

## AN OLD-WORLD HARVEST.

Who does not know the story of Ruth the Moabitess? Who does not admire her courage, her affection, her humility, her industry? Who is not glad at the happy ending of the little romance of the harvest field? For indeed the book of Ruth is a little romance. It contains those elements that in fiction excite our interests and rouse our sympathies: the poor young widow, a stranger in a strange land, the rich unknown kinsman, the rencontre amid the waving barley fields, the match-making instincts of the bereaved yet worldly-wise mother-in-law, and finally the marriage that restores prosperity and happiness again to both Ruth and Naomi.

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Naomi is not a typical mother-in-law by any means; that is if we accept the modern theories that make her a jest, or paint her a tyrant. A very tender relationship must have existed between Naomi and her sons' wives, a relationship that had deep fibres in old associations and mutually sacred memories. Both volunteered to leave home and kindred for the sake of their dead husbands' mother. That both were sincere is probable, that one was, is undoubted; for Ruth wins her point, and clings to her mother-in-law with that self-forgetting irresistible appeal, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn 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." It was indeed a self-sacrificing avowal of devotion that Ruth made. Think for a moment what it meant. It meant giving up home and friends and religion—and who can doubt that she held them dear?—it meant a rooting up of herself and her affections from the scenes where they had blossomed and grown, scenes where she had known a happy youth and married joys; it meant transplanting herself to a new soil, where perchance she might find it arid, bare, unfriendly; it meant the care and burden of an aged woman, to bear with her complaints and fretfulness; it meant the rejection of possible suitors and the prospect of again finding a happy home among her own people. But Ruth did not make calculations, she simply followed the promptings of a loving nature. Sentiment is an easy thing to simulate, and effective too! Ruth might have stopped short as Orpah did, and yet gained contemporary sympathy and esteem; she had only to take a tearful demonstrative farewell of her mother-in-law, to talk fluently of her own sorrow, inviting commiseration for her hard lot, in a word to make all the outward show of grief that appeals to the senses.

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We can follow in imagination how it fared with these two desolate women—back again in Naomi's fatherland. Daily the pressure of poverty became harder to bear. For Naomi's friends seem to have made no effort on her behalf further than discussing her return, and its conditions. Poverty is never a welcome guest, and it was but natural for them to conveniently forget this old neighbor, who had come back among them empty and sad from her wanderings. Consequently, it was imperative need that first sent Ruth among the gleaners. It was the time of the barley harvest. The time would correspond with our spring, and from the remembrance of similar home scenes we can call up visions of that harvest time—the broad fields of ripe grain, the busy reapers, the gay tones of their voices as the golden barley fell before their scythes, the many maidens stooping to gather the scattered sheaves, or pausing to exchange a pleasant word with their companions, then the needed rest and refreshment, the alfresco meals under the blue heavens, while the soft breeze ruffled the uncut barley.

But see, the master moves among the mown grain. His eye glances keenly but kindly among the groups of workers, and one who is not of his maidens attracts his attention. He learns her name—Ruth, the Moabitess. No contemptible pride hurts him that one who is a kinswoman should be gathering for a poor sustenance the stalks his workmen leave. Boaz behaves with the utmost courtesy and addresses the stranger in reassuring and respectful words: "Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the fields that they do reap. Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn." And then, when Ruth is surprised at the graciousness of this great man whose fields she had invaded, he puts her at ease by frankly telling her that he knows her history, while he commends her conduct and invokes a blessing upon her. It is not too much to say that Boaz is the type of

## A Perfect Gentleman.

In giving permission and encouragement to Ruth's gleanings, he also ensures that she shall proceed without annoyance, "have I not charged the young men?"—and with a thoughtfulness rare in those who themselves know not what hunger is, arranges that she may join his maidens and enjoy the plentiful supply of food and drink provided for them. One little action, however, reveals more fully perhaps than any other the fine fibres of his manhood. He draws aside his reapers that he may bid them "let fall on purpose some handfuls for her that she may glean them; and rebuke her not." It was a practical kindness done in the most delicate fashion. A clumsy man, equally generous, would have been inclined to offer her gifts, to have said, "Never mind any more gleanings; I shall give you what you need." Not so Boaz. With a delicate perception of her feelings he would not insult her by proffering alms. She had chosen the manner of helping herself; he had no right to interfere, but he would quietly make her work easier, and that without obtruding himself, or posing before her as a Lord Bountiful. Indeed, presumably during the two months of harvest that Ruth continued to glean in his fields he never again approached her. She was a young woman in straitened circumstances, obliged to undertake the humble task of gleanings, but nevertheless Boaz treated her with consideration and respect, and avoided making her position among his maidens embarrassing or conspicuous. All the courtly homage, all the extravagance of a chivalrous code are prompted by no truer spirit of gallantry than that which prompted Boaz to give that order to his reapers to let fall the sheaves that Ruth's gleanings might be with profit.

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The story of Ruth and Boaz is a little pastoral, and it brings with it a breezy open-air fragrance of rural life, while Boaz himself, kind, just, unostentatious, seeking an advantage over no one, is worthy to be termed "an honorable man;" and since, true politeness belongs to no age or clime or race, the men of to-day, despite our boasted civilization, might do well to take example from the manners of this Eastern old-world gentleman.—L.A.M.P.

## A POOR SUBSTITUTE.

The Catholic Register.

Professor Go'dwin Smith, has, it seems, just given a long and heavy letter on "Man and His Destiny" to the New York Sun, part of which was published in the Toronto World

of Monday. Toronto's well known Professor, under the guise of "one of the many who doubt," plays the part of the iconoclast, tearing away all beliefs in the Scriptures, Old and New, and with it all belief in a Creator and in the world's Redeemer. The doctrine of immortality is swept out of existence to the entire satisfaction of the Professor, and he tells us, "the belief that man has an immortal soul inserted into a mortal body, from which, being, as Bishop Butler phrases it, 'indiscernible,' it is parted at death, has become untenable. We know that man is one, that all grows and develops together. Imagination cannot picture a disembodied soul. The spiritualist apparitions are always corporal."

We have no intention of arguing with our learned fellow-citizen. We would simply say that his statement unsupported by proof, does not make a thing so and against his assertion we have the belief of at least three hundred million of the world's inhabitants that the doctrine that the soul is parted from the body at death is not only tenable, but likewise very real. We shall not attempt any proof of this; we adopt the same method as does the learned writer in his letter to the Sun. Professor Smith shows where to find proofs if he seeks them, and in case he may be in doubt he will find the Faith of these three hundred million distinctly defined and proven in the little book which may be got for a penny, and is called Butler's Catechism.

Having made chaps of all faith and hope, Professor Smith says: "Meanwhile the earth is beautiful; we have society with all its interests; we have friendships, love and marriage; we have beauty and art. We must trust that the power which will regulate the future reveals itself in these."

And this is what is given in place of the great virtues which have made martyrs and heroes, which have supported the poor and made the burdens of life bearable throughout the centuries. "The earth is beautiful."

What comfort is this to the toiler in the mines, the factory or the field, who treads his narrow and never varying path and whose vision is too tired and whose range is too limited to see or recognize the beauty. "We have society with all its interests." Again we would say, what is either of these to the vast majority? Nothing but empty sound. The world everywhere has marriage, but not always love, and as for "beauty and art," their presence or absence is ever a matter upon which statements and opinions may differ, and to expect that authoritative power will reveal itself in such, is indeed a sorry anchor upon which to fasten our expectations for a happy solution of things now inexplicable.

It is a sad retrospect, that of a long life given to study and search ending in such failure. But it is the old story, the finite trying to measure the infinite, and as of old, a voice comes out of a whirlwind and asks, "Who is this that wrappeth up sentences in unskillful words?" for in as much as the contentions of the writer to the New York Sun are ineffectual in providing any remedy for the ills of those who doubt, so we may term his words unskilled. There is nothing for it but that our learned Professor, of whom Toronto is in many ways so justly proud, should come back to the point from which he started, to that childish faith which accepts the teachings of Christianity in their entirety, because for such, and such alone, is there any understanding and promise of that alluring field—the "Kingdom of Heaven."

May you be just as happy as you like to see anybody else.