

THE
REMEMBRANCER.

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

FOR

THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

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“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them. Yea, . . . I think it meet . . . to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.”

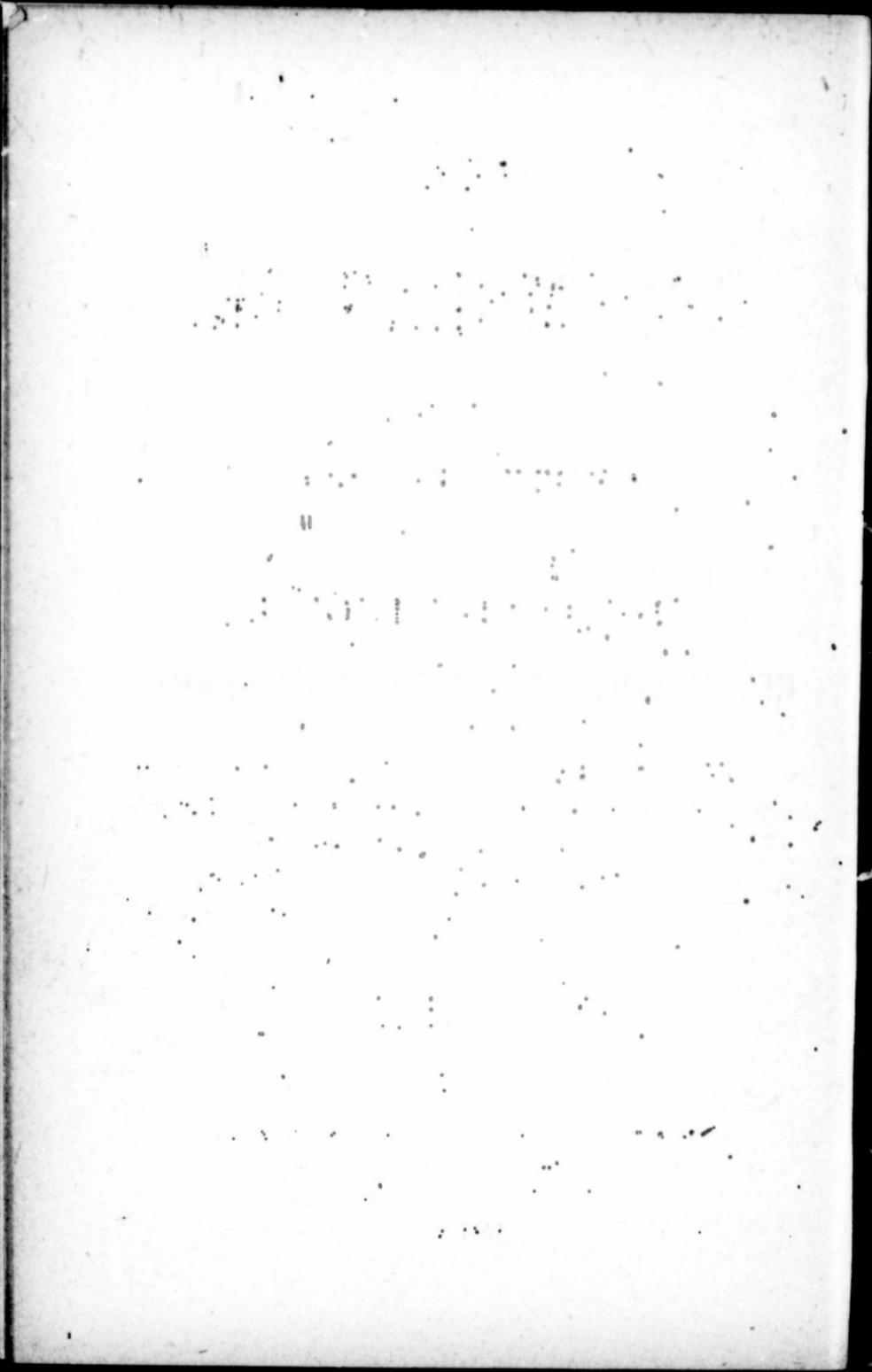
—2nd Peter i. 12, 13

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The Remembrancer.

" WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT."

2 COR., V. 7.

" Not by sight" can we guide our feet,
Safe through the perils we this day meet :
Easy and smooth as the path may seem,
Dangers lurk where we least should dream ;
The net is not spread in sight of the bird,
'Mid Eden's flowers was the tempter heard,
And great is the need when life looks fair,
That we closely cling to our Father's care.
O keep us Lord when the world seems bright,
Walking by faith and not by sight.

" Not by sight" when a few steps on,
All the brightness of life seems gone :
Our earthly sunshine is clouded o'er,
We see the joy of our hearts no more.
Shall we sit desolate ? Nay, but rise
By faith to the good that beyond this lies :
God is preparing in cloud and gloom,
Showers of blessing whence grace shall bloom.
So keep us, Lord, through Thy Spirit's might,
Walking by faith and not by sight.

" Not by sight !" It is best to lean
On the hand that's guiding us though unseen ;
Yes, best in suspense to linger, till
God's time is come to reveal His will.
Best in perplexities far, to wait,
Till He the "crooked things shall make straight,"
Best, for the honour of His great name,
Best, for the blessing we then may claim,

So keep us, Lord, through Thy Spirit's might,
Walking by faith and not by sight.

O foolish those who would walk by sight !
What will ye do in death's dark night ?
It is faith alone can triumph then,
Faith in the Saviour of sinful men.
Thousands have told with their last faint breath,
How He they trusted was near in death,
He has brought them safe where they see at last,
The meaning of all the mysterious past.
O keep us, Lord, till we meet in Light,
Walking by faith and not by sight.

FAITH.

[AN EXTRACT.]

It is characteristic of faith to reckon on God, not simply spite of difficulty, but spite of impossibility.

Faith concerns not itself about means ; it counts upon the promise of God. To the natural man the believer may seem to lack prudence ; nevertheless, from the moment it becomes a question of means which render the thing easy to man, it is no longer God acting ; it is no longer His work where means are looked to. When with man there is impossibility, God must come in ; and it is so much the more evidenced to be the right way, since God only does that which He wills. Faith has reference to His will, and to that only ; thus it consults not either about means or circumstances ; in other words, it consults not with flesh and blood.

WHERE FAITH IS WEAK, EXTERNAL MEANS ARE BEFOREHAND RECKONED ON IN THE WORK OF GOD. LET US REMEMBER THAT WHEN THINGS ARE FEASIBLE TO MAN, THERE IS NO LONGER NEED OF THE ENERGY OF THE SPIRIT. Christians do much, and effect little—why?

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him.”

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

HEBREWS XI., 8-18.

Quite a new principle was brought to light when God began to deal with Abraham; *i. e.*, the principle of calling out. God distinctly called Abraham. Many other things are connected with Abraham, as father of the faithful, and a pattern model man, to show forth God's dealings: he was the first that God called forth out of his own country. One of the first principles of truth to a soul lies in the discovery that Abraham made; that is, the personal existence of God, and an invitation from Him to keep in His company—“Come unto the land that I shall shew thee.” Many may not have denied the existence of God, but as to any personal connection, it would never have entered their minds unless He had revealed Himself. Others had faith, too, but it did not come out like Abraham's. Abel shewed his by offering a lamb. Again, we get Enoch's call, but his heart was above before he went on high. Noah's lot was

cast in exceedingly evil days ; he believed God, prepared the ark, and was carried out of one earth to another. (We do not get Lot called apart.) Abraham is among an idolatrous people, and God comes and calls him, saying, " I have a place for you, and there I will bless you and make you a blessing in every way, and you shall know what it is to have the living God as your help in every time of need."

I want you who are old and you who are young in faith, to set to your seal that God has introduced Himself as a living Person to your soul. Directly we have Jesus Christ, we have God, and all our associations are connected with God. Faith produces different effects ; the moment you bring in anything save God and His word, that is not faith. The path of faith is never the path of nature ; nature takes quite a contrary course. " What ! " Abraham's kindred might have said, " a stranger, a God we do not know, has told you to leave us all, and you are going forth in a mist, not knowing where He is going to take you to." God had spoken, and Abraham as an individual had to act on His word, and God did accredit His own word to Abraham. It then became a question whether Abraham could say, " I will put aside all the reasonings of my friends, and listen only to Thee." When did his faith fail ? When he came to a difficulty, and stopped to consider for himself, and settle for himself, which way to get out of it. God had told him the way, but he got upon cir-

cumstances and off faith. First, he had been told to leave all ; if it came to that he must go without Terah.* He did not leave all, he takes with him Terah and Lot, and the effects become evident ; he had to stop till Terah died, and he could not get on till Lot was separated from him.

God will not give up with His people, He will have patience till they know it will not do to depart from His word. Not until after Terah died did Abraham come to Canaan ; first, he had to get rid of Terah, and then of Lot. If I interrupt the word of the Lord in any one part, it lowers the tone of my whole soul unconsciously. There was Lot, and besides a famine came. There was corn in Egypt ; Abraham says, " I will go there." The lack of faith carries him there, and he gets into the thick of the fight, loses Sarah—where is she? He is at his wits end, and what can he do? Nothing; departure from the word has brought him into all this, and what was to help him out of it? God's own word. Again he is sent forth in the power and presence of God.

Remark in the eighth verse, when called to go out, by faith Abraham obeyed, and went forth, not knowing whither he went. Nothing tries and searches human nature so much as uncertainty ; we cannot bear suspense (there is relief in the worst certainty) ; but that is just God's principle of acting with us. He does not want you to know

* It is a significant fact that Terah means "delay."—EDITOR R.

how to face famine. He does not want Abraham to know how His promises are to be made good : his seed was to be as the stars of heaven ; how was this to be, seeing he had no child ? God has given him everything but that ; silver and gold, flocks and herds, and three hundred trained servants. He was a man most remarkable in his day, and all seemed to say to his heart, " Who is to inherit all this ? " It ever seemed to be bringing to his heart the thought that he had no children, and poor Sarah tried to smuggle a child into the house, but that was not an Isaac. The question was continually raised, " Where is your city ? where is your seed ? " He had to wait a long time, and it came at last by a miracle wrought of God. The very prosperity of Abraham forced him to hang on God. Who is to be the heir ? the man-servant ? No, wait ; hang upon God.

Remark in the ninth verse, the pilgrim and stranger character kept up : dwelling in tabernacles (tents) was the mark of a stranger and a pilgrim. Tents were made for Israel in the wilderness ; they did not have houses till in the land of Canaan. God's dwelling in the wilderness is a tent, in the land a temple. Abraham dwelt in a tent ; Lot did so too at first ; but he did not keep up the pilgrim character. First, he pitched his tent towards Sodom, then sat in the gate, and had a house in Sodom. Abraham kept it up (looked for a city) ; he knew there was such a city, and the Holy Ghost adds, " Whose builder and maker is

God." Remark how this man's faith was sustained. He can look above everything counting on it. There it was ; he had not yet got the fulfillment of the promise, but he was to have it ; but he had a faith sustained by God's word. As heavenly pilgrims, we cannot say we have got what we hope for ; but the time is coming when we shall go right into heaven, and cease to be pilgrims and strangers down here.

Is our faith set above ? If God and you are keeping company, do you think He will let you have a single need unsatisfied ? Oh, what a jealous God He is ! What a wall of fire round about us ! When He separates any one to Himself, He plants the blood of Christ right behind them. If He has spoken to us of His glory, and told us not to mind earthly things, should not our associations be, not of ties of nature down here, but of His company, His country, His interests ? Waiting as people who do want to keep up their character of strangership, plainly confessing by their walk and ways that they are pilgrims on their way to a better country ? Even poor Jacob could not help being a pilgrim. How came Jacob to be in a position to receive wages of Laban ? Because he got off the ground of being a pilgrim. He had a deal to say at the end of how long and how dreary his life had been, whilst Abraham's whole pathway is strewed with blessings every step. God was with him. Jacob too dwelt in a tent. If God has revealed Himself to your heart, and spoken to you

of future glory, separating you unto Himself, He would not like you to be passing through the wilderness "hardly bestead," not with Jacob's experience, talking of the great things you have to give up. He does not like that. He wants you to be like Abraham, saying, "Look at all my blessings; look how close God has set me to Himself, and see how He is going to fill all my circumstances, to make me rise over all my difficulties, and make His own presence so sweet to me, that I would rather be in difficulties with Him than out of them without Him."

We learn what God is by Abraham's walk. Look, too, at Paul, when moved out of everything: when in difficulties of all kinds he always had a song to the praise of God's grace. What a difference between God saying, "Here is something good for you," and your holding out your hand and taking it, and saying you are not good enough for what God gives you. Christ would not give Himself to us in resurrection till He was given to the Father. He must come down to us as the Father's gift. Whether it be sorrow or joy, if it is God's gift, we can say to everything else, "That is not good enough for me." Did God's people lack power in His company to feel that He was their portion? The very country not theirs till God had given it to them. What you must be looking out for is God's gift at the present time. If anything bright offers itself (not God's gift) do not take it, it will not have sweetness, you will

not find God in it. Let Him be first, and you keep behind Him. If a pilgrim, you will not be thinking of settling in houses, you will hang all your hopes on the place where the Son is ; but do not take anything but God's gift to you at the present time. If God has prepared a city for me, should my mind be absorbed by anything down here ? Abraham refuses to touch a single thing, and the moment after God says, " I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." We never read of His being the God of Lot. He promised to be Abraham's God to Lot, and fetched him out of Sodom ; but Lot was not in the way to talk of Him as " my God." What ! the God of a man settled in Sodom ? No ! but the God of pilgrims and strangers. The same untiring grace and love ; but God could not blazon it abroad that He was the God of Lot in Sodom. There was no planning with Abraham. When we deal with God we cannot make plans ; directly we make a plan we get our feet entangled.

You and God must go together ; there can be no planning if with God. The trial God puts Abraham to in regard to offering up Isaac is very remarkable. God tries hearts often in the same way. I do not know anything more heart-searching than this that Abraham had put before him, but he left it with God to settle all his difficulty. It was just the test whether he was hanging on God or not. Yes, he was ; and he gives up Isaac, his hand is stretched out to slay, but God comes

in ; it was not in the heart of the Father to let that father slay his son. Oh, what a feeling must there have been in Abraham, the feeling of all blessing from first to last being in the approbation of God Himself, the feeling in the soul that the faith given by God had been tried and not found wanting ! How God does try our faith in many ways ! Do you know what suspense is ? Do you know what it is not to see your own way on ? And if you put forth a single thing to help yourself, does He not move it out of His way ? To be kept in suspense is one way that we may be compelled to wait upon God ; to look to, to hang upon Him, in the being satisfied with that God, so as to leave all to Him for the fulfilment of our desires.

To be in suspense, to be a pilgrim and a stranger, not to take anything, but wait till God gives. Oh, a man walking with God will have a happy, a blessed experience ! Otherwise there will be only sorrow and disappointment, as Lot and Jacob found.



FRAGMENT.—In Hebrews, faith is looked upon as an active principle of endurance and conduct ; reliance on God's word through grace for practice. In Romans, it is the principle on which we are justified, in virtue of Christ's work, the ground of peace. In the former it is the active-working faith of the saint—in the latter the no-working faith of the sinner.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF RUTH.

INTRODUCTORY.

The events of the book of Ruth unfold themselves in the midst of the sorrowful circumstances that characterized the administration of the Judges, and yet there is nothing in common between the line of thought of this narrative and of that which preceded it. The book of Judges describes to us the ruin of Israel placed upon the footing of responsibility—a ruin irremediable, in spite of the tender care of Divine pity which sought to restore the people and often even did so partially. In contrast to the dryness and barrenness of the ways of unfaithful man as seen in the book of Judges, that of Ruth is full of refreshment. One finds there the “brooks of water, the fountains and depths” of which Moses speaks (Deut. viii. 7); it is fresh as the dawn of morning. All there is redolent of grace, and not a false note disturbs this delightful harmony. It is a green oasis in the desert, a genuine idyl in the midst of the dark history of Israel. When we meditate on this little book of four chapters, infinite are the proportions which it assumes for our souls. The sphere of action has not changed, and yet it might be said that the sentiments and affections of heaven have come to choose a home on the earth. One can hardly conceive that this country, a witness of so many wars, infamies and abominable idolatries, was at the same time the scene of events whose

simplicity carries us back to the blessed times of the patriarchs.

It is explained thus. Since the fall two histories run side by side ; that of man's responsibility with its consequences ; and that of God's counsels and promises with the manner of their accomplishment in spite of everything. Now the latter is *grace*. It could be nothing else when it is a question of the divine counsels and promises, for the responsibility of man can not touch them, his guilt can in no wise change them, a scene of ruin is incapable of hindering them, and God rebukes Satan even when he opposes their course (Zech. iii. 2). In proportion as evil is extended does the history of grace develop itself in the most wondrous way and with irresistible progress, until it reaches the purposed end. It has the heart of God as its starting point, and the person of the Lord Jesus as its centre. It tends finally to the pre-eminent glory of the Second Man and to the blessings which we share with Him. For this reason is it that the book of Ruth concludes with the prophetic mention of Him who is the Root and the Offspring of David, the glorious Redeemer promised to Israel.

But if Ruth is a book of grace, it is also necessarily a book of faith. Grace cannot go on without the latter, for it is faith which lays hold of and appropriates it to itself, which clings to the divine promises and to the people of the promises ; which, in short, finds its delight in Him who is the

sustainer and heir of those promises. Such is the wondrous character of the pages that we are about to look at.

CHAPTER I.

“ Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land ” (ver. 1). These words indicate the special circumstances of the scene. We are in the days of the judges, in the land of Israel, but there is a *famine*, a time when the providential ways of God are exercised in judgment against His people. “ And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.” Bethlehem—the town which was to be the birth place of the Messiah (Mic. v. 2), and was to have the privilege of seeing shine forth, at its rising, the Star waited for by Israel—in the days of Naomi looked only upon utter human destitution and catastrophe. The hand which had often sustained the people was withdrawn, and everything failed them. This truth, developed in the book of Judges, that of Ruth only confirms, but adds thereto certain important facts in vs. 2-5.

During these days of ruin, and under the dealings of God in chastisement—Elimelech (a characteristic name signifying “ God is king ”) expatriated himself with Naomi (“ My pleasantness ”) and his children. Under the divine government

they seek a refuge among the Gentiles. In the midst of this desolation, Naomi is still, in spite of everything, linked up with her husband and her children. Her name is not changed and she still bears it in spite of the ruin. But Elimelech ("God is king") dies and Naomi is left a widow. By joining in affinity with the idolatrous nation of Moab, her sons profane themselves and die. To all appearance the race of Elimelech is extinct without hope of posterity; and "My pleasantness," in mourning and henceforth barren, is plunged into bitterness.

"And Naomi arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab; for she had heard in the country of Moab how that *Jehovah had visited His people in giving them bread*. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah" (vs. 6, 7). At the news that Jehovah was showing grace to His people, Naomi arises and starts to return to her country. The state of Israel had not changed, but God Himself had put an end to those days of providential judgment that had fallen on the nation, and this poor widow, bowed down under the weight of affliction, could hope for better days. *Grace* is then, as we have said, the first and dominant note in the book of Ruth. All the blessings which it contains are dependent on the fact that "Jehovah had visited His people in giving them bread." By

this well known expression, the Old Testament characterizes the blessings brought to Israel by the Messiah. "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread" (Ps. cxxxii. 15). Ah! if the nation had been willing, these benefits would have been their permanent portion when Christ was come into their midst multiplying the loaves for the 5000 and for the 4000!

The daughters in law of Naomi accompany her, prompted by the thought of *going with her to her people* (ver. 10). But this good intention is not enough, for to be found in connection with *grace* nothing less than *faith* will do. The behaviour of Orpah and of Ruth illustrates this principle. Outwardly, there was no difference between them. Both start and go with Naomi, proving thus their attachment to her. The affection of Orpah is not at all wanting in reality: she weeps at the very thought of leaving her mother in law; full of sympathy, she again sheds tears abundantly when leaving her. Orpah, the Moabitess, also loved the people of Naomi: "*They* said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." But it is quite possible to have a very amiable character without faith. It is faith that creates a gulph between these two women so alike in so many points. The natural heart, struggling with impossibilities, draws back, whilst faith is developed thereby and its strength augmented therein. Orpah relinquishes the path of uncertainty. What could

Naomi offer her? Ruined, stricken of God and full of bitterness, had she yet any more sons in her womb to give as husbands to her daughters in law? Orpah kisses her mother in law and returns unto her people *and unto her gods* (ver. 15). There at last is the secret of the natural heart exposed. It can cling to the people of God without belonging to Him. A woman like Naomi is well deserving of sympathy, but there is no indication of faith there. Faith separates us from idols *from the very first*, causing us to abandon *our gods*, and it turns us to the true God. Such was the first step of the Thessalonians in the path of faith (1 Thes. i. 9). Orpah, on the contrary, turns away from Naomi and from the God of Israel, to turn back unto her people and unto her gods. Struggling with the difficulty she shows herself incapable of bearing the strain. She goes away weeping, but she goes away, like that amiable young man who departed very sorrowful, not being able to make up his mind to part with his possessions to follow a Master that was poor and despised.

Very different is Ruth's case. Precious faith, full of assurance, determination and decision! How clearly she sees her way! Nothing seems to move her. She listens to Naomi, but her conviction is settled, for she knows of only one path, which, for her, is the *necessary* one. What becomes of the *impossibilities* of nature, before the *necessities* of faith? Ruth does not allow herself to be stopped by the impossibility of getting a

husband, nor even by the fact that the hand of Jehovah was gone out against her mother in law, and only sees in the accumulated obstacles fresh reasons for not forsaking her object. Naomi is everything for Ruth, and Ruth *clave* unto Naomi. "Intreat me not to leave 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. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (vs. 16, 17). To accompany Naomi, to journey, to dwell, to die with this one who, for Ruth, is the only possible link with God and His people—such is the desire of this woman of faith. But her intentions go further than mere companionship; she *identifies herself* with the people, whatever their state may be, to belong thus to the God of Israel, the true God who changes not: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Having turned her back on Moab and its idols, she belongs henceforth to new objects. Without possibility of separation she identifies herself with them; let death come in, it is powerless to break such links. This is the meeting place between God and faith, the place of agreement and of identification. How this narrative makes us thoroughly understand that faith is the only means of putting man—the sinner—in connection with God! Like as Ruth *clave* to Naomi so does faith cleave to the Mediator, object of the counsels of

God, who only can give a sure connection with the true God, an immovable position before Him.

Precious touching journey is this of these two afflicted women going up again to Bethlehem! Naomi went away rich and full, and was coming back empty. Had there been any desolation comparable to hers? Deprived of her husband and her two sons, too old to have a husband, without human hope of an heir,—a true picture of Israel—all was over for her as far as nature and the law were concerned. Far more than that, the hand of Jehovah was stretched out against her, and the Almighty Himself, whom she might expect to be the sustainer of her faith, had filled her with bitterness under the weight of His chastisement. She had changed her name "My pleasantness" for that of "Mara" (Bitter), because the God of Israel (Jehovah) had testified against her and the God of Abraham (The Almighty) had afflicted her. Ruth, her companion—also a widow and without children (but who had never had any), being moreover a stranger and daughter of an accursed race—had never known the blessings that had passed away from Israel, and had no claim whatever to their promises. They go together, the one acknowledging fully her state and the hand that was heavy upon her, the other having no other links with God than her faith and Naomi. Their road is strewn with difficulties, but they see shining brightly a star which guides them. Thanks be to Him; Jehovah has visited His people in giving

them bread. They come to Bethlehem together in the beginning of barley harvest, thus arriving at the place of blessing at the very moment when it is dispensed. It is there that they are about to meet with Boaz !

The reader, even slightly acquainted with prophecy, cannot fail to see in all this scene a picture of the past history of Israel and of the future ways of Jehovah with them. Although they have been banished among the Gentiles for their unfaithfulness, certain links may still exist between the people and God. Has not Jehovah spoken by their prophet : "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" (Ezek. xi. 16)? But their Elimelech is dead ; the sole head of the family of Israel, Christ—the Messiah—has been cut off ; then the nation has become as a widow stript of her children and barren in the midst of the Gentiles. But when they acknowledge and accept the judgment of God on them and drink, in humiliation, this cup of bitterness, then there will be the dawn of a new day for this poor people. The old Israel of God, object, in its hoary old age, of the ways of Jehovah to the stranger, will set forth in bitterness of soul to recover the blessings of grace. With it arises a new Israel, a Lo-ammi which was "not His people" but which finding a germ in Ruth, returns, a poor remnant from the fields of Moab to become again

the "people of God." It is shown us under the figure of a stranger, because on the footing of the law there was no claim to the promises, and that it is the new principles of grace and faith that places them in connection with Jehovah. On this latter footing God acknowledges them as His people and gives them a higher place of supreme honour, associating them with the glory of David and of the Messiah. Out of barren ground issues a refreshing spring which only waits the moment when all human hope is lost, to show itself. This fountain becomes a running stream, a large deep river, the river of divine grace, which carries Israel along to the ocean of Messianic and millennial blessings!

(To be continued, D.V.)



EXTRACT.—The confidence of faith is to be manifested in the Christian life as a whole. Christians are often brought to a stand, through measuring their own strength with temptation, instead of exclusive reference to God. They go on well up to a certain point. One talks of his family, another of the future; in the various concerns of life our reasonings mean but this: "I have not the faith that counts on God." Faith has reference entirely and exclusively to God. Duty often leads into difficulty; but I have the consolation of saying, "God is there, and victory certain;" otherwise, in my apprehension, there is something stronger than God. This demands a perfect practical submission of the will.