OLD TESTAMENT WEDDING

Sunday Discourse by Dr. Chapman, the Noted Pastor-Evangelist.

The Love Romance of Isaac and Rebekah Retold—Teaches a Lesson of Divine Providence.

[The Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman, D. D., is now the most distinguished and best known evangelist in the country. He was second only to Dr. Talmage, but since the death of that famous preacher Dr. Chapman has the undisputed possession of the Pulpit as the preacher to influence the plain people. His services as an evangelist are in constant demand. His sermons have stirred the hearts of men and women to a degree unapproached by any latter-day divine. J. Wilbur Chapman was born in Richmond, Ind., June 17, 1859. He was educated at Oberlin College and Lake Forest University, and graduated for the ministry from the Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1882. His sermons are simple and direct, so that their influence is not so much due to exciting the emotions as to winning the hearts and convincing the minds of those who hear him. Dr. Chapman is now in charge of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, New York City.]

NEW YORK CITY.—The Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, the popular pastor-evangelist, who is now preaching to overflowing congregations in this city, has furnished the following eloquent sermon to the press. It was preached from the text Genesis xxiv, 58: "Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go."

This is the story of an Old Testament wedding in which our text is found, and naturally because it is a marriage scene it is interesting. The saying that "all the world loves a lover" is very true, and I suppose is not without meaning the wide world round, but there is something about an Oriental wedding which is especially interesting. Again and again in this Book of Inspiration such scenes are recorded, but of all the Old Testament stories I place this the first of its kind.

If I were an artist I should paint it, and if I were an artist worthy of my theme it would surpass the other masterpieces in the world's great gallery of art, notably that of the Russian wedding feast, which has had admiration everywhere. The heart of the picture is an old man; his hair is whitened with grief which in the past days has taken hold upon him, and the lines of his countenance have been peculiarly softened by the touch of the finger of sorrow, leaving an expression which can only come to those who have been obliged to bear great burdens and endure great afflictions.

Abraham is practically alone in the world, for Sarah is gone. She who had journeyed with him to Bethel, down into Egypt and back again to Hebron, the place of fellowship, is at rest, and in the cave of Machpelah she waits by his side to hear the summons given at the resurrection morning. Abraham was desolate. They had made so long a journey together that their lives were like one.

"In the long years liker had they grown,
Till at the last she set herself to him
Like perfect music unto noble words."

Above him is God, who has kept His word with him when He said, "As I was with Moses so I will be with thee;" about him the angels who keep watch over him all day and all the night in sleepless vigil; before him the trusted servant to whom he speaks, "And Abraham was old and well stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughter of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land; must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; He shall send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master, and sware to him concerning that matter." Genesis 24: 1-9.

One of the incidents of the picture would be the setting forth of this servant. "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor." Genesis 24: 10. One of the most picturesque sights of the East is a camel train. With a peculiar swinging gait these strange animals of the desert push their way along on a most interesting journey, but the picture can only be appreciated when looked upon in the atmosphere of the Orient. I counted 100 one morning journeying toward the pyramids beyond Cairo. The train of this old servant was made up of ten camels only, but they were the camels of a prince. Their trappings were gorgeous, and side by side with Abraham we watch them as they go until they are lost to view.

The next incident is the approach to Nahor. It is the hour of sunset; the day is dying out of the sky. There is really nothing that can be compared with that time in the East, when the day is far spent and the night is at hand. The birds hush their song, the cattle are still, all nature is at rest, the hills are transfigured and the rivers and the seas are like most beautiful jewels. Ladened with precious gifts the ten camels kneel just as the women are coming forth to draw water from the well. The old servant as they kneel begins to pray. "And let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also; let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast showed kindness unto my master." Genesis 24: 14, and the answer comes at once. "And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder." Genesis 24: 15.

Elastic of step, modest of manner, pure of heart, fair of face she stands in the presence of the servant of Abraham. As to parentage she was the daughter of Bethuel; as to condition she was of virgin purity; as to appearance she was fair to look upon; as to education she was trained to domestic service. This is Rebekah, the bride of the picture. "And the man wondering at her held his peace, to witness whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not. And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold; and said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee; is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough and room to lodge in. And the man bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord." Genesis 24: 21-26.

The next incident is the wooing and the departure. The old servant tells his story, makes his appeal, and the text is spoken, "Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go." Genesis 24: 58. And the camel train is moving once more, the family of Rebekah watching until the last camel is lost to view in the distance. The journey is uneventful, but the end of it is more than striking. "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master; therefore she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her unto his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her, and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." Genesis 24: 63-67.

I.

Here is a lesson of divine providence. Hear Abraham when he says, "The Lord God of heaven which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; He shall send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." Genesis, 24: 7. We think of this as Old Testament history simply. We hear God saying, "As I was with Moses I will be with thee," and we say certainly, but not with myself. Why it is we always think of God's care of the patriarchs as miracles, without its counterpart is in our own lives, when God is our Father, everything in our life is precious to Him, and the very hairs of our head are numbered? He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and He is your God. The angel of the Lord is still living. We have grown worldly wise and speak of impressions, convictions, coincidences, impulses, when all the time it is the angel of the Lord speaking to us. Have you noticed that there were two servants, one winged one in the air and the other in charge of the camels. It is always so. It is by this double ministry that providences are confirmed. All through life we see it; in the conversion of men, in things common and in things unusual. You say, "I feel a strong impulse to do a certain thing." It is the angel of the Lord troubling the stagnation of your heart. You say that I am impressed that I ought to do thus and so, when it is the finger of God writing His purpose on your soul. These are but the heavenly ministers of Jehovah. Look around you and you will find some opportunity for service fitting into your impulse or conviction, and that which yesterday you wondered at as a coincidence fills you with the spirit of worship to-day as you say, "The Lord was in this place and I knew it not." "Life without a religious interpretation is little less than a tragedy," while life thus viewed may have many twists and turns, but ends in heaven.

II.

I find here a good picture of real service. When Eleazar was leaving Abraham he said, "Peradventure, the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land; must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?" And Abraham said unto him, "Beware, thou, that thou bring not my son thither again. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; He shall send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only bring not my son thither again." Genesis 24: 5-8.

It is the same figure that we have of the watchman upon the walls. Both of these appeal strongly to us. We are not free from responsibility until we have tried at least to win every soul over whom we have an influence for Christ. I cannot convert even the smallest child, nor can you, but I can try to tell them what I have been commissioned to say, for I am my brother's keeper. Oh, for the intense desire to do our Master's will that Eleazar had. His camels are cared for, he has entered the house of Bethuel. He is weary with his long journey, the savory meat prepared for his feast appeals to his weakness, but hear him say, "And there was set meat before him to eat; but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, speak on." Genesis 24: 33. Is not this like Paul on his missionary journey. "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." 2 Corinthians 11: 26-27. And is it not like Jesus Himself, when He is weary by the well side, hungry with much fasting and sends His disciple to buy meat which He forgot to eat because of the woman by His side. I am sure Rebekah saw in him the great love of Isaac's heart. And when they said, "Wilt thou go with this man? She said, I will go."

III.

Yet there is more to the story than this, I am sure. I know it because I read that what was written afore time was written for our instruction. The great object and aim of the Bible is to illustrate the operations of divine grace, to show the works of Providence in the minute things of life, to show us that provision has been made for the fulfillment of the great scheme of Redemption. God speaks in every way; by direct statement, by parable, by picture, by types, by symbols, if by all means He may make known the riches of His grace; and here is a whole chapter, one of the longest in the Pentateuch, taken up with a wedding story; there must be some reason. The spirit of God would not use an entire chapter to describe the journey of Abraham to Mt. Moriah, and another to tell of the death of Sarah, and another to give an account of a wooing and a wedding without meaning. I think it must be that it is all to illustrate the mystery of the church. In the 22d chapter of Genesis, the son is offered up as a sacrifice, at least Abraham is willing to offer him; in the 23d chapter of Genesis Sarah is laid aside in the tomb, while in the 24th chapter the servant is sent forth to win a bride for the son. It is at least a perfect illustration of that New Testament story where Christ was offered, the only begotten Son of God, where Israel was rejected because they would not come home. The Holy Spirit, as a servant of God, is calling forth from the world a bride for the Son. This is the work of this generation. The Holy Spirit is the one of whom Jesus spoke when He said, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeded from the Father, He shall testify of Me." John 15: 26. One day we shall meet the Bridegroom, our eyes shall see Him and the wedding feast shall be spread, and all Heaven shall resound with the music of that glad day.

IV.

I wish in closing to take up the appeal of the Holy Spirit, and change the text just a little bit and say to you all, "Wilt thou go with this Man?" And I refer to Christ as this Man. He is the chiefest among ten thousand. I bid you come to Him who walked with men, ate with sinners, smiled with little children, wept with weary women and died with sinful malfactors. "Wilt thou go with this Man?" You who are Christians I ask you the question, for many of you have not gone with Him, for "How can two walk together except they are agreed?" And if you will go with Him it must be in some better way than in other days.

First: You must share His opinion of men. He was always excusing weakness, always helping the distressed and always rebuking unkind criticism. You may need to forgive the man who injured you yesterday, for He did, and if you would be like Him you must do the same. "Wilt thou go with this Man?"

Second: He will lead you into the homes where distress is tarrying, relieving embarrassment as when He made the water into wine. Driving the wolf from the door as when He fed the multitudes. You will need to give your money as well as your sympathy. "Wilt thou go with this Man?" I think I see Him treading the streets of our own city where distress has gone before Him. There is a child with a heavy heart, and He stops long enough to breathe a benediction of peace. Yonder is a man upon the verge of despair, and this matchless Savior of ours bids him come unto Him that he may find rest. There is a woman whose child is dying, whose mother is on the brink of Eternity, and He who spoke as never man spake bids her listen as He says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

There is a celebrated picture which represents Jesus walking through the multitude. Before Him all the people are diseased, while back of Him as he trods they are all perfectly well. This is His influence always. "Wilt thou go with this Man?"

V.

I put it to all those of you who are not Christians, and bid you remember that it is not an invitation to come to Christ simply but a command, and in His name, after the manner of Eleazar, I say, "Deal kindly and truly with my Master." By His beautiful life, wilt thou go? By His agony in the Garden, wilt thou go? By His betrayal and His trial of mockery, wilt thou go? By His shameful death, I ask you once again, wilt thou go? His marred face and His bleeding back, His breaking heart, His cry of agony, wilt thou go with this Man? He hath trodden the wine press alone for you; He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief for you. It is the moment of crisis in your life. "Wilt thou go with this Man?" Answer, and answer it now as did Rebekah, "I will go." Oh, say it; say it, and the Devil shall hear it and tremble, the angels shall hear it and shout for joy. God Himself shall hear it and shall rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Trap Imbedded in Tree.

While felling a tree on Eli Marvin's farm near Jefferson, Ind., Oscar Walters, the tenant, made a singular discovery. A large steel trap was found imbedded in the tree, the wood having grown over it to a thickness of three inches. Attached to the trap was a long chain, this being imbedded about six inches. On the spring of the trap was stamped the name of George Emory.

Mr. Emory reports that the trap has been missing for twenty-two years. The owner was a famous trapper in those days, and did a flourishing business in 'coon hides, those animals being plentiful in the woods then. In making his rounds one day he found that one trap has disappeared. He thought that it had been stolen, but had no idea that the thief was a four-footed one. When the trap was found in the tree it was about forty feet from the ground. After being cut out it was returned to Mr. Emory, who remembered its loss and identified it. He thinks that the trap was carried up into the tree by a 'coon.

Submarine Camera.

One of the most interesting of new inventions is a camera for taking photographs in the depths of the sea. It consists, more correctly speaking, of two cameras, which are so arranged as to be focused upon a common point. Each is inclosed in a large steel bulb to protect it against the pressure of the water.

In the middle of the apparatus is a glass fronted chamber, which contains a powerful electric light. When the light is turned on it shines through the glass and illuminates the water for a considerable distance.

Thus the object to be photographed is brightly lighted up, and it only remains to expose the plates, which is accomplished by the help of electric wires that run up through rubber tubes to the surface of the water above.

HIS CRAZE FOR NUMBERS.

Man Possessed by a Mania for Memorizing Them.

"I read recently," writes a correspondent, "of the habit that some men have of counting the steps in the flights of stairs they ascend and descend, of touching the iron posts they pass and so on. I have a habit similar to these that annoys me greatly.

"I make note of all sorts of numbers and remember them; they float in my brain persistently, as the tune of some popular but commonplace song will go with all of us. Thus, when I am reading a book I remember the page I leave off at—say, page 182—and all day long that page will be in my mind, and when I have finished the book I can tell you at just what pages I stopped reading at each sitting.

"When I get off a train I know the locomotive's number, and the numbers of the cars, and for hours I keep running over these numbers, as though it were of paramount importance for me to remember them, when, as a matter of fact, it is my desire to forget them at once. I can tell you the number of stairs in at least fifty flights that I occasionally use, and the number of flagstones in the walk from my house to the railroad station, and the number of iron poles in each square on Chestnut street, from Broad street down to Delaware avenue, and dear knows how many other things beside.

"My mind is nothing but a storehouse of numbers, and every day the storehouse gets a little fuller. The thing is a disease almost," concludes the correspondent, according to the Philadelphia Record, "but I can't find any cure for it."

His Grateful First Client.

When Henry C. Smith of Michigan started to practice law he had as his first client a negro, and he won the case. The hearing was before a local magistrate, and the charge was stealing a ring. As his client had employment on a farm outside the town where Smith first hung up his shingle, the young lawyer is said to have taken the precaution of hiring a carriage and riding out to the farmer, where he secured promise of the negro's wages for a few days as his retainer.

"I made an eloquent plea," said Mr. Smith yesterday in recounting the proceedings of that case. "I did not fail to ring the changes on the downtrodden race and all that sort of thing, with the result that my client went free. Still, I had a sort of lingering suspicion that the verdict was certainly all my man deserved, and when the case was over I wanted to be rid of him. He continued to haunt my office.

"'Why, don't you go out and chase around with the boys?' I said finally, in some impatience.

"'Deed, boss, I thought yo' fee war too small, an' I want yer to accept this 'ere ring.'

"And the negro produced from his jeans the ring which he had been supposed to have stolen."

But Mr. Smith refused to accept the proffer of stolen goods.

Out of the Ordinary.

A great fad in England is for the ladies to have themselves photographed as moving pictures.

When a storm is approaching glow worms are far more brilliant than at other times.

No person under 16 years of age is permitted to enter a theater or tavern in Heligeland.

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Bay Stallion, whorl in center between the eyes, white at bottom of right hind heel, foaled April 6th, 1897 ; 15½ hands high, weighs 1000 pounds Bred by Wm. Russell Allen, Pittsfield, Mass. I have owned this horse since he was two years old. He is stylish, has good disposition, is a fine driver and shows speed though never having been trained. His breeding should recommend him to any one wishing to raise first-class drivers. Sire Lancelot 6860, record (5) 2.23; Champion, sire at 5 and 6 years old.

FIRST DAM :—Mintaka, half sister to Refina, 2.08¼ ; by Chichester 6247 (2.25¼), sire of Luxon 2.11¼ ; Stornaway 2.19, and eight others.

SECOND DAM :— Mina Wilkes, dam of Refina 2.08¼, and sister to Kentucky Wilkes 2.21¼; by George Wilkes 519 (2.22), sire of '83.

THIRD DAM :—Minna, dam of Kentucky Wilkes 2 21¼; Madison Wilkes 2.24¼, grandam of Refina 2.08¼, etc., by Red Jacket (inbred Morgan.)

FOURTH DAM :—Undine by Grey Eagle ; Lancelot 6860, (2 23) is young at the stud and is the sire of seven, including Lyric 2.14¼, Malvolis 2.17¼, and Unhamen 2.22¼ ; by Messenger Duroc 106 ; dam Green Mountain Maid, dam of nine: by Harry Clay 45

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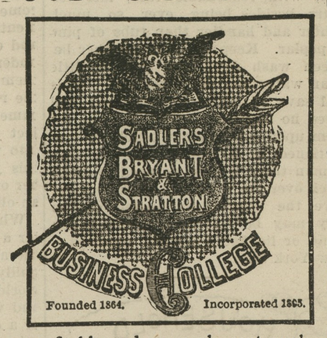
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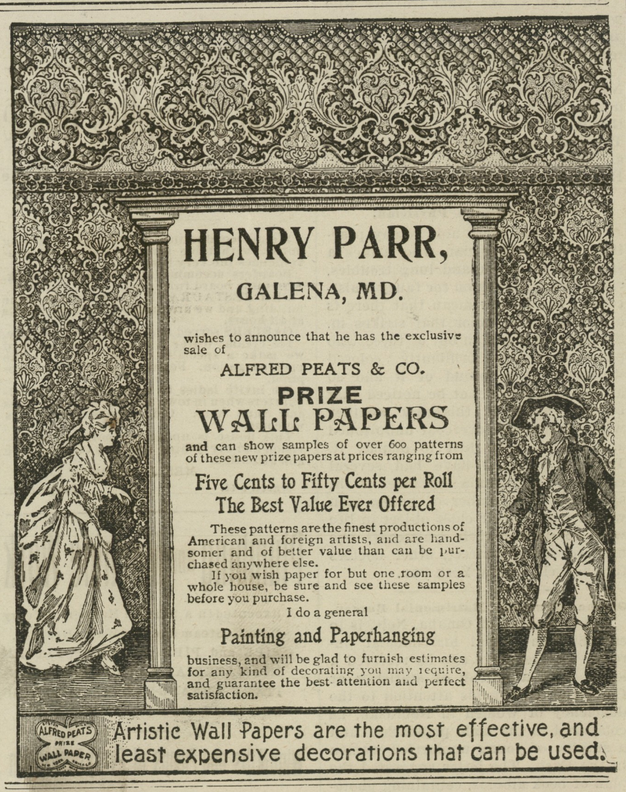
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