

Take Christ into your life, make Him your treasure, and unconsciously you become like Him. Such was the burden of his message, and it was sealed to his hearers, because they recognized in him a true example.

I have read, and men still talk of "Drummondism," and by that phrase, according to their temperament and turn of mind, they appear to designate some point of view, some theory, some attitude of soul that they consider to be his secret. But surely the only Drummondism was Drummond, for even as he invited men not to a system but to a Person, and sought to give them not a phrase but a life, so was he greater than all his teaching. And it is for him that I would recommend you to seek in his writings, and, having found, to imitate. For as James Martineau has it, "The noblest workers of the world leave behind them nothing so great as the image of themselves."

J. Y. SIMPSON.

### *RUTH: A HEBREW IDYL.*

#### THE STORY: ITS SETTING AND SPIRIT.

##### CHAPTER I. 1.

THE short book, which thus begins, has a very close relation to the Book of Judges. Not only is its period contemporary with the rule of judges in Israel, but its object is to make us acquainted with the private and domestic life of the land while men of iron and blood were directing its public policy. So sweet a companion never attended so stormy a record as here in this tale attends that Book. The transition from one to the other is like that from war to peace. The temper and feeling change in a moment, and we pass into a new atmosphere. After the rage and fury of storm the air becomes soft and calm; the bristling of spears is changed to the rustling of the ripe barley; and

if there is sadness in the book, it is the sadness of a story which refreshes and pleases even when it fills our eyes with tears. Only one other such transition do we know in all literature, and that is when the great historian of the French Revolution, in its ethical aspects and meanings, passes from the din and wild death of the falling Bastille and says, with equal pathos and beauty, "Oh! evening sun of July, how at this hour thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main!"

We cannot, therefore, while we read, keep too intimate both the connexion and the contrast between this tale of lowliness and poverty, and what has just been told of tribal heavings and unrest when the judges ruled; for it seems almost certain that these gentler chapters at one time were attached to, and as an appendix formed part of, the preceding Book. Some say that the moon, which now attends our world in its nightly wanderings, was once a part of the earth; and that it became detached when things were taking shape for man and withdrew to the place of ministry apart, whence now its silvery light is shed over all. In something of the same way the Book of Ruth may be said to be related to the Book of Judges. This kindly Word of God, as if now settled in its own place in heaven and dividing its light from a distance, spreads a radiance over every page of that sterner record. For this one pleasing instance of fine instinct and motive in the life of a peasant home suggests the truth that, during all the sudden fray which judge after judge raised, the constant sanctities of the cottage and the family altar were the saving of the nation. The influence of this representative case spreads sweetly over the whole period, as if God would thereby assure us to all time that the quiet power of woman, and the patience of home-keeping lives, and the care of the cradle and the hearth, mean as much in His eyes as the work of the

statesman and the warrior. There are both struggle and victory here, but they are those of virtue—the virtue of all gentle and gracious womanhood.

It would be almost to insult the unadorned and homely beauty of the whole of this narrative, if we spoke of the structure and style of the book. Had it all been taken down from the recitative of one who did not know that his tale was being noticed, or had it been written out as it came unconsciously from the lips of a prattling child, the story could not have been more artless and simple. There is no style—no intermediate element between the thought and its resolution into language; the simple facts are presented through the most transparent medium of words and are left to speak for themselves. There is here that naturalness and ease which are the truth of all expression, and which the most ambitious art only seeks to realize. As a fragment of early literary work the Book of Ruth stands alone; it is certainly a curious and unexpected “find” in the annals of Israel. Take it as we may, it remains unreproved and unexplained—a gem of literature so rare as to be priceless. The very genius of simple narration is in this Hebrew tale; and around it a gentle *glamourie* floats, in which

All puts on a gentle hue,  
Hanging in the shadowy air  
Like a picture rich and rare;  
It is a climate where, they say,  
The night is more beloved than day.

It has an office in the Bible not unlike that which God has given the flowers in the world of nature; it softens, it sweetens, it soothes. And, as God has greatly cared for His flowers, He has greatly cared for this book. Its Maker has made it very beautiful.

In a later Testament than the one from which we here read, the Bible is fearless in its record of the descent of

Jesus Christ from Adam in humanity's ordinary course. It seems almost to go out of its way to tell all the truth of that succession, as if it would emphasize some dark links in the chain that was stretched along the earth-level attaching from generation to generation the Son of God to the sons of men. Here we are shown that mysterious connexion at one of its sweetest and holiest joinings ; and the link which we see being historically forged is of cleanest gold. "Boaz begat Obed of Ruth ; and Obed begat Jesse ; and Jesse begat David"; and Jesus the Saviour was David's son. Of Ruth, then, according to the flesh (we must never forget) Christ came. Yet it would be a disregard of the truth of humanity and of God's divinest work in human nature if we were to trace His power and purpose in history, and if we found His meaning and order in the arranging and adjusting of the Bible part to part into a perfect whole, but either were unwilling or failed to see His presence and some elements of His own power in the individual hearts and separate lives of those who are named in His Book and who acted parts in the scenes there depicted. The light which falls on the face of her whose life pervades this book with a spiritual spell, is light from heaven—the light which is the life of men ; and the love which filled her Moabite heart so full was love which came fresh from the heart of God Himself. One who loved as Ruth did, whether she was a daughter of Moab or of Israel, was not far from the kingdom of God ; and every such life as hers, whether lived long ago or being lived to-day, is preparing on earth a way for Christ.

This little book, so fairly set yet so firmly fixed in an important historical place in Holy Scripture, would seem, therefore, to have even a higher mission than to illustrate and complete Hebrew history. Here we have the Eternal appreciation of every-day virtue and service in the midst of little ordinary things, and the Divine recognition of these

as powers in making the world what God wants it to be. There is given in the pleasing form of a fireside tale God's own testimony to the Divine essence in all truest human love and His vindication of love's continual self-sacrifice; and, in its setting in God's own Book, this fragment of Hebrew folklore is meant to teach that, in the timidest breast of timid woman, there may reside an energy which affects human life and the destinies of ages more even than clattering arms and clashing armies. "Ruth" is thus a book for correction and instruction. For we are all inclined to make much more of any loud winter storm than of the lingering summer tide, and of a raging lightning cloud than of the gentle daily light. Why else have we made so little of Ruth and so much of Samson with his club and of Deborah with her fiery tocsin? Yet a mightier force than that of armies came as softly as the dayspring over the hills of Moab that morning when Ruth timed her steps to Naomi's there; and she, bringing into Judah only a woman's heart filled with a wonderful love, was able to do more for the land of her exile than its soldiers spending themselves in battle all along its frontiers.

To teach gentle lessons the wise use gentle methods; and it is to remind us of what we daily forget that, after the wreck of things in *Judges*, the fair and modest form of Ruth is here shown us "gliding in serene and slow," like the white doe of the immortal poem amidst the ruins of the abbey, and, "as one incapable of her own distress," diffusing lustre and peace around her life which love and duty have redeemed of its own sorrow. Every man had been doing that which was right in his own eyes; havoc had been made of the nation's life and all was turbulent and rude. But no miracle was wrought, nor any sign given from heaven, when God began to heal and renew. No deed of heroism was done in high places nor was there valour in war; no sword is drawn nor bow bent in all the

pages of this book, and its only rites are those of two holy hearts in faithfulness and purity and blameless love. God's Word to make all things new was spoken, and God's steps in history towards the Christ were being taken, when Ruth, unaware and half-bewildered, came in amidst the confusion to appease and reconcile and subdue. The power put forth is that of a woman, not rarely endowed by nature nor highly idealized by those who tell her story, but

A Creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food.

Only the common and essential characteristics of womanhood are represented in Ruth—a lowly mind, a large and loving heart, and active brightness; and, for this reason, a universal reference and appeal attach to all that is told us of her. The plainest and the most refined, the richest and the poorest, all and alike feel that they may say of her, "The same is my sister and mother"; for Ruth's need was what every woman knows and her comfort what every woman desires. Any woman can (so to speak) substitute herself for Ruth, and can imagine herself thinking, feeling, acting just as she did. Strong lessons in resignation to God's will and gratitude for His goodness may be learned here as throughout all Scripture, but the distinctive and finer teaching of the book is given when almost unconsciously our heart is drawn with our eyes to the woman herself, who in these imperishable verses, as in an avenue where both sunshine and shadow fall, flits and lingers continually.

Those who are to read this story aright must cultivate a certain spiritual mood; they must in a measure breathe and absorb the spirit of the book itself. Antiquity surrounds and secludes it like the wilderness around an oasis; and there has thus been preserved to it its own old-world innocence and simplicity. This should restrain our

present-day spirit as we enter a place so enclosed and guarded, and should not only forbid our rudely disturbing or even too rudely gazing, but should subdue our soul to reverence and affection. We must be in sympathy with all that is pure and of good report, if we are here to love; and love we must if we are to understand. In this book the Bible brings its readers to all time into a place of rest. God here blesses His people with peace. There is no commotion here, only a gentle and gracious movement. The narrative no longer sounds in a rocky bed; it glides among the smooth stones. The ear is no longer stunned; it is lulled. We are beside the still waters, and all around us is a sweet native wildness—a natural unmolested garden, where fine instinct and virtue have their own way of growing. A melodious spot it is too, where the song of God has its seasons! The book is sacred to the lowly and the poor; its *genius loci* is a woman of simplest life and of russet homebred sweetness—the Hebrew saint of meekness and of poverty, with whom if we walk this garden we shall meet with God.

ARMSTRONG BLACK.

STUDIES IN THE "INNER LIFE" OF JESUS.

IV.

THE VOCATION ACCEPTED.

1. FROM Jesus' utterance in the Temple, when He was twelve years old, a light falls forward; and from His words at His baptism, when He was thirty, a light falls backward; and thus the intervening eighteen years, in which He grew from youth to manhood, although no record of His sayings and doings has been preserved for us, need not be shrouded in utter darkness. He returned to the home and the workshop in Nazareth with the moral imperative heard, and the