

ORPHA'S REGRET

A STORY OF THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES IN ISRAEL

By the "Highway and Byway" Preacher

Scripture authority:—Ruth 1:1-15, especially verses 14 and 15.

SERMONETTE.

A Choice That Determined a Destiny.—Orpha on the road that led to the land of Israel came face to face with the turning point of her life. The vision had come to her of a new home and a place among God's people and obedient to the aspirations for a better life and holier things, she started with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and sister-in-law, Ruth, for the Promised Land.

So they had gone forth with Naomi and had come to the borderland of Israel. There Naomi paused and wisely tested the sincerity of purpose of the two young women. They must count the cost. It was no light thing to choose God and God's people as a future destiny. They must realize that it meant separation from the old life and hardships in the new. In substance, Naomi said to Ruth and Orpha what Jesus said to those who would become his disciples. "Which of you," he exclaimed, after he had declared that discipleship meant cross-bearing and fellowship in hardship and suffering, "intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and he is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

And Orpha bid her mother-in-law a tearful adieu and turned back. Turned back from the light of which she had caught a glimmering. Turned back from the higher purpose and destiny. Quenched the flickering flame of spiritual aspirations, and turned back to the old life and the old gods. Turned back to be swallowed up by the world and the things of the world. This is the last word we ever hear of Orpha. From that time forth she was counted out of God's reckoning. We can imagine what her life may have been after her return, and how when the tidings came of the blessing and prosperity which had come to Ruth in the, to her, strange, far-off land of Israel, there must have come the smartings of disappointment and regret that she had once been so near the blessing and had thoughtlessly and carelessly let the treasure slip from her. "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'" Orpha and Ruth stood side by side that day at the dividing line between the world and God. Orpha turned back, there ends the tale. Ruth went on, and today we are rejoicing in the Christ who was of the house and lineage of David, whose grandfather Obed was the son of Ruth and Boaz.

THE STORY.

BY DINT of coaxing and petting Orpha's friends had at last persuaded her to accompany them to the festivities in the village close at hand, where for weeks the preparations had been going on for the honoring of the gods of the Moabites, and she was

busy getting ready for the start in the early morning. It seemed strange to them to have to coax Orpha to go, for in former years she had been one of the gayest at such celebrations, and they had expected, now that the influence of her mother-in-law, Naomi, was no longer present, that she would enter again heartily into the life and customs of her people.

On her return to her old home, after the departure of Ruth and Naomi her parents and friends had welcomed her right royally, secretly rejoicing that she was no longer to be dominated by the Israelitish woman who had come into their midst years before and who had firmly and steadfastly refused to share in their idolatrous feasts and practices, and the feelings of jealousy and resentment which were felt at the time of her marriage to the promising young Hebrew, Chilion, were forgotten in the realization that she was once more one of them.

But to Orpha something in the old life was lacking. She could not explain why. She did not understand, except that in the old home and with the old friends there was something lacking, and a sense of disappointment came to her. She tried to forget it, and enter into the activities of the home circle and friends with the old-time pleasure and vivacity, but she could not forget the quiet, helpful, uplifting influence of Naomi. Unconsciously she was constantly drawing comparisons between the life she had known after becoming the wife of Chilion, and the life her people lived. When the time drew near for the festivities attending the worship of their gods she had felt the old thrill of expectant pleasure which she used to know as she had planned and prepared to share in the celebrations. But this feeling soon passed and left her with that sense of unrest and dissatisfaction, so that at last, much to the surprise of her friends, she decided that she would not go to the festivities. It was then that they besieged her with their pleadings until at last she consented to go.

"What is the matter with me anyway?" she exclaimed, irritatedly as she busied herself with the preparations.

"Why shouldn't I go, and why shouldn't I have a good time? Why should I feel as I do?" But even while she impatiently argued with herself there kept recurring to her mind the memory of her mother-in-law's words, as repeatedly she had heard her say, when asked to attend the feasts: "No, I have left my own land, but I did not leave my God behind, and I could not go up to the services that would do honor to those which are no gods at all."

She had felt a glow of admiration for Naomi at that time for her brave words, and down deep in her heart she knew that the gods which her people worshiped were false gods and not like the God whom the Hebrews worshiped. But now that she had gone back to her people once more and was away from the strong, uplifting influence of that godly woman, she had felt the old desire to enjoy the old life as she had formerly done, but somehow she could not.

"But I will, I will, I will," she exclaimed, as she made her final preparations and started forth with the merry group of friends who had come to accompany her to the place of the celebration. As they moved on they chatted and laughed gaily, and it was not long ere the old spirit of gaiety had complete possession of her, and she forgot all about the struggle she had had and the questions which had kept her in so unhappy a state since her return to the old home.

Thus the day sped swiftly on. The festivities were at their height, and the great throngs of people awaited the coming of the solemn procession of the priests, who in the presence of all the people were to make their offerings to the gods and invoke their blessings upon the people, following which the damsels were to dance the sinuous, dreamy figures which were part of the religious ceremonies. Or-

pha, arrayed in her filmy, festal robes, had taken her place with the other dancers ready to play her part, when the time should come, as she had been wont to do in former years.

"Are you not glad that you are here and not in the land of Israel?" asked one of her companions standing next to her.

"Yes," answered Orpha enthusiastically, "and I wish Ruth were here to share in the festivities with us." "Foolish she was, indeed," was the reply of the other. "What can she find there but poverty and hardship? Have you had tidings from her since she went away?"

At the mention of the land of Israel, and the name of Ruth a stranger standing near had started and then listened eagerly to the conversation which followed, but so occupied were Orpha and her friends with their conversation that they did not note this. But suddenly they were aroused by an abrupt inquiry addressed to Orpha: "Did you know Ruth?" he asked. "Bring you word from her?" Orpha asked, eagerly. "Is she well? How fares she?" and she continued to pour out a rapid fire of questions, piling up her inquiries concerning Ruth.

The stranger lifted up his hand in helpless protest to stem the flood of questions, saying, as he did so:

"Listen, for I have just come from Bethlehem and bring tidings of wonderful things which have come to pass. Call her no longer poor, unfortunate Ruth, for she has become the wife of one of the principal men of the city."

"What's that you say?" cried Orpha, incredulously, believing that her ears had misunderstood.

And thus importuned the stranger went on to explain and to give further details of her sister-in-law's life since going to Bethlehem.

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the passing of the priests, mumbling their incantations, while the people shouted the names of their gods, crying:

"Great are the gods of the Moabites. Where are there gods like unto them, and who can bestow blessing such as they give to their faithful children?"

"Who, indeed?" thought Orpha, bitterly, as her thoughts sped back to that day when she had stood in the roadway with Ruth and Naomi and had finally turned back and left the two to go on alone. Her gala attire seemed as though mocking her in her distress. She thought of the abhorrence which Naomi had had of the feast days of the Moabites. What would she think of her now in the midst of that gaiety? She knew that the God whom Naomi had worshiped and about whom she had spoken to her two daughters-in-law, was the true God. She might have had him for her God, but she had turned back. Thus harassed by the workings of her conscience, she turned and fled from the place, crying out as she went:

"It might have been, but now it is too late! Too late!"

Satire of a Logger.

In the pine clad hills of California the country folk had gathered at a neighbor's house to spend the evening in social dance.

The male contingent of the gathering was composed of farmers, millmen and logging hands; the fairer sex, the wives, sisters and sweethearts of the men and the district schoolteacher, who was the center of attraction of the young men and who seemed to be aware of her own popularity.

During the evening an awkward, bashful and roughly dressed logging hand was introduced to the school teacher and asked if he might have a dance with her.

The school teacher drew herself up haughtily and said: "No, sir-ee; I am particular with whom I dance." Whereupon the logging hand replied, with an air of indifference, "I am not, a mite, or I would never have asked you."—Judge's Library.

Plautus—Little do you know what a gloriously uncertain thing the law is.

ISRAEL ENSLAVED IN EGYPT

Sunday School Lesson for May 19, 1907

Specially Prepared for This Paper.

LESSON TEXT.—Exodus 1:1-14. Memory verses, 13, 14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses."—Psalm 107:13.

TIME.—According to Usher's chronology Jacob went down into Egypt about 1706 B. C., and the sojourn in Egypt was for 215 or 230 years from that time. For the length of captivity see Gen. 15:13, 14; Ex. 12:40; Kings 6:1; Gal. 3:17.

RULERS.—It is quite generally agreed by scholars that the Pharaoh of the oppression was Rameses II., and the Pharaoh of the Exodus his son, Menephtah I.

Comment and Suggestive Thought.

The Chosen Family.—Vs. 1-5. "The first seven verses are introductory to the whole book. In accordance with the almost invariable custom of the writer, there is first a brief recapitulation of preceding events, and then a statement of the actual condition of affairs."—Joseph Parker.

V. 1. "These are the names." The 12 sons of Jacob only are given, the heads of the families or clans. "Every man and his household." "The household," according to the Hebrew idea, included not merely wife and children, but men-servants and maid-servants, dependents and retainers, even hirelings who might quit the service and go elsewhere when it pleased them."—Rawlinson. How numerous these households were can be surmised from the fact that Abraham could muster 318 armed men to rescue Lot (Gen. 14:14); Isaac was mightier than some of the neighboring kings (Gen. 26:16); Esau and Jacob had to separate because their followers were so numerous (Gen. 36:6, 7).

V. 5. "And all . . . were 70 souls." The list is given in Genesis 46, where two women are included, Dinah, Jacob's daughter, and Serah, a granddaughter. Perhaps, as Canon Cook suggests, these were named because they remained unmarried. Dean Payne Smith (Hampton Lectures) estimates that altogether, with their households and retainers, they numbered 3,000 souls. "That so large a body should be favorably received need not excite surprise."

The Reasons for Removal.—"There was need for Jacob's family being removed from Canaan, as some of them were becoming much tainted with the idolatry and pollution prevalent there. In Egypt, on the whole, life was purer. Then there was a risk of their amalgamating by marriage with the doomed Canaanites; but the Egyptians were so different a race that there was no such risk with them. To be among the Egyptians would also be a benefit to them in other ways, for they would learn much from a people so skilled in all the arts of life and so superior in civilization."—Blakie. Even the afflictions they were to suffer there were not the least of their gains from the stay in Egypt, as we shall see.

A Period of Prosperity.—Vs. 6, 7. It was a wise providence of God that introduced the period of bondage in Egypt with a period of liberty and prosperity; otherwise, the Hebrews would not have remained in Egypt after the end of the famine.

A Period of Adversity.—Vs. 8-14. The period of prosperity through which the Israelites passed was from Jehovah; but so, no less certainly, was the period of adversity which followed as soon as they were strong enough to endure it. Both were parts of God's great process of development and training.

Rameses II. as a Builder.—"This king was the most enterprising builder of all the Pharaohs, and that means the sacrifice of tens of thousands of lives. He built temples and reared monoliths and colossal statues. His temples were approached through long avenues of sphinxes. Out of the solid rock at Ipsambul he hewed two spacious subterranean temples, and set up at their doors four human figures 60 feet high. Among his public works was a chain of fortifications along the entire northeastern frontier of Egypt, for 160 miles. By his command immense dikes were built on the lower Nile and in the Delta. Canals were dug and cities were built."—Prof. E. P. Humphrey.

The Climax of Cruelty.—Ex. 1:15-22. When Pharaoh found the Israelites flourishing even under this terrible oppression, he resorted to measures still more severe, ordering the destruction of their male infants as soon as they were born. The females would be harmless, and would prove valuable slaves. "A similar policy was pursued by the Lacedaemonians toward the helots, by Mithridates toward his Roman subjects, and by the Caliph, Hakem, toward the Egyptians."—F. Johnson. When the official midwives evaded the king's command, "by a refinement of cruelty to which the Herod of the future was not equal, he required parents to execute the sentence of death on their own children."—Humphrey. This was indeed the climax of affliction.

CARE IN WASHING STOCKINGS.

Are Too Often Considered as of Little Importance.

We all know the ordinary laundress' most "ornery" way of washing stockings, using the rinsing water left after the white clothes, which gives them a coating of white lint, both hoary and disreputable. These things ought not to go to be.

The first essential in washing stockings is to have an absolutely clear, clean soap solution in tepid water. Shake the stockings to remove all the dust possible, put in right side out, rub well, turn and rub on the wrong side. If the color is at all delicate, rub the feet first, then the legs, so as not to leave long in the water. Rinse thoroughly, wring dry and hang from the tops of the stockings, so that if the water settles, leaving a little discoloration, it will be in the toe instead of the leg.

The black stockings now are usually fast. If the colored stockings show signs of running or fading, they may be set with alum or salt, remembering, however, that alum sets dirt as well as color.

Silk stockings should be washed and rinsed in lukewarm water and wrung between towels. Iron stockings from the toe, following up to the heel, then fold the leg with the seam in the middle, leaving the foot uncreased.

TO BROIL A STEAK.

Only Way if One Would Retain Delicate Flavor.

Few housewives understand the art of broiling and consequently chops and steaks are often robbed of their delicate flavor by frying in a pan.

A steak or chop properly broiled should have a thin, well-browned crust. Beyond this crust the meat should be red and juicy, hardly a shade less done in the middle than near the surface.

If the broiling be done on a range, have the fire very bright and clear. Open every draft that smoke and flame may be drawn up the chimney. Place the piece of meat in the double broiler and hold it as near the coals as possible until the surface is brown, turning frequently. It will take three or four minutes for this. Now raise the boiler several inches above the bed of coals and continue the cooking until the meat is done.

The boiler must be turned often. A good rule is to count ten slowly, then turn the broiler. A steak or chop cut a little more than an inch thick will cook nicely in ten minutes. If liked well done it should be cooked for 12 minutes.

Stewed Rhubarb.

Stewed rhubarb for breakfast or luncheon must not fail when it is the cheapest and best thing of the vegetable world on the market. Cut up the rhubarb, pour boiling water over it and then drain in a colander and cool. Pack the pieces tightly in quart cans; fill the cans to overflowing with water that has been boiled, strained and cooled in ice. Seal quickly when the can is overflowing and tighten with the can wrench. Invert and put immediately in a cool, dry place. When opened for winter use, drain off all the water and let the fruit stand in fresh cold water half an hour. This is by far the best manner of preserving this fruit for winter pies or where it is used like the fresh variety. Strawberries, cherries (not pitted) and red currants are canned in this way, but the other methods are better. The fruit is not scalded first.

Ginger Ice Cream.

Three pints thin cream, one cup sugar, one-fourth pound Canton ginger, one-fourth cup ginger slrup, three tablespoons sherry. Cut the ginger in small pieces and mix with the other ingredients. Freeze, using one part rock salt to three parts finely crushed ice.

Washing White Blouses.

The following is a quick way of washing a white silk blouse: Let it soak for two or more hours in a basin of cold water. Next prepare a hot lather of soap and water and squeeze the blouse in this. Change the water when dirty. When the lather remains clean rinse the blouse in warm water until it is quite free from soap, and finally leave it for ten minutes in a basin of water to which a tablespoonful of methylated spirit has been added. Roll in a towel for a few minutes and iron, while wet, with a hot iron.

To Stir Smooth Thickening.

All housekeepers appreciate the difficulties of mixing perfectly smooth flour thickening for gravies.

One of the best methods for success is to take a new wire dishcloth with a handle and keep it for a thickening stirrer. Half a dozen whisks with this and your thickening is all mixed, much smoother than you could possibly do it with a spoon.

Hold the stirrer for a moment under the faucet, hang on the drier and it will require no more washings.

HORSE THAT COULD REASON.

Physician Tells of Animal's Conduct on a Stormy Night.

The best story told in an evening of amusing talk at the Winship club meeting this week was that of Dr. Paul about his partner in business for a score of years or more, his horse. When the doctor and he were 20 years younger in practice Dr. Paul received a "hurry" night call from one of the best families in his circle. They lived a mile or more away in a rural neighborhood and although it was late at night and storming, the doctor rushed out there at full speed.

On arriving in the yard at the house he threw the blanket hastily upon or, rather, at the horse (who never required hitching), for it was found afterward lying on the ground at his side, and dashed into the house with his case of instruments. It turned out that the aged grandmother of the family had had a fall, that her shoulder was dislocated, that ether had to be administered the pain was so great—

in short, the doctor could not take his hand off his work for three hours. All this time a driving sleet storm, the moisture freezing as it fell and giving everything a coat of ice, was beating upon his partner out in the yard.

When the doctor finally emerged in the small hours it was to find the horse where he had left him, except that the rig was headed round for home. A daylight examination revealed the truth through the marks of the hoofs and wheels of the buggy that during his long wait of three hours in a pelting and freezing storm, the horse had a score of times made up his mind to go home and had gone down the road sometimes a quarter, sometimes half of the way, and then had thought this hard on the doctor and had turned back to wait as in duty bound.

If this is not a demonstration not only of reasoning power but also of moral consciousness, what is it? It is needless to say that the doctor respects his subhuman partner and would no more think of parting with him till death doth them part than

he would with any member of his family. His back is bowed with the weight of 27 years; he is no longer the handsome trotter he once was, but he is the doctor's "fidus Achates," just the same, and he will not be supplanted, in spite of the public's smiles.—Boston Transcript.

Progress in New Zealand.

A number of great engineering projects are under way in New Zealand looking to the utilization of some of the many water powers of that country. The most notable of these is the harnessing of the famous Huka falls at a cost of \$8,000,000, which will supply the Auckland district with 76,000 horse power.

Marie Corelli on "Baby Talk."

When a man is born he at once displays that fractious and fickle disposition which is so often significant of his future development—and woman has to carry him up and down in her arms, talking nonsense to him, or, as it is called, "baby language." She knows she has to begin that way, because he would not understand sense