rest to young people. Their wandering affections are then fixed, and the heart must be at rest. Those are giddy, indeed, whom marriage does not compose. That which should be de-

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sired and designed by those who enter into the marriage relationship, is, that it may be well with them; and this, in turn, requires that they choose well, for if they do not, their married life, instead of being a rest to them, may prove to be the greatest of uneasiness. Parents, in training and advising their children for their future relationships, should always have this goal in their minds, namely, that it may be well with them. And, let it always be remembered, that is best for us which is best for our souls. It is the duty of the parents, therefore, to seek this kind of rest for their children, and to do all they can to prepare them in heart and life for it.

The Near Kinsman.

The family relationship among the Hebrews was very close. If an Israelite should become poor and sell his land or himself, it became the duty of the nearest of kin to redeem that which had been sold. "If thy brother be waxed poor, and sell some of his possessions, then shall his kinsman that is next unto him come, and shall redeem that which his brother hath sold. . . . And if a stranger or sojourner with thee be waxed rich, and thy brother be waxed poor beside him, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner with thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family; after that he is sold he may be redeemed: one of his brethren may reedeem him; or his uncle or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be waxed rich, he may redeem himself." (Lev. 25:25, 47-49.)

If a man had wronged another and sought to make restitution, but found that the party whom he had wronged was dead and had no son living, it fell to the lot of the next of kin of the injured person to represent him and receive the reparation. (See Num. 5:5-8.) If a man should be maliciously murdered, then "the avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death, when he meeteth him." But, if the slaying should be accidental, then the near of kin, the avenger of blood, was expected to pursue the slayer to the very gate of the city of

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refuge. (See Num. 35:9-34.) If an Israelite should die without children, leaving a widow behind him, it became the duty of his brother to marry his widow and raise up seed to his deceased brother. "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married without unto a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the first-born that she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother that is dead, that his name be not blotted out of Israel." (Deut. 25:5, 6. See also verses 7-10.) Custom seems to have extended this to the nearest of kin, if there was no brother. It was to this law that Naomi now thought of appealing. Ruth, indeed, was a stranger and a foreigner, and her claim upon the law of the Israelites might easily have been evaded; but, because of the kindness shown her by Boaz during the harvest season, Naomi was inspired to make the attempt.

The Plan.

"And Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing-floor. Wash thyself, therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the threshing-floor, but make not thyself known to the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest I will do." (Ruth 3:1-5.)

In view of this most unusual, and, to us, very questionable, incident, it may be well to introduce the testimony of a number of witnesses, in an effort to understand this situation, although they may in some instances overlap each other.

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“The plan was daring and appears to us to be at least indelicate. It is impossible to say whether any custom of the time sanctioned it; but even in that case we cannot acquit Naomi of resorting to a stratagem with the view of bringing about what seemed most desirable for Ruth and herself.

“The relations between Naomi and Ruth are to be remembered at this point. Ruth was a stranger in Bethlehem, and in the ways and manners of the land she knew not her right hand from her left. But Naomi was an old inhabitant; she knew about everything, and had such guidance of Ruth that whenever she said, ‘Do this,’ we may be sure that Ruth did it. Not only so, but, under awe of her recently espoused religion, the strangest law and rite of the country would have a sacredness in Ruth’s eyes; and never would she be less inclined to hesitate and question than when some holy mystery was flung around Naomi’s directions. This view of the half-alluring, half-entangling power of religion in her case seems to be both indicated and verified by the instant way in which she replied, when Naomi, with just an insinuation of the Divine sanction, bade her do very strange things: ‘All that thou sayest unto me I will do.’

“Perhaps Naomi knew, or suspected, that Boaz looked with kindness, with respect and admiration, on Ruth. Perhaps, too, she was aware of the two considerations which held him back from seeking a wife in Ruth. These considerations were, as we learn from the third chapter, first, that there was a nearer kinsman than himself, who had a prior legal claim on Ruth; and secondly, that he was very much older than Ruth, and hesitated to place himself in the way of a more suitable and equal match.

“Nor did Ruth suffer loss through the blundering of Naomi, for this interview with Boaz straightened out the difficulty which otherwise would still have caused him to refrain from interfering with their concerns. How differently things might have turned out if he had not been wiser than Naomi and more jealous for his own reputation as well as Ruth’s. He saved the situation for

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both, and to him all the credit is due, not to the woman who devised this plan of bringing them together." (James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible.*)

"We still think, however, that the occasion for making this demand was unusual, and, to a certain degree, indiscreet. This may be gathered from the anxiety which Boaz himself eventually expressed, while doing the utmost honor to her character and motives, that it should not be known that a woman had been there. He must have feared that evil tongues might misconstrue to his or her discredit, a proceeding far from evil when rightly understood. It is not unlikely that when this matter had first been suggested by Naomi, Ruth, as a stranger, had shrunk from making this claim publicly in the harvest-field, and that Naomi had, therefore, to spare her in this respect, devised this mode of enabling her to do so in private, in which she would find less difficulty, seeing that Boaz had already won her confidence by his fatherly consideration for her. It may be that desire to evade one difficulty somewhat blinded this good woman to the danger that may have lurked in the other alternative." (Daily Bible Illustrations, Vol. III, p. 40.)

"Now all this, it must be confessed, seems to us, with our modern ideas, not only exceedingly improper, but also terribly hazardous. It must be admitted, too, that, judged even by the conventionality of those almost patriarchal times, it was unusual, and, as the words of Boaz himself make evident, would have been compromising to the reputation of both if it had been known. But in order to a right estimate of its nature we must take in all that can be said upon the other side.

"We must remember, in the first place, that the proposal was made by Naomi, whose whole character, as it comes out in this book, was marked by devout reverence towards God and purity towards man, and to whom the honor of Ruth was as dear as her own. We cannot, therefore, believe that she would wilfully do that which would endanger her reputation. That would have been a poor

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return for all the self-sacrifice that Ruth had manifested on her behalf.

“Again, we must take it for granted that she knew the sort of man Boaz was. Probably in the years gone by he had been the companion and friend of her husband, and she had then had means of judging of his character. Then, since her return she had been watching him, and perhaps she felt that she could trust Ruth in his hands. Furthermore, we must believe that there had been lying behind all this an interesting history which is here unwritten, and which had come out during these harvest weeks in the evening talks of Ruth after her return from the field, and, perhaps, also, in the visits of Boaz, on occasions, at her humble home. She had been taking notes very diligently all the time, and it may be that the pensive absent-mindedness of her daughter, now that the gleaning season was over, had revealed to her that she was something else than indifferent to her benefactor; while perhaps, there were indications on the part of Boaz that his interest in Ruth was more tender than that of mere kindness and compassion.” (Wm. M. Taylor: **Bible Biographies—Ruth and Esther.**)

In the Threshing-Floor.

“The threshing-floor is,” according to J. W. McGarvey, “a hard piece of ground, made harder by tramping and beating, or, when it can be found of sufficient size, the flat surface of a rock. The grain is laid upon this in a circle from forty to eighty feet in diameter, and then oxen, horses, and mules are driven around upon it until the most of it is shattered out and the straw broken to pieces. Then follows the process of grinding the straw into chaff and disengaging all the grain that may yet be encased in the ear. This is effected by dragging over it a rough slide, usually about three feet wide and five feet long. It consists of three planks of hard timber about two inches thick, laid edge to edge, with two battens nailed across them to hold them firmly together, and one end slightly turned up so that the instrument will slide over the straw. The bottom is bored full of inch

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auger-holes not deep enough to go through, and rough stones of the right size to make a tight fit are driven into these holes deep enough to leave nearly half their size above the surface of the plank. These stones constitute a kind of teeth, and as the slide is dragged round and round the threshing-floor by a horse or a mule, with a man or boy sitting on it, they grind the straw into fine chaff and shatter out the very last grain of wheat. This instrument was used in early times by the Jews, and was probably included in the instruments offered by Araunah to David. (See Isa. 41:15; 2 Sam. 24:23.) It is called the **mowrej**. This mass of grain and chaff is then heaped into a conical pile in the center of the floor, or at a short distance outside the circle, and another bed of the unthreshed grain is laid to go through the same process. I have seen the driver of a **mowrej** lying down on it fast asleep while the horse continued his rounds."

"He Winnoweth Barley To-night."

"The winnowing took place by night in accordance with the agricultural habits of the land at present; for the heat being oppressive by day, the farmers avoid its power as much as possible, and the wind also is apt to be stronger by night than during the day. . . . It might seem strange that a rich proprietor, like Boaz, should be said to have slept at night in such a place; but that is the custom still, rendered necessary by the danger of pillage and the untrustworthiness of the hired laborers. Robinson, speaking of a night spent in the mountains of Hebron, says: 'Here are needed no guards around the tent; the owners of the crop came every night and slept upon their threshing-floors. We were here in the midst of scenes precisely like those of the book of Ruth (3:2-14); where Boaz winnowed barley and laid himself down at night to guard the heap of corn.' (Bibl. Res. II., 446)." (Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.)

The method of winnowing barley and the custom of sleeping at the threshing-floor by night during the season of winnowing is described by Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown in these words: "The winnowing process is per-

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formed by throwing up the grain, after being trodden down, against the wind with a shovel. . . . The farmer usually remained all night in the harvest-time on the threshing-floor not only for the protection of his valuable grain, but for the winnowing. That operation was performed in the evening to catch the breezes which blow after the close of a hot day, and which continue for the most part of the night. This duty at so important a season the master undertakes himself; and, accordingly, in the simplicity of ancient manners, Boaz, a person of considerable wealth and high rank, laid himself down to sleep on the barn floor, at the end of the heap of barley he had been winnowing."

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, 14.

J. W. McGarvey: *Lands of the Bible*, p. 95f.

Lange's Commentary, in loco.

Matthew Henry's Commentary, in loco.

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Questions

Part IV—Chapter XX

1. How did Naomi feel toward the unselfishness of Ruth and what did she determine to do for her?
2. How did they behave toward each other?
3. What should married life be to young people? Give reasons for your answer.
4. What duties do parents have in preparing their children for married life?
5. How may they determine what is best for their children?
6. Tell something of the place the "near kinsman" occupied among the Hebrews.
7. What plan did Naomi formulate for getting this benefit for Ruth?
8. What is your idea of the wisdom of the plan?
9. Do you think any less of either Naomi or Ruth because of what was done at the direction of Naomi?
10. What do you think were the leading motives that prompted Naomi to adopt this method of getting Boaz and Ruth together?
11. Give a description of those ancient threshing-floors, and tell how the threshing was done.
12. Why did they winnow at night?
13. Why did Boaz, the proprietor, sleep there?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Effect of Unselfishness in Character Building.
2. In What Sense Is Marriage a "Rest" for Its Principals?
3. Do You Feel That Parents, as a Rule, Take Enough Interest in Preparing Their Children for Marriage? Why?
4. Name Some Things That They Should Do in Making This Preparation.
5. The Value of a Beautiful Character in Courtship and Marriage.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PLAN EXECUTED

The Narrative.

“And she went down unto the threshing-floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself; and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thy handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thy handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.” (Ruth 3:6-9.)

She Uncovered His Feet and Laid Down.

This incident must have been based on some custom of that age. Adam Clarke observes that “it is said that women in the East, when going to bed with their lawful husbands, through modesty, and in token of **subjection**, go to the bed’s foot, and gently raising the clothes, creep under them up to their proper place. See Calmet.

“On the whole, we must say, had not Boaz been a person of extraordinary piety, prudence, and continence, this experience might have been fatal to Ruth. We cannot easily account for this transaction; probably Naomi knew more than she revealed to her daughter-in-law. The experiment, however, was dangerous, and should in no sense be imitated.” Over against this view, the following is added:

“Singular as these directions may appear to us, there was no impropriety in them, according to the simplicity

THE PLAN EXECUTED

of rural manners in Bethlehem. In ordinary circumstances these would have seemed indecorous to the world, but in the case of Ruth, it was a method, doubtless conformable to prevailing usage, of reminding Boaz of the duty which devolved on him as the kinsman of her dead husband. Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet—a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master's bed. Resting, as the Orientals do at night, in the same clothes they wear during the day, there was no indelicacy in a stranger, or even a woman putting the extremity of this cover over her." (Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown.)

But, however correct either of these views may be, we cannot believe that there was any intention of doing anything that would injure Ruth's character. Naomi was too good, thoughtful, and appreciative for that. Matthew Henry comments on the incident as follows: "What she did, had no ill effect, either one way or the other, so that Naomi was not mistaken in her good opinion of her kinsman. He knew her demand was just and honourable, and treated her accordingly, and did not **deal with his sister as with a harlot**, Gen. 34:31. For, 1. He did not **offer to violate her chastity**, though he had all the opportunity that could be for it. . . . Boaz knew that it was not any sinful lust that brought her thither, and therefore bravely maintained both his own honour and hers. 2. He did not put any ill construction upon what she did, did not reproach her as an imprudent woman, and unfit to make an honest man a wife; she having approved herself well in the fields, and all her conduct having been modest and decent, he would not, from this instance, entertain the least suspicion of her character, or seem to do so; perhaps blaming himself that he had not offered the service of a kinsman to the distressed widows, and saved her this trouble, and ready to say as Judah concerning his daughter-in-law, **She is more righteous than I**.

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“But on the contrary, he commended her, spake kindly to her, called her his **daughter**, and spake honourably of her, as a woman of eminent virtue. She had showed in this last instance more kindness to her mother-in-law, and to the family into which she had matched, than in any instance yet. It was very kind to leave her own country, and come along with her mother to the land of Israel, to dwell with her, and to maintain her; for this he had blessed her (ch. 2:12); but now he says, Thou hast **showed more kindness in the latter end, than at the beginning** (v. 10), in that she consulted not her own fancy, but her husband’s family, in marrying again. She received not the addresses of **young men** (much less did she seek them) **whether poor or rich**, but was willing to marry as the law directed, though it was to an old man, because it was for the honour and interest of the family into which she had matched, and for which she had an entire kindness. Young people must aim, in disposing of themselves, not so much to please their own eye, as to please God and their parents.”

“Spread Therefore Thy Skirt over Thy Handmaid.”

The Hebrew says, Spread thy wing, the wing being the emblem of protection, and is a metaphor taken from the young fowls, which run under the wings of their mothers, that they may be saved from the birds of prey. The meaning here is, Take me to thee for thy wife. The Targum translated the passage in these words: “Let thy name be called on thy handmaid to take me for wife, because thou art the redeemer, that is, thou art the goel, the kinsman, to whom the right of redemption belongs. See ch. 2:20. “Even to the present day,” according to Adam Clarke, “when a Jew marries a woman, he throws the skirt or end of his talith over her, to signify that he has taken her under his protection.”

THE PLAN EXECUTED

Honor before True Love.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you, too, shall adore;
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

—Richard Lovelace.

After Ruth had made her claim, Boaz was put in a different position. He would now see that justice is done her, either by a nearer kinsman or himself. In his heart he was overjoyed. As he saw the matter, she had "showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning." She had at the beginning been willing to leave her father, her mother, her country, and her religion. Now she wants to obey the law of Israel, and to show kindness unto the family of her dead father-in-law. However, Boaz did not merely praise her fidelity and piety; he promised her that, should the nearer kinsman refuse the duty and honor, he himself would redeem her dead husband's name and inheritance. Boaz, in all probability, found it hard to utter the words, "There is a kinsman nearer than I," for obviously by this time, as his allusion to young men indicates, he was deeply attached to this attractive young kinswoman. However, his proposition to give the "nearer kinsman" his legal due, served to emphasize the nobility of his character, his honor, and his integrity, although to recognize that right might cost him no small sacrifice.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, 15f.

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Questions

Part IV—Chapter XXI

1. Tell how the plan was executed.
2. What is your personal opinion as to the wisdom of the action of Ruth?
3. What effect does one's "motive" have in the case of a questionable transaction?
4. What effect did all of this have on Boaz?
5. Are young people justified in seeking to please themselves only in the matter of marriage? Give reasons for your answer.
6. What was the meaning of the expression, "Spread therefore thy skirt over thy handmaid"?
7. How does honor come before true love?
8. How was Boaz affected by the claim that Ruth made upon him?
9. What did he promise to do?
10. In what way did he further show the nobility of his character?

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Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Necessity of a Knowledge of the Customs of Bible Times as a Means of Understanding the Ancient Records.
2. The Place and Power of "Motive" in Character Building.
3. Social Responsibilities Involved in the Marriage Relationship.
4. What Is Involved in "Honor" and What Is Its Place in Character Building?
5. The Effect of a Strong Character in Meeting New Responsibilities.

CHAPTER XXII

PATIENT AND HOPEFUL WAITING

Waiting and Watching.

“And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could discern another. For he said, Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing-floor. And he said, Bring the mantle that is upon thee, and hold it; and she held it; and he measured six measures of barley, and laid it upon her: and he went into the city. And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law. Then said she, Sit still my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not rest, until he have finished the thing this day.” (Ruth 3:14-18.)

Consideration and Caution.

Boaz imposed no hardship on Ruth by sending her away before daylight. He simply did not want to take any unnecessary risks in having her character or his injured. The magnanimity of his soul shines out here with a brilliant luster and a rare beauty which is all too often lacking in otherwise good people today. How easily could he have driven her away and proclaimed before the people his own righteousness! Here was his opportunity to win the praise of men at the expense of one whom he might save. But not Boaz. His soul was too great. Instead, he spoke kindly to her. And even though in his own sight (and had it been known, in the sight of others) she had acted very unwisely, yet he “took care of” her. He did not send her away in shame and disgrace,

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and with a heavy heart; but saw to it that her honor was preserved and her opportunities for doing good were not taken away from her. This humble, working young woman became one of the ancestresses of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

A Mantle of Barley.

"Boaz measured six measures of barley and put it into Ruth's veil. Barley is, in fact, very often eaten by the poor in Palestine; and as to the veil, you have only to look at those still worn by the women to understand what kind of article is referred to in this story. It is merely a long piece of cotton cloth, and I have often seen it used for just such service as that to which Ruth applied hers." (William M. Thomson.)

"Who Art Thou, My Daughter?"

In this singular, yet suggestive, question, Naomi seems to have asked Ruth whether she was still the widow of Mahlon, or the betrothed of Boaz.

Sit Still until Thou Know.

There is a time for one to be active in doing that which is required of him—that which he can do—and having done that, it is just as necessary for him to wait on the Lord for that which he himself cannot do. There are some things beyond the reach of human beings. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"

Delight thyself also in Jehovah;

And he will give thee the desires of thy heart.

Commit thy way unto Jehovah;

Trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass.

—Psa. 37:4, 5.

Shakespeare says:

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will.

PATIENT AND HOPEFUL WAITING

And that Divine Being will shape everything toward the end which he has planned, if he may have our consent. This is the working basis of the whole problem of guidance. Indeed, it greatly simplifies many otherwise difficult questions. It is not the coaxing of a friendly God to keep us along a path we have marked out for ourselves. Rather, it is finding and fitting into the plan which has been lovingly thought out for us, and doing the service which has been assigned to us in the great world-plan. Guidance, therefore, is a matter of finding God's plan for the individual and following it faithfully step by step. A man, then, should aim to have a clear understanding of what God's plan for him is. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." (John 7:17.) The likeness of God imprinted upon the man puts him under a definite obligation to find out the plan which God has for him.

S. D. Gordon: *Quiet Talks on Personal Problems*, p. 157.

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Questions

Part IV—Chapter XXII

1. How long did Ruth remain at the threshing-floor and what did Boaz say to her?
2. How was she received by Naomi?
3. What did Naomi tell her to do?
4. What can you say of the consideration and caution exercised by Boaz?
5. What is so often done in cases like this one?
6. What did Boaz give Ruth to take to her mother-in-law? Why?
7. What question did Naomi ask Ruth and why?
8. What is implied in the request to "sit still"?
9. What is the working basis for the problem of guidance?
10. What obligation in this respect rests upon every child of God?

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Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Did Ruth Violate the Moral Code of Her Day by Remaining All Night at the Threshing-Floor?
2. What Do You Think of One Who Will Endeavor to Exalt Himself at the Expense of Another?
3. To What Extent May One "Involve" the Moral Status of Another in an Effort to Try to Do Him Good?
4. When Should People Sit Still and Wait for the Lord? Illustrate.
5. How May One Best Find the Lord's Place for Him in Life?

GLEANINGS FROM PART IV

CHAPTER XXIII

GLEANINGS FROM PART IV

The True Ideal of Marriage.

Naomi was eminently correct when she said to Ruth: "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" The rest of the wife should be in the affection of her husband, and the rest of the husband should lie in the love of his wife. Each should have comfort in the support and confidence of the other. The husband should always be sure of the sympathy and cooperation of his wife; and the wife should be able to rely implicitly on being understood, trusted, and, if need be, defended, by her husband. They should be so nearly one that whatever comes to one comes to both. Neither should add to the affliction of the other by putting his or her weight on the load that must be borne. Instead, they should divide each other's burdens and double each other's joys. The confidence of each in the other should be so absolute and entire as to give rest to the heart of each, whether in the trials of the business world, or in the "many things" that are so troublous and distracting in the management of the household. Unless this is the case, marriage in that particular instance is shorn of its highest glory, its greatest helpfulness, and its holiest influence. But how often is it far below this ideal! It is too frequently entered upon without knowledge of each other's characters, dispositions, and idiosyncrasies, and from purely secular motives, because of the position which it will command or the advantage which it will bring, and without any thought of mutual helpfulness. And then after a while the illusion is dispelled; disappointment leads to alienation, alienation to unhappiness, unhappiness to divorce, and that, again, in many in-

stances—so little valued are the lessons of experience—to a repetition of the same miserable circle with other parties. What is here said is not addressed primarily against the short and easy methods of obtaining a divorce which is the shame of our country, and which is the twin-sister to polygamy itself; but it is a solemn protest against those unholy alliances and mercantile marriages which so frequently end in divorce. It is also meant to urge young people to view this matter, “not lightly or unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of the Lord.” In the words of another, “I am old-fashioned enough to believe in love, and I am Christian enough to believe that no Christian can be truly happy in an alliance in which Christ is not supreme. Therefore, I would lay down two principles: to all alike I say, do not marry one whom you do not love—that is the law of nature; then to the Christian I add this other: do not marry one who has no love to Christ—that is the law of grace. Comply with these two precepts, and other things will soon naturally and easily adjust themselves; but without these essentials nothing will go right for any length of time. Above all, young woman, never marry an infidel to convert him, or a drunkard to steady him, or a rake to reform him; for if you do, you sacrifice yourself for nothing, inasmuch as you will entail misery on yourself without any certainty of benefiting him. Let the reformation come first, and then there will be more assurance of happiness.”

The Value of Character.

Boaz said to Ruth, “All the city of my people doth know that thou art a worthy woman;” and his conviction that she was, indeed, a noble character led to his interest in her welfare, and, ultimately, to his making her his wife. But Ruth had not been in Bethlehem very long, and the fact that she so soon gained such a reputation speaks volumes for her deportment. Character cannot long be hid. If it is good, it will reveal itself in worthy conduct; but if it is bad, it will become known, in spite of any hypocritical efforts that may be made to hide it.

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It will surely come to light through some little act of unconscious and, therefore, unwatched, evil. Ruth's daily life in the harvest field was enough to let all the people know what kind of woman she was. Thus, character and reputation are closely related. The one is the flower, while the other is the fragrance; but in order to have the fragrance rich, one must have the flower perfect. So, if one would have a good reputation, he must look first to his character; for if the character is what it should be, the reputation will take care of itself. Indeed, even in apparently questionable circumstances, as in the case of Ruth at the threshing-floor of Boaz, the character will come to the rescue of the reputation. How important, then, it is to have a good character! It is not only the highway to success in this life, but it is in itself the highest success. Therefore, cultivate good character; and in order that one may do that in the right way, it is necessary that he unite himself to Jesus by a living and obedient faith; and, having done that, let him add to his faith courage, to his courage knowledge, to his knowledge self-control, to his self-control patience, to his patience godliness, to his godliness brotherly kindness, and to his brotherly kindness love. (2 Pet. 1:5-11.) He then will be a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men (2 Cor. 3:2), and carrying in his deportment the infallible endorsement of the genuineness of his piety.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 75ff.

GLEANINGS FROM PART IV

Questions

Part IV—Chapter XXIII

1. What can you say of the true ideal of the marriage contract?
2. How may confidence be “developed” and “maintained” in this relationship?
3. What are some of the things that people should seek to know about each other before entering the marriage state?
4. How should people always regard their marriage?
5. Is it possible for one to disregard it without sin? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Is the highest ideal of marriage possible without Christ?
7. What two principles, then, should always govern people in seeking marriage?
8. What do you think of the idea of marrying a person to reform him?
9. Point out the value of a good character, as seen in Ruth’s experience at the threshing-floor.
10. What about the person who tries to hide his real character?
11. In what way are “character” and “reputation” related?
12. What is always necessary in order to have a good character?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. What Can You Say Regarding the Emphasis That Is Being Place on “The Ideal of True Marriage” Today?
2. What Are Some Steps That Can Be Taken That Might Improve This Situation?
3. The Difference, if Any, Between Breaking the Marriage Contract and Any Other Contract.
4. Name All the Parties to an Ideal Marriage.
5. The Chief Benefit of a Good Character To One’s Reputation.

PART V
REDEEMING AN INHERITANCE
RUTH 4:1-22

CHAPTER XXIV

AT THE GATE

The Gate.

"Now Boaz went up to the gate, and sat him down there." All the important cities of Palestine were surrounded by walls. This was made necessary as a means of protection both from invading armies and from the assaults of robbers. Of course, it was necessary to have gates for the convenience of those who dwelt within the walls; but we are not to understand that the sole purpose of the gate was for the convenience of those who passed within and without the city. "A city gate," says McGarvey, "is not a mere opening in the wall, with a heavy shutter to close it; but it is a square tower, usually twenty or thirty feet square, and projecting beyond the wall both without and within. The outer entrance is through one side of this tower, and the inner through the side at right angles to it; so that after entering the tower you turn either to the right or the left—usually to the left—to enter the city. This made it more difficult for an enemy to force his way into the city, and it prevents one who is outside from seeing in or shooting in when the gate is open."

"As the sun goes down," says W. M. Thomson, "you see along every converging lane and pathway men and women, flocks and herds, all hastening toward the city gates; for such is the state of insecurity, even at the present day, that nothing left outside and unguarded is safe from robbers that are ever prowling around the country. . . ."

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"In 1834 I resided for several months in this city, and, to pass away the time, frequently came out in the afternoon, 'to the gate through the city, and prepared my seat in the street.' There the governor, the kady, and the elders of the people assembled daily, 'in a void place,' and held an extemporaneous divân, at which affairs of every kind were discussed and settled with the least possible ceremony. But recently from America, I was greatly amused with this novel open-air court, conducted amidst the din, confusion, and uproar of a thronged gateway—men, women, and children jostling each other; horses prancing, camels growling, donkeys braying, as they passed in and out of the gate; but nothing could interrupt the proceedings, or disturb the judicial gravity of the court. The whole scene, with all its surroundings, was wholly Oriental, and withal had about it an air of remote antiquity, which rendered it doubly interesting. Throughout sacred history, poetry and prophecy, the gate is celebrated for and connected with numberless interesting incidents and allusions. It would require a little volume to notice and explain them all; but here we have the thing itself, with 'a void place in the entrance of the gate (I Kings 22:10), like that where Boaz made the elders of Bethlehem sit while he contracted for Ruth, the fair Moabitess (Ruth 4:1, 2); where Eli sat trembling for the ark of God, and fell back and broke his neck when tidings of its capture came (I Sam. 4:18). And here are the two doors of the gate, and the posts, and the bars, and the bolts, like those of Gaza, which Samson tore from their sockets, and on his shoulders carried up to the top of the hill that is before Hebron (Judg. 16:3). And over this gate is a chamber, like that to which David went and wept; 'and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (2 Sam. 18:33).'"

The gate was the place for great assemblies of the people (Prov. 1:21), as they passed into and out of the city. This naturally led to the custom of using the gates for many public purposes, such as public discussions,

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reading the law, and issuing proclamations (2 Chron. 32:6; Neh. 8:1, 3); holding court (Deut. 16:18; 17:8; Ruth 4:11; 2 Sam. 15:2); gathering news (Gen. 19:1), and gossip (Psa. 69:12). Compare, also, Esther 2:19, 21; 3:2. The priests and the prophets seem to have delivered their discourses, admonitions, and prophecies at the gate (Isa. 29:21; Amos 5:10; Jer. 17:19, 20; 26:10).

The open place at the gate of the city was the place where much of the business of the town was transacted. The gate of Bethlehem had already seen a greater part of this story. It had seen Elimelech, with his family, setting out for the land of Moab. It had seen the widowed Naomi, with her widowed daughter-in-law, returning, poor, friendless, and desolate. It had seen Ruth going forth every morning to the harvest field, and it had seen her returning with her gleanings in the evening. It was, therefore, but fitting that the gate should see how it was all to end.

"Ho, Such a One!"

"And, behold, the near kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down." (Ruth 4:1b.) Early in the morning Boaz went to the gate of the city, and sat down and waited for the kinsman of whom he had spoken to Ruth to come by. When he came to the place where Boaz was, he asked him to sit beside him there. Boaz, in all probability, called him by his name, but the sacred historian used a very significant phrase in referring to him. W. M. Taylor observes that "the original words translated, 'such a one,' are very peculiar, and some have supposed that they were an ordinary legal formula, like John Doe or Richard Doe of old English documents; while others have preferred to take them as we take indefinite initials, like A. B. C. or M. N., and the like. They are in Hebrew, 'P'loni almoni,' the former derived from a word meaning to mark out or distinguish, and the latter from a term which signifies to hide; so that both together seem to give the notion

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of one who is indicated, though in a certain sense concealed; and it is interesting to note that he who, as we shall presently see, would not marry Ruth lest he should mar his own inheritance while perpetuating the name of Mahlon, is not even named in this narrative, and has passed into utter oblivion."

The Proposition Stated and Rejected.

"And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the near kinsman; Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth the parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: and I thought to disclose it unto thee, saying, Buy it before them that sit here, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it besides thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." (Ruth 4:2-5.)

Thus accosted by Boaz, this anonymous goel sat down to await developments, wondering, perhaps, what was coming next. His curiosity must have increased rapidly as he saw Boaz pick out ten men of the elders of the city, and place them in formal order, that they might be both witnesses and judges. Every Jewish city was governed by elders, and it may have been that ten were needed to make what we would call a quorum, even as among modern Jews it is said that ten are required to constitute a synagogue. In any case, we may be sure that Boaz knew what he was doing, and proceeded in everything according to the law of the land.

In order to understand all this, it is necessary to call to mind some of the things which have already been advanced regarding the duties of a goel. The Jewish nation was a theocracy, which is to say, Jehovah was the

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King, and all the land belonged to him. It had, according to his direction, been divided among the people, according to their tribes and their families by lot. But they could not do with it as they chose, and it could never be permanently alienated from the family to whom it first fell. If the possessor for the time being became poor he might sell it, but it would finally, during the year of jubilee, revert to him and his heirs, if, indeed, it was not redeemed before that time. If he were able to redeem it before that time he might do so, or if being himself unable, his next of kin might redeem it, if he had the means of doing so. Again, when the owner of the land offered it for sale it was the privilege of the next of kin to become the purchaser, and no other kinsman could buy it until he had formerly renounced that which was by law his privilege. This was the law regarding property; but along with it, and it would seem, closely connected with it, there was also the law of the Levirate marriage, which provided that if an Israelite married and died without children, his brother should marry his widow, and if a son should be born to that union he would take the name of the deceased man and inherit his estate, so that the name of the deceased might be perpetuated and his property not alienated. When the nearest of kin to such a widow was her brother-in-law, the widow and the land, through the operation of the two laws, would go together; but when there was no brother-in-law, and yet a childless widow, the goel who redeemed the land was also, by custom, expected to marry the widow. This, indeed, was not laid down by the letter of the law, but it seems to have been regarded as implied in the spirit of it, and, accordingly, it became the custom among the people.

This last, it seems, was the case of Naomi. In her poverty, and, perhaps, in her desire for the welfare of Ruth, she wanted to sell the land that had belonged to Elimelech for the interval between that date and the year of jubilee. This became known to Boaz. In fact, we may suppose that Naomi had taken Ruth into her confidence, and that Boaz, having learned from Ruth what

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her mother-in-law proposed to do, had seen in that proposal a way to the immediate settlement of the whole affair; for Ruth was as much concerned as was Naomi, because, if a near kinsman should purchase the land, he thereby would become obligated to make Ruth his wife.

"Lest I Mar Mine Own Inheritance."

"And the near kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: take thou my right of redemption on thee; for I cannot redeem it."
(Ruth 4:6.)

It seems that so long as this anonymous goel knew nothing more than Naomi wanted to sell the land, he was quite willing to become the redeemer of it; but when he learned that the purchase also involved the obligation to marry Ruth, he renounced his privilege in favor of Boaz, who was the kinsman next after him. The reason which he gave for this action is expressed in these words: "lest I mar mine own inheritance," and they have been explained to mean two or three different things. Some have supposed that he already had a wife and some children; others, that he feared the risk of losing the perpetuation of his own name in endeavoring to secure that of Elimelech and Mahlon; and still others, that his means were not sufficient to support both Naomi and Ruth and buy the land, too. It is, perhaps, impossible now to say definitely what he meant by the statement. One thing, however, is very clear, and that is that his whole thought was about his own inheritance, and, thus, selfishness was at the root of his decision.

J. W. McGarvey: *Lands of the Bible*, p. 106.

W. M. Thompson: "*The Land and the Book*, Vol. 1, p. 29f.
The People's Bible Encyclopedia, p. 398.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 17f.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 78ff.

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Questions

Part V—Chapter XXIV

1. Give some facts concerning the "gate" of a city of Palestine.
2. What part did the gate play in the affairs of the city?
3. How many interesting events can you name which transpired at the gates of Bible cities?
4. Tell of some of the facts of this story which the gate of Bethlehem had already witnessed.
5. How, according to the sacred historian, did Boaz get the attention of the kinsman who was nearer to Naomi and Ruth than he?
6. What did the expression, "Ho, such a one," probably mean?
7. Give the facts of the proposition as they were stated by Boaz.
8. How do you suppose this kinsman felt as he saw Boaz getting ready to place the matter before him?
9. Why would Boaz exercise such care in doing everything according to the letter of the law?
10. What was the law governing the land-possession of the Israelites?
11. What was a "Levirate marriage"?
12. In what way did the property law and that of the Levirate marriage operate together?
13. How did the anonymous kinsman react to the proposition which Boaz placed before him?
14. What reason did he give for his rejection?
15. What well-known characteristic lay at the root of his decision?

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Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Place of the Gate in the Civic Affairs of the Cities of Modern Palestine.
2. The "Romance" of the Gates of Ancient Palestine.
3. What Well-Known Principle Did the Attitude of This Unnamed Kinsman Illustrate?
4. The Economic, Moral, and Spiritual Effects of the Hebrew Property Law.
5. The Relation of Selfishness To Sin and Its Effect in Character Building.

CHAPTER XXV

THE TRANSACTION CONSUMMATED

Drawing off His Shoe.

“Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, to confirm all things: a man drew off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. So the near kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thyself. And he drew off his shoe.” (Ruth 4:7, 8.)

There is another interesting statement concerning the removing of the shoe, which related to the man who refused to marry his brother's widow and raise up seed unto his dead brother, as provided by the law of Moses. “And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate unto the elders and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother unto me. The elders of the city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face; and she shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto the man that doth not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath the shoe loosed.” (Deut. 25:7-10.)

Bible scholars are not agreed on the question of whether or not the removing of the shoe in Ruth 4:7, 8 has any connection with that which is recorded in Deut. 25:9. In the latter instance, it was pulled off by the widow as a matter of disgrace, while in the former, it seems to have

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been voluntarily removed by the man himself, with no dishonor connected with it. Those who think that there is a connection between the two may be fairly represented by the following quotations.

“His motive for thus sparing his kinsman is not simply, I suppose, either a kindly consideration for a man closely related to himself, or his love for Ruth, but also his conviction that an Israelite, caring only for the letter of the law and not for its spirit, might honestly doubt whether he were bound to marry his ‘brother’s’ widow, when that widow was a daughter of Moab. True, Ruth had come to put her trust under the shadow of Jehovah’s wings. True, she was known as a good and brave woman in all the city of Bethlehem. But nonetheless she was by birth an alien, one of the heathen women with whom the sons of Israel were forbidden to intermarry. The latter was doubtful: if the appeal were pushed too far he might defeat his own end.” (*Expositor*, Vol. II., p. 169.) Others inclined to this view have thought that the distance of the relation—not a brother, but a near kinsman—might have excused him from the penalty, or “probably because the circumstances of the man were such as to render it **improper** for him to redeem the ground and take Ruth for his wife; and because of this reasonable excuse, the **contemptuous** part of the ceremony is omitted.” (See Matthew Henry and Adam Clarke, *Commentary in Loco*, and *The Land and the Book*. Vol. II., p. 42.)

The following quotations will give some idea of the position of those who hold to the view that the drawing off the shoe in Ruth had little or no connection with that of Deuteronomy.

“From the expression ‘formerly,’ and the description of the custom, we infer that it had largely gone out of use when the book was written. The custom itself, which existed among the Indians and ancient Germans, arose from the fact that fixed property was taken possession of by treading upon the soil; and hence taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the

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transfer of possession or right of ownership. From this thought we have the expression, 'Over Edom will I cast my shoe (Psa. 60:8; 108:9), i.e., claim it as my own.' (**People's Bible Encyclopedia**, Article, Shoe.)

"The establishing of a connection with a property is indicated by a man casting one of his shoes upon it. This is based upon the fact that walking upon a piece of ground is a sign of proprietorship. We may recall the Roman custom of bringing before the praetor a clod of earth from the field which one claimed as his property.

"The opposite condition of things, namely, the **dissolution of relations**, is indicated as follows. One person takes off another's shoe (Deut. 25:9), or the wearer removes it himself (Ruth 4:8). The idea at the basis of this act may be explained thus. Seeing that one enters upon the occupancy of a field by treading upon it with his shoes, the pulling off of the shoe indicates the intention of **not** carrying out of this occupancy." (**Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible**, Vol. V., p. 171f.)

Witnesses.

Boaz, with profound and solemn emotion, called on the elders and the circle of bystanders to observe and to remember this legal transfer of rights and duties, expressing himself, however, with legal firmness and precision in these words: "Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses"—thus completing the legal transaction.

A Gracious Benediction.

The elders and the people then broke out into a pro-

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fusion of good wishes which amply verified the statement which Boaz made concerning Ruth in the previous chapter: "All the city of my people doth know that thou art a worthy woman." They raised her to the level of the most famous women in Israel by praying that she might be like Rachel and Leah, the mothers of the tribes of their people. If they had not esteemed her thus, they would not have uttered this prayer. She was, indeed, lovely and pious as a true daughter of Israel. It was a happy day for them both when, amidst the benedictions of all present, they were united in marriage, and next to their joy Naomi's was probably the greatest.

"Like the House of Perez."

This was a very appropriate statement; for from this son of Judah, by Tamar, came the Bethlehemites and the family of Elimelech.

Thou knowest not the glorious race,
Sweet Ruth! that shall be thine;
How many kings thou shalt embrace
In thy illustrious line.

The fountains of Hebraic song
Are in thy heart, fair Ruth!
Fountains whose tides are deep and strong
In deathless love and truth.

The great in wisdom and in song,
The bard of deathless fame,
A mighty and a warlike throng
Shall rise to bless thy name.

And One at last, of lowly birth,
Shall crown thy long increase,
Of lowly birth, yet not of earth—
The glorious Prince of Peace.

Anon.

Yes, thou **Beautiful Gleaner**, lovely and beloved, we, too, greet thee as a mother of the Saviour of men! The

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ideal woman, as we believe, of the Old Testament, we place thee beside Mary of the New, while we bow in lowly reverence before him who is the Son and yet the Lord of both.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, 19.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 90f.

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Questions

Part V—Chapter XXV

1. How were legal matters confirmed in Israel in ancient times?
2. What is signified by the expression, "in former time in Israel"?
3. What other custom regarding the shoe was noted in Israel?
4. Was there any connection between the two practices?
5. Were witnesses to this transaction alone sufficient, or was a written document also required?
6. How did the people react to the deeds of Boaz?
7. What statement did their attitude confirm?
8. To what level did they raise Ruth?
9. What was meant by the statement, "Like the house of Perez"?
10. Tell something of the greatness that was finally reached by Ruth?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Which Is Stronger in Confirming Human Transactions, Moral Witnesses or Legal Documents?
2. Why Do the Customs of a Country Change?
3. The Moral Value of the Good Wishes of Upright People.
4. The Effect of Good Wishes on Character Building.
5. Ruth's Place among the Great People of the Old Testament.

CHAPTER XXVI

"HOME, SWEET HOME"

Inside Glimpses.

Again the curtain rises for one brief moment to give us a sweet glimpse of domestic life in the household of Boaz. We behold Ruth, a happy wife and still a happier mother. We also see Naomi, spending the calm evening of her beclouded life, not separated from the abiding love of her devoted daughter-in-law, but living once more in the new representative of the house of Elimelech. And it is to her, instead of Ruth, that the congratulations of the women are addressed. For the babe, in a very true sense, was hers, the restorer of her life, the nourisher of her old age, the builder up of the fortunes of her house, because in him the great love of her daughter-in-law had become a visible and an embodied fact.

"A Full Reward."

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son." (Ruth 4:13.)

Boaz, yonder in the harvest field, had prayed that this pious proselyte to the Jewish faith might receive a full reward of her courage and stedfastness from the God of Israel, under whose wings she had come to take refuge; and now he has become an instrument of that kindness, which was also an answer to his prayer, and he helped to make his own words good, while Ruth herself now has the command of those servants with whom she had toiled, and of those fields in which she had gleaned.

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He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
And lifteth up the needy from the dunghill;
That he may set him with princes,
Even with the princes of his people.

—Psa. 113:7, 8.

A Restorer of Life.

One of the many fine points of this story is found in the fact that its concluding sentences are almost wholly devoted, not to the young and happy mother, Ruth, but to Naomi, who had suffered so many calamities, and who, by the piety and resignation with which she bore them, had drawn Ruth from the idolatries of Moab to the land and worship of the God of the chosen people. It was Naomi, instead of Ruth, whom the neighbors congratulated upon the birth of Ruth's son, for it was in him that they saw Naomi's goel—Ruth already had Boaz—and they prayed that as he grew up he might restore her to her former happiness, and be the stay and gladness of her declining days.

Obed.

This name means "servant," a fitting name for him who was to be a restorer of life and a nourisher of Naomi in her old age.

Better Than Seven Sons.

No finer tribute could have been paid to Ruth than that which was paid to her by her neighbors and friends after the birth of her child. All feeling of jealousy against the alien who had come among them has been forgotten, and in congratulating Naomi they expressed themselves in this way: "Thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him." Coming from those women of Bethlehem who at first probably envied the good fortune of Ruth and looked upon

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her union with one of their best citizens as a slight upon their own daughters—coming from such neighbors, this statement was a splendid tribute to the qualities alike of head and heart which Ruth possessed.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 20.

Matthew Henry's Commentary, in loco.

Expositor, Vol. II, p. 372f.

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Questions

Part V—Chapter XXVI

1. Describe the final glimpses that we are permitted to behold in the house of Boaz.
2. Why were the congratulations upon the birth of the baby offered to Naomi instead of Ruth?
3. What part did Boaz have in helping to answer his prayer that Ruth might receive a full reward?
4. To whom is the closing part of this story almost wholly devoted? Why?
5. What was the name of Ruth's baby?
6. In congratulating Naomi, what tribute did the neighbors pay Ruth?
7. What consideration adds weight to their statement?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. What Can You Say of the Family Life of Ancient Israel?
2. What Facts Show the Continued Devotion of Naomi and Ruth to Each Other to the End of the Story?
3. How Can We Help to Answer Our Prayers?
4. Methods of Winning Unfriendly Neighbors.
5. What Do You Think Were the Principal Causes That Led the Women to Change Their Attitude Toward Ruth?

CHAPTER XXVII

CONCLUSION—THE PROBABLE PURPOSE OF THE STORY

Royal Lineage.

And so the story closes, not simply with leaving Naomi and Ruth happy in each other, and in Boaz and Obed, but weaving for them an immortal crown of honor in that it makes their intimate connection with David, the "darling of Israel," and with him who was both David's Son and Lord. "Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David;" and of David, as concerning the flesh, came Jesus the Christ, the light of the Gentiles and the Glory of the children of Israel. Thus, the lovely story of Ruth furnishes a fitting background for this royal lineage, ending, finally, in the most noble Character and the greatest Benefactor the world has ever seen.

A Happy Ending.

Not every story that begins as sadly as this one did has so sweet and pleasant an ending. Not always are virtue, piety, steadfastness, and self-sacrifice so visibly rewarded here upon the earth. However, we are not on that account to think any less of the providence of God; for virtue is not to be pursued simply for its reward. Right is to be done for its own sake, or, rather, for the sake of God. Then, when the end shall come—not here, but hereafter—we shall see the righteous judgments of Jehovah vindicated, and forget all else in the "Well done" of an approving Judge.

James Hastings: *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 20.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 91.

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Questions

Part V—Chapter XXVII

1. How does the story of Ruth end?
2. Trace the royal lineage from Boaz to David.
3. Contrast the sad beginning with the happy ending.
4. Are the noble traits of character always visibly rewarded here on earth? Why?
5. Should that make one think any less of the workings of Providence? Give reasons for your answer.
6. What should be one's motive in pursuing virtue?
7. If such a principle governs one's life, what shall be seen at the end of the way?
8. How many traits of a "beautiful character" that were exemplified by the principals of this story can you recall?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Is It True That All Is Well That Ends Well?
2. What Can You Say of the Emphasis the Pious Hebrews Placed on the Royal Lineage?
3. Does the Bible Teach That Rewards and Punishments Are Meted Out in This Life?
4. In What Way Are Rewards and Punishments Related To the Workings of Providence?
5. What Are Some of the Dominant Motives That Should Govern One's Life?

GLEANINGS FROM PART V

CHAPTER XXVIII

GLEANINGS FROM PART V

Secret Marriages.

Everything in the matter of marriage ought to be open and above board. The noble action of Boaz throughout the entire transaction should enable any thoughtful person to see the wisdom of such a course. He was always careful not to infringe upon the rights of another, and he contracted for marriage openly before the elders of his people. There was nothing clandestine about his procedure. There was no run-away match, formally made in secret haste, but faced with the danger of being bitterly lamented in lifelong leisure. He did not go away from Bethlehem to celebrate his marriage, without the knowledge of his family, friends, and neighbors; but, desiring to follow the properly constituted course, he did all things decently and in order. Now here is a fine example for young people in similar circumstances. Of course, there may be exceptional cases, but clandestine marriages, as a rule, are to be condemned. However, if they do turn out well, those who have been a party to them should thank a gracious Providence, rather than congratulate themselves on their own wisdom. There is usually something wrong when either party desires to keep the marriage relationship a secret; and the very suggestion to do so should itself be a danger-signal that ought to bring things to an immediate halt, for as someone has well said, "Whenever there is anything in marriage or in its preliminaries that needs smothering up, the wind is sown, and the whirlwind will need to be reaped." Perhaps one of the chief contributing causes to this evil is the facilities which the state laws, in many instances, furnish for the contracting of such questionable marriages. This also leads to an increase in

GLEANINGS FROM PART V

divorce, as any thoughtful observer can plainly see. There is no better way of dealing with this question than by doing that which the Lord has ordained. The Lord's way has never failed.

The Reward of Self-Sacrifice.

Orpah, as we have already seen, went back to Moab and was never heard of again. Ruth, on the other hand, clung to Naomi and has been elevated to a high position among the Old Testament saints, and has a place among the ancestors of the Lord Jesus. The nameless goel was afraid lest his name should be endangered while he was seeking to perpetuate Mahlon's; but his action in following his own wisdom resulted in the very thing which he feared. Boaz did what that man declined to do, and lo! his name stands in everlasting honor, on the first page of the New Testament! "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:25.) Selfishness outwits itself, but self-sacrifice for the sake of Christ always results in the highest gain. But if we endeavor to make the sacrifice for the sake of the gain, it is not self-sacrifice, but selfishness. It must be made for Christ's sake; and then Christ himself will see to our reward, in fact, he will be our reward.

The moral of this lovely story is very encouraging to unselfish virtue. For while Orpah, whose love was satisfied with the tears and kisses which she gave to and received from her dead husband's mother, forfeited the place which she had partially gained in Israel, and returned "unto her people, and unto her god;" and while the "kinsman" who, in his selfish care for his own interests, withheld what was due to the living and the dead, had his name removed from the book of God's worthies; Ruth, on the contrary, who sacrificed everything that could appeal to a young woman, to the claims of affection and duty, and Boaz, who unhesitatingly did the kinsman's part, have their names written in enduring letters and handed down to the Lord's people wherever his

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word is known, as being worthy of all praise, and as progenitors of that illustrious line which gave kings to Israel through hundreds of years, and from whom was born at last, in the city of David, "a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

It is true that Boaz and Ruth, in their decisions, did not dream of these things, and it is well that they did not. They acted from a profound regard for truth and duty. If they had acted because it would pay, it would have robbed their conduct of its true glory. No one, then, should be urged to be true to truth and duty because it will pay; but everyone should be true to them, if nothing but loss and shame should be the result until the last day of life. However, it should be instructive and encouraging to learn that when brave and devoted souls give up all for the sake of truth and right, God, when they have been tried, and have come forth as gold, meets them in the way of righteousness and crowns them as his own; while all those who place selfish interest before duty, lose all, and perish from remembrance.

The voluntary and wonderful attachment of Ruth to the people of Israel, their land, and their God—an attachment terrified in sorest trials, when all hope seemed gone, and there was but an aged, childless, homeless, and destitute widow to cling to—had its reward in keeping with her intense love, devotion, and disinterestedness. But what was that reward? Behold it first in the favor of and then as the wife of Boaz. Behold it in Ruth the Moabitess as the ancestress of the royal house of David. Behold it in this lovely woman as an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold it in this beautiful story, the Book of Ruth, as it forms a part of the inspired Scriptures—one of the loveliest pastoral productions on record. The less we put our service in the form of bargain and agreement, the more likely are we to be blessed with special richness at the end.

But go to! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes
After its own life-working. A child's kiss

GLEANINGS FROM PART V

Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad;
A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich;
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
I set upon thy head.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

The Secret of Ruth's Success.

When any outstanding success in life is made, there are always ample reasons for it. Some of the more prominent ones in the case of Ruth are:

1. The ability to decide for things which are right when such decisions seem to involve great hardships.
2. The adherence to such decisions under continued adverse circumstances.
3. The ability to make another person feel that she could be depended upon.
4. Unselfish love and the willingness to work and suffer for another who was less fortunately situated.
5. Great faith in God and humanity.

Others.

If God has so ordered one's life so that he is left yet a little while in the land of preparation, he should try to forget himself by serving others. Let him forget his own hurt for the need of others. If he will give his life in the service of others until the Lord calls him home, he can then go with the courage of faith to meet the happy family of those who are saved. The soul which is cleansed in the blood of the Lamb will meet the heavenly Bridegroom in the holy city, where all the ties of the earth will be a thing of the past, and where all who are permitted to enter will be the happy children of a kind and loving heavenly Father. God has written across the life of Ruth these glowing words: "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for

THE BEAUTIFUL GLEANER

good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28.) That promise has never yet been broken. It is the sure and eternal rock on which the children of God may rest and receive compensation for all the sorrows and trials and losses of life.

Lord, help me live from day to day,
In such a self-forgotten way;
That even when I kneel to pray,
My prayer shall be for—Others.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true,
And know that all I'd do for You
Must needs be done for—Others.

Let self be crucified and slain
And buried deep, and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again,
Unless to live for—Others.

And when my work on earth is done,
And my new work in heaven's begun;
May I forget the crown I've won
While thinking still of—Others.

Others, Lord, yes, others;
Let this my motto be;
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee.

—Anon.

William M. Taylor: *Ruth and Esther*, p. 91f.

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GLEANINGS FROM PART V

Questions

Part V—Chapter XXVIII

1. What do you think of the question of “secret marriages”?
2. What light does the action of Boaz throw on this subject?
3. Why do you think that many young people want a secret marriage?
4. In what way has the state contributed to this situation?
5. What principle did Orpah and the nameless kinsman, together with Boaz and Ruth, illustrate?
6. What happens when sacrifice is made for the sake of gain?
7. What does the moral of this story encourage?
8. Do you think that Boaz and Ruth expected the blessings which they received as a reward of their unselfishness? Why?
9. Give a summary of the rewards that came to Ruth.
10. Name some of the reasons for Ruth’s success.
11. What should be our attitude toward others?
12. What New Testament teaching is so beautifully illustrated by the life of Ruth?

* * *

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. The Cause and Cure of Secret Marriages.
2. The Responsibility of the State in the Question of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage.
3. Why Does One Who Seeks to Save His Life Lose It?
4. The Effect of Unselfishness in Character Building.
5. The Greatest Lessons That You Have Learned From the Book of Ruth.

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