

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

WOMEN OF THE BIBLE.

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And these were a bitterness of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah, Gen. 26:35.

Esau likewise took to himself two wives. If Jacob had his Leah and Rachel, Esau married his Judith and Bashemath. These two young women were Hittites. They sprang from Canaanite families, and as such by birth and training they were devoted to the cult and practices of that deeply degraded form of idolatry wherewith the original inhabitants of Canaan had grievously offended the Lord. Hence marriage with them was a breach of faith on the part of Esau. He well knew that such alliances were under the divine ban, and that they went contrary to the holy calling to which his father's family had been called for God, when away from Ur of the Chaldees, they had been sent to Canaan.

There was an urgent necessity that Abraham and his family should get away from Ur. The idolatry which was in vogue in Mesopotamia was comparatively chaste. And this but made the danger all the greater, that unconsciously Abraham and his people might yield to its seductive influence. And so they were sent to Canaan where the practices of idolatrous worship had well nigh become bestial. In this fair and beautiful land of Canaan idolatry had assumed such repulsively gross and low forms that no man or woman, in whose breast there glowed so much as a spark of affection for the pure worship of Jehovah, ran the least danger of being led astray by it. In its milder form, such as it was practiced in Ur, idolatry might indeed be a menace; but not in its degraded form in Canaan. Such degradation of self and desecration of holy things could not attract; it could only repel.

And for this reason it was so grievous a breach of faith on the part of Esau that he did not hesitate to take two wives from among these degraded people; for thereby, as it were, he deliberately invited the danger, that this God-defying idolatry of the tribes of Canaan should communicate itself to the holy family.

Thus Judith and Bashemath are pitifully notorious for the fact that in the Holy Bible they are examples of young women such as a young man from a godly home should not marry. For nothing is recorded of them save that they sprang from idolatrous families; that Esau took them to wife; and that this unfortunate alliance became a cause of "bitterness of spirit" to Isaac and Rebekah. This does not mean that Judith and Bashemath were of a trying disposition, or that they were unmanageable and therefore difficult to get along with. This does not appear at all to have been the case. On the contrary we may reasonably suppose that they were attractive and pleasing maidens, who had been practically trained in all the affairs of domestic and social life. Esau was not the kind of man who, when once he had made up his mind to take Canaanite wives, would set his affections upon girls which were in the least degree repulsive. Hence there is no doubt but that all the bitterness of spirit which these two young women caused Isaac and Rebekah sprang from the fact of their idolatrous faith and the wide difference of habits and manners that went with it.

In their tent-life Isaac and Rebekah had ever maintained the holy traditions of Abraham and Sarah. Their manner

of life was of that quiet, pious and sober kind to which God had accustomed the first Patriarch by the inworking of faith. And now in their old age these two young women came into their tents who had no part with them in the fear of the Lord, and who were used to the artificial and sensual style of life of the heathen who know not God. This gave rise to points of difference between the habits of godliness and the worldly practices of Judith and Bashemath. With these differences Esau sided with his wives in opposition to his father and mother. And so the evening of life of the second Patriarch went down in sorrow of soul.

In the Scripture this state of things is forbidden the church of God. In her midst the danger presents itself again and again that young men from godly homes become entangled in the net of worldly and frivolous women who knew not God, who have no love for their Saviour, and who burn license to the idols of the world. And when this ends in an alliance the sorrow which comes to such homes cannot be estimated. With advancing years father and mother are no longer able to give right tone to the family life. The unbelieving and worldly minded women bring in their methods and practices. By their worldliness the honor of the cross of Christ is lost from view. And when from such an alliance children are born it is only by a miracle wrought of God that the fear of his name continues itself in such a generation.

And therefore Esau and his Judith and Bashemath stand as a beacon out at sea for every godly generation. The great evil of such un-Christian alliances must be kept out from the congregations of the people of God. And this can be done, provided the godly father and mother are godly in the dealings with their children from the very start. The effort to extinguish the fire, when by their own neglect the flames are already in full blaze, will avail but little. To leave children to follow their own pleasure in early days, and later on to allow them all sorts of companions and fellowship with the world; and then to give them warning; and when the evil is born, to seek to oppose it, is like trying to pull up the weeds which one's own hand has sown. From earliest infancy the seed of the church must be reared in the fear of God, and be held back from fellowship with the idolatrous world. Then, and then only, no Judith and no Bashemath shall embitter the evening of your life.—The Christian Intelligencer.

WHISTLING.

In boyhood when you journeyed home
And darkness wrapped the world,
Weird beasts and ogres lurked about.

Each bush an imp would hold.

The rocks took unfamiliar shapes.

The trees were stiff and stark,

And then to keep your courage up

You whistled in the dark.

You travel through this vale of tears

In darkness wrapped around;

You do not know from where you come

Nor whither you are bound.

Strange shapes arise on every side

More dread than goblins are,

Devourers worse than ogres grim

Your shadowed pathway bar.

And then you strike Old Hundred up

Your spunk to keep a spark,

For, after all, what is a hymn

But whistling in the dark?

A DAUGHTER'S THOUGHTFUL-
NESS.

"Has father come yet? I haven't heard the whistles!" called Agnes, as she slipped from her pony and ran toward the veranda, where her mother was sitting.

"No, dear, it isn't quite time. Have you had a pleasant ride?" Mrs. Gifford looked up from her sewing, smilingly.

"Oh, I had such a delightful scamper! You can't think how lovely the river road is, mother; but I hurried back to go after father. It won't take but a few minutes to put Jack into the cart, and the girl flew upstairs to change her riding habit for a pretty pink gingham.

A few weeks before Agnes' uncle had made her a present of a pony, a cart and a saddle. How much she enjoyed the rides on Jack's back! And there was always room for two in a little cart.

The whistles were just blowing for six o'clock when Agnes drove up to the large building in process of erection on the other side of the town. The carpenters were making ready to climb down from the scaffolding.

"There's your girl with her pony-cart, Gifford!" sang out one of the men. Agnes was watching him, and she was more than repaid for her self-denial by the look upon her father's face as he turned toward her.

"Hello, daddy!" Agnes called joyously, as he came toward her.

"I don't know about getting in beside such a pretty pink pony; I might crush some of her petals," said Mr. Gifford, jocosely.

"Why, daddy, how you do compliment! Hop right in and Jack will take you home in no time; you'll enjoy the ride."

"Indeed I shall; I was just dreading the long walk. I feel pretty tired to-night; but it rests me wonderfully, daughter, to think you remembered."

And then Agnes' cheeks grew rosier, and her heart gave a quick, warm thrill. How glad, how very glad she was! She never thought that father would have cared so much.

BOBY'S LILY.

Oh, dear, how queer things turn out sometimes!

You see, I had an Easter lily, and Jenny had an Easter lily, and they were both full of buds, only Jenny's buds were 'most open, and mine were only green; and I didn't want Jenny to have flowers before I did. I always want to get ahead of Jenny, 'cause—well I don't know why, but I do.

I asked mamma what made flowers open, and she said: "Sunshine and warm rain." So I set my lily on the windowsill in the sun, but I couldn't think where to find any warm rain.

Then I heard the tea-kettle singing away on the stove, and I thought what a nice, warm rain it would make to pour the water out of the spout on my lily, and so I could have flowers when Jenny didn't.

But what do you s'pose? Just as soon as it felt the water from the tea-kettle spout, that lazy old lily began to curl up and wilt and wither till it was all dead, leaves and buds and all!

I didn't cry much, 'cause I'm seven years old; but I tell you I felt bad. And Jenny said: "Don't cry! You can have all my flowers. I'd rather you would than keep 'em myself—honestly."

But that didn't make me feel a bit better, 'cause, you know, then I felt ashamed!—Youth's Companion.