

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

"FRIENDSHIP UNFAILING," LAST SUNDAY'S SUBJECT.

From the Following Text: "And She Went and Came and Gleaned in the Fields After the Reapers; and Her Harp Was to Light."—Ruth 2:3.



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

Boaz owns a large farm, and he goes out to see the reapers gather in the grain. Coming there, right behind the swarthy, sun-browned reapers, he beholds a beautiful woman gleaning—a woman more fit to bend to a harp or sit upon a throne than to stoop among the sheaves. Ah, that was an eventful day!

It was love at first sight. Boaz forms an attachment for the womanly gleaner—an attachment full of undying interest to the church of God in all ages; while Ruth, with an ephah, or nearly a bushel of barley, goes home to Naomi to tell her of the successes and adventures of the day. That Ruth, who left her native land of Moab in darkness, and traveled through an undying affection for her mother-in-law, is in the harvest field of Boaz, is affianced to one of the best families in Judah, and becomes in after time the ancestress of Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory! Out of so dark a night did there ever dawn so bright a morning?

I learn, in the first place, from this subject, how trouble develops character. It was bereavement, poverty and exile that developed, illustrated, and announced to all ages the sublimity of Ruth's character. That is a very unfortunate man who has no trouble. It was sorrow that made John Bunyan the better dreamer, and Doctor Young the better poet, and O'Connell the better orator, and Bishop Hall the better preacher, and Havelock the better soldier, and Kitto the better encyclopaedist, and Ruth the better daughter-in-law.

I once asked an aged man in regard to his pastor, who was a very brilliant man, "Why is it that your pastor, so very brilliant, seems to have so little heart and tenderness in his sermons?" "Well," he replied, "the reason is, our pastor has never had any trouble. When misfortune comes upon him his style will be different." After a while the Lord took a child out of the pastor's house; and though the preacher was just as brilliant as he was before, oh, the warmth, the tenderness of his discourses! The fact is, that trouble is a great educator. You see sometimes a musician sit down at an instrument and his execution is cold and formal and unfeeling. The reason is that all his life he has been prospered. But let misfortune or bereavement come to that man, and he sits down to the instrument, and you discover the pathos in the first sweep of the keys.

Misfortunes and trials are great educators. A young doctor comes into a sick room where there is a dying child. Perhaps he is very rough in his prescription, and very rough in his manner, and rough in the feeling of the pulse, and rough in his answer to the mother's anxious question; but years roll on, and there has been one dead in his own house; and now he comes into the sick room, and with tearful eye he looks at the dying child, and he says, "Oh, how this reminds me of my Charlie!" Trouble, the great educator. Sorrow—I see its touch in the grandest painting; I hear its tremor in the sweetest song; I feel its power in the mightiest argument.

Grecian mythology said that the foundation of Hippocrene was struck out by the foot of the winged horse Pegasus. I have often noticed in life that the brightest and most beautiful fountains of Christian comfort and spiritual life have been struck out by the iron shod hoof of disaster and calamity. I see Daniel's courage beat by the flash of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. I see Paul's prowess beat when I find him on the foundering ship under the glare of the lightning in the breakers of Melita. God crowns his children amid the howling of wild beasts and the chopping of blood-splashed guillotine and the crackling fires of martyrdom. It took the persecutions of Marcus Aurelius to develop Polycarp and Justin Martyr. It took all the hostilities against Scotch Covenanters and the fury of Lord Claverhouse to develop James Renwick and Andrew Melville, and James McKail, the glorious martyrs of Scotch history. It took the stormy sea, and the December blast, and the desolate New England coast, and the warwhoop of savages to show forth the prowess of the Pilgrim Fathers.

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

Life often seems to be a mere game, where the successful player pulls down all the other men into his own lap. Let suspicion arise about a man's character, and he becomes like a bank in a panic, and all the imputations rush on him and break down in a day that character which in due time would have had strength to defend itself. There are reputations that have been half a century in building, which go down under one push, as a vast temple is consumed by the touch of a sulphurous match. A hog can uproot a century plant.

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

Again, I learn from this subject that paths which open in hardship and darkness often come out in places of joy. When Ruth started from Moab toward Jerusalem, to go along with her mother-in-law, I suppose the people said: "Oh, what a foolish creature to go away from her father's house, to go off with a poor old woman toward the land of Judah! They won't live to get across the desert. They will be drowned in the sea, or the jackals of the wilderness will destroy them." It was a very dark morning when Ruth started off with Naomi; but behold her in my text in the harvest field of Boaz, to be affianced to one of the lords of the land, and become one of the grandmothers of Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. And so it often is that a path which often starts very darkly ends very brightly.

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

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

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

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

That song of love, now low and far, Ere long shall swell from star to star;

That light, the breaking day which tip. The golden-spired Apocalypse.

Madame de Staël did a world of work in her time, and one day, while she was seated amid instruments of music, all of which she had mastered, and amid manuscript books which she had written, some one said to her: "How do you find time to attend to all these things?" "Oh," she replied, "these are not the things I am proud of. My chief boast is in the fact that I have seventeen trades, by any one of which I could make a livelihood if necessary." And if in secular spheres there is so much to be done, in spiritual work how vast the field! How many dying all around about us without one word of comfort! We want more Abigails, more Hannahs, more Rebeccas, more Marys, more Deborahs consecrated—body, mind and soul, to the Lord who bought them.

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

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

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

The Dragon-Fly.

One of the most useful of insects is, owing to the ignorance of the public, forever being killed. It is known as the dragon-fly, the needle-case and the devil's darning-needle. Says a writer of authority: "In its larva stage it subsists almost entirely on those small squirming threads which can be seen darting about in any still water, and which hatch out into sweet-singing mosquito. As soon as the dragon-fly leaves its watery nursing-ground, and climbing some friendly reed, throws away the old shell and flies away, it is helping man again. Its quarry now is the house-fly. Not long ago the writer saw one of these insects knocked down in a veranda, where it had been doing yeoman's service, and the children and women seemed delighted, although they shrank back from the poor, wounded dragon-fly. They all thought it had an awful sting at the end of its long body; a cruel injustice. When the writer took the insect up there was general wonderment, which was increased when a captured fly was offered it and it ate greedily. The boys of the household will never harm a dragon-fly again."

Quite a Difference.

All disciples of Isaac Walton will appreciate the story which is going the rounds, concerning Mr. Andrew Lang, the English critic and essayist. An exchange publishes the anecdote which one of Mr. Lang's literary friends tells: "It happened to me to spend a few days last summer in an English village. Having noticed a pleasant river which seemed to promise excellent fishing, I spoke of it to my landlady. 'Oh yes, sir,' she said, 'there is very good fishing here—many people come here for fishing.' 'What kind of people come here?' I asked. 'Literary gentlemen come here very often, sir. We had Mr. Andrew Lang staying here.' 'Oh, really! does he fish? Is he a good fisherman?' 'Yes, sir, he fishes beautifully.' 'Really! does he catch much?' 'Oh no, sir, he never catches anything, but he fishes beautifully.'"

A Characteristic Reply.

The incorruptibility of General Walker, late president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was above all suspicion. A characteristic anecdote is told of him by J. J. Spencer in the Review of Reviews: "At one time, when General Walker held a government position, a place shared in a measure by another, he was approached with the suggestion that, since the whole department was under their control, by working in harmony they could have whatever they desired. 'I have no desires,' said General Walker. 'But, general,' said his coadjutor, 'do you not see that we can push forward our friends and relatives into good places?' 'I have no friends,' was the reply."

ARE MAKING FACES.

THAT IS WHAT THE DEMOCRATS ARE DOING.

Meantime the Republicans Are Going on with Their Duties—They Are Pushing the Tariff and Bimetallite Conference and Making Good Progress, Too.

(Washington Letter.)

The Bryan and Bailey factions of the democracy are continuing to make faces at each other across the hall of the house of representatives at Washington. The followers of Representative McMillan who wanted to keep up the combination made with the Populists last fall and support the sockless Simpson in his attacks upon Speaker Reed, were mercilessly spanked by the Baileytes in caucus the other day. The populist leader appealed to the Democrats for their co-operation in his joust at Speaker Reed, and a few of the Bryan followers had the temerity to respond to the call when "Speaker" Bailey adjourned the house, called a caucus in five minutes and after reading the riot act to the Bryanites voted them down two to one and adopted a resolution ordering them to desist from further co-operation with the Populists, at least in the matter then under consideration.

Those Democrats who were at first inclined to exult over their party's successes in the recent municipal elections, are finding the figures cold comfort. In Chicago they were unable to at all increase their vote and only held their own in numbers by reason of the fact that a large number of those who always vote against them in national elections co-operated with them on this occasion on purely local issues. This was found to be the case everywhere. National issues cut no figures at all in the municipal elections while in the state of Rhode Island in which the national questions were the leading issues the Republican vote increased 20 per cent over that of the presidential election of 1896.

A Week of Good Work.

Tariff and bimetallism, those two great issues of the campaign, have been prominently at the front during the present week in Washington. And those people who doubted or professed to doubt the sincerity of the professions of the Republican party on either of these subjects have found that they were mistaken. A thoroughly protective tariff, one which looks after the interests of the farmer and the working man; that is what the new Dingley act is to be when it gets upon the statute books, what it is, in fact, today, for the probabilities are that it will be little changed by the senate. Earnest and intelligent efforts in behalf of international bimetallism—that is what this week's work means upon that subject. The appointment of the commission whose names have already been given the public assures prompt, vigorous, and, it is to be hoped, successful work.

The Bimetallite Commission.

The appointment of Senator Wolcott of Colorado, ex-Vice-President Stevenson of Illinois, and Hon. C. J. Paine of Massachusetts as commissioners to pave the way for an international conference has been cordially commended. Until this week nobody knew definitely what the president's plans were in regard to this question. It was known that he was extremely anxious to take the proper steps toward carrying out the pledge of the party looking to international consideration of the silver question, but just how he proposed to bring this about or to take the initiative, nobody was able to say. It now appears that, as usual, he has chosen the wise plan and one most likely to be successful. Not only has he chosen the plan most likely to be successful, but the one likely to be most successful. By this is meant that if he is able to carry out the plans thus inaugurated the international conference will be brought to the doors of every American voter. President McKinley's hope is that it may be practicable to hold this conference in the United States and in the city of Washington. If this shall happen every American citizen will have the full benefit of the discussion which there arises. It will be as though the meeting of the representatives of the great nations was brought to his own doorway. With press associations carrying the full proceedings of the conference and the hundreds of special correspondents in Washington commenting upon the proceedings in the papers which they represent, every citizen who feels the slightest interest in this question would be able to follow the proceedings and study them in their proper light, thus knowing for himself that the work was well done. The commissioners who are to go abroad to try to bring about an agreement for a conference are highly commended by members of all parties as especially judicious selections. Mr. Wolcott, by reason of his long study of the question and discussion on two previous trips abroad of this same subject, will be of much greater value than any man who has not had these experiences; ex-Vice-President Stevenson representing the silver element of the democracy and well known by reputation and in person abroad will instantly command attention, while Mr. Paine, as a close student of this subject will prove equally useful and influential. It does not follow that these men who are selected for this work are to be the representatives of the United States in an international conference if they are successful in bringing one about; on the contrary, it is expected that other men will be selected to represent the government in that conference.

Progress of the Tariff.

The people who are assuming that the tariff bill is likely to drag through the summer and keep the business of the country in an unsettled condition awaiting final action, are to be disappointed. The next week or ten days at the furthest are likely to see the bill perfected by the Republican members of the finance committee and it is likely to get into the senate before the month ends. Prospects now seem to be good for a final vote upon it in June and its completion in time that it may go into effect at the beginning of the fiscal year July 1st. The changes made by the senate committee are much less in extent and importance than had been expected. The pressure for a reduction in the duties on wool has not been successful thus far and the chances seem to be that they will not be. The demand of the sugar trust for changes in the schedule advantageous to them has been promptly rejected. The wall of the standard oil trust and of sundry other corporations of this character have passed unnoticed. These Democrats and Populists and other enemies of the Republican party who had hoped to be able to make political capital by charging that the tariff bill was favorable to corporations and trusts are disappointed. And they will continue to be disappointed.

G. H. WILLIAMS.

Business Revival.

The wholesale merchants of Kansas City report that they received larger and more numerous orders in the month of March than they received in any month of last year. In nearly every branch of trade there is more activity, with indications that things will grow better from this time forward. Such reports as these are the best evidence that a healthful revival of business is at hand. Many retailers have not yet experienced any substantial gain in business, but their trade is less rapidly affected by improved conditions. The wholesalers first feel the effects of restored confidence and the release of hoarded money. Such evidence as they give refutes the taunts of those who demand spectacular results, as if there had been any promise that the new administration would witness an immediate revival of all the interests that flourished before the great depression. The most hopeful change is that indicated by the gradual increase in the volume of trade, for that denotes natural and conservative enterprise. There is nothing fictitious about the improvement in business conditions, whatever the scope of that improvement may be. But when it is shown that in a single state 100,000 more men are employed now than were employed before November last, and when large dealers make like comparisons between the trade at this time and that before the presidential election, the pessimists and the sneerers should be silent.—Kansas City Journal.

"Inexcusable Cowardice."

The men who style themselves "silver Republicans" have told the country why they refused to vote on one side or the other on the Dingley bill when that measure passed the house. "We took this course," said Representative Hartman, of Montana, "to prevent the diversion of the great issue of current politics from silver to the tariff. Our object was to emphasize the fact that the tariff is not and can not be made the main issue, and to give warning that the silver people will not accept the tariff as the paramount question of the time." According to the same authority another reason for the refusal to vote was that the joint caucus of the Populists of both branches of congress and a private conference of the Tellerites urged this inaction. This is presumption and cowardice of a particularly inexcusable character. A handful of men arrogate to themselves in their prejudice and blindness the right to dictate to the great body of congress what is and what is not an issue, without having the courage or capacity to reveal their position in a manly and practical way.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Trouble for Two.

Two classes of people have failed to prosper since the election of McKinley. One of these classes is composed of silver advocates, the other the trusts. The election of McKinley and the rejection of the free silver proposition started similar action by some other nations which had been looked to as supporters of the silver theory, and the friends of free coinage have witnessed with dismay the transfer of Japan, Russia and China to the gold standard column. The trusts have also fared as badly. The railroad corporations, the sugar trust, the standard oil trust and many minor organizations of this character have received stunning blows within the few months since the election of 1896, and will suffer still more when the new tariff law goes into effect and deprives them of the advantages which they have enjoyed under the Wilson law.

Wilson's Wall.

Ex-Postmaster-General Wilson, in continuation of his protest against the new tariff bill, has evidently persuaded himself that the measure will in some way be injurious to the farmers. He doesn't tell why or how, but he hints at an explanation in this vague and uncertain way: "For thirty years the farmer was deluded by the cry of a 'home market,' and of the benefit in store for him from 'bringing the factory to the farm.' Factories were built up, but he saw them filled, not with living consumers of his products, but chiefly with machinery of iron and steel." Mr. Wilson's sneer at the "home market" idea is distinctly that of the free trade theorist who imagines that it is better for the American farmer to sell one bushel of grain to English buyers

than it is to sell three bushels to American consumers. The fact that the home market absorbs 80 per cent of our agricultural products counts for nothing with Mr. Wilson. He doesn't consider that this market needs or deserves any protection, and he would neglect it or impair its purchasing power by forcing its industrial elements into wage-cutting competition with foreign labor. The farmer's real interest lies in a system that will maintain and expand the domestic demand for his produce, and this is to be found in a tariff that will open the mills, provide employment for labor and encourage the extension of native enterprise. Agricultural prosperity cannot exist without industrial prosperity. They are dependent on each other. When one thrives the other will thrive with it, and the man who attempts to convince the farmer and the mechanic that their interests are conflicting is an enemy to both.—Mail and Express.

Save the \$100,000,000.

A payment of about \$100,000,000 annually to foreign countries for a product adapted to our own soil and climate is plainly an industrial error. Within the last ten years attention has been directed to this wasteful method of conducting business, and signs are multiplying that the proper remedies will be applied. Last year every pound of wheat and flour exported was required to pay for the sugar imported. Our exports of cotton were only double the value of the sugar imported. The value of all exports of live and dressed beef, beef products and lard just about balanced that of the sugar bought abroad. It is now known beyond question that the sugar beet can be grown in many of our states and of a quality unsurpassed anywhere. The genius of Americans in the use of machinery is an assurance that the sugar beet factories will return good dividends. What measure of protection should be granted by the government is a subject to be considered with care. Meantime, states and localities are disposed to encourage the new industry with so many millions in it.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

The Senate and the House.

Generally speaking, whatever the house is enthusiastically in favor of the senate regards with cool and critical calmness, and vice versa. In the same way, no matter how much in sympathy the congress may be with the executive, it is sure to guard jealousy its rights in all financial matters. It is said that President McKinley has a comprehensive plan of currency reform which he will recommend in his message next December. As the President is an old hand in congressional matters—having in that a huge advantage over Mr. Cleveland—he ought to know that no congress will be likely to follow the dictates of the President in any matter of taxation or finance. Already the men who hope to be on the house committee on banking and currency and the senators on the finance committee are saying that they understand their own business, and propose to originate any currency scheme which is presented to the country.—Illustrated American.

Factories and Protection Sentiment.

The springing up of factories throughout the south has been followed by a growth of protective sentiment and Republican membership in congress from that section. More than thirty votes from the south were cast for a protective tariff measure in the house, and the southern states had thirty-three Republican members in last congress, while in no preceding congress had the party been represented by more than half that number from that section. When Democrats from North and South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas join with the Republicans in supporting protective views and a protective tariff bill, there can remain no doubt of the growth of Republican principles in that section.

Five Bad Months for Silver.

The five months since the election have been bad ones for the silver cause. Japan, to which the silver people were accustomed to point as the most brilliant exponent of the advantages of the free coinage of silver, has adopted the gold standard at the ratio of 32 to 1. Russia, which was accounted a silver country, has announced that she is going to the gold standard. China, which, with her 400,000,000 people, was accounted in the list of silver users, announced through her officials a currency change which is equivalent to the adoption of the gold standard. Truly these are depressing days for the free silver theorists.

The only persons who are expressing dissatisfaction with the new tariff bill are the foreigners and importers. Germany, Canada, England, and other foreign countries are scolding about the Dingley bill; so is the reform club, of New York, which is made up principally of importers.

The Reform club of New York is spreading broadcast over the country an offer of newspaper plate matter with which it proposes to attack the Dingley bill. This is not surprising. The Reform club is composed mostly of importers, who naturally want a low tariff, and are against protection.

The chief objection offered to the Dingley bill is that it is a bill. The people want it to become an act and that very promptly. Ex-Candidate Bryan called upon Vice-President Hobart during his recent visit to Washington. It is served, however, that he did not serve prospective candidates.