

The Dairyman's Daughter

A B Simpson refers to a tract that tells the story of a Dairyman's daughter

In chapter 7 of a book entitled "The Supernatural" by A B Simpson, this founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, states: "A little English girl (Elizabeth Wallbridge was her name) lived (on the Isle of Wight) and died unknown to all but her family and her pastor. But the beautiful story of her life was written by her minister, Leigh Richmond, in a tract called The Dairyman's Daughter" (so named because Ms. Wallbridge's Father herded a few dairy cows).

What The American Tract Society says about this tract

"The Dairyman's Daughter is a booklet of 52 pages; it is a narrative of the religious experience of Elizabeth Wallbridge who, after a lingering sickness of a year and a half, died (of tuberculosis) May 3, 1801, at the age of 31 years. Her parents although worthy were of the lowly ranks of the poor, and their children were put to service at an early age. Ms Wallbridge's life until the age of 26 was of the most worldly character. Never immoral, she was willful, proud, selfish and irreligious. Her life was, however, transformed by a sermon and she became very devout".

"Ms Wallbridge said (about herself), "Often I mourn over my sins and sometimes have a great conflict, through unbelief, fear, and temptation, to return to my old ways--I was laughed at by some, scolded by others, scorned by my enemies and pitied by my friends, but I forgave and prayed for my persecutors, and remembered how very lately I had acted this same way towards others myself."

"The Dairyman's Daughter" tract was first issued in tract form in 1814. By 1828, 14 years after its first publication, its circulation exceeded four million copies in 19 languages, and the number of conversions from its impact on readers is estimated in the thousands. Its popularity increased for several decades and it is estimated that more than ten million copies have been distributed in many languages. Conservative writers have ventured the claim that "The Dairyman's Daughter" has had a more extensive influence and a wider circulation than any other similar publication".

Here are some excerpts from the tract the full text of which is available online

The relationship between Ms Wallbridge and the author of the tract Leigh Richmond began when she wrote him a letter, which he quotes – here are a few of the things she said followed by some of his comments on her letter:

"Rev. Sir, I take the liberty to write to you. Pray excuse me, for I have never

spoken to you. But I once heard you when you preached at the Church. I believe you are a faithful preacher, to warn sinners to flee from the wrath that will be revealed against all those that live in sin, and die impenitent. Pray go on in the strength of the Lord. And may He bless you, and crown your labor of love with success, and give you Souls....

"The Lord has promised to be with those whom He calls and sends forth to preach his Word to the end of time: for without Him we can do nothing...May (love) constrain you to seek the wandering souls of men with the fervent desire to spend and be spent for his glory! May the unction of the Holy Spirit attend the word spoken by you with power, and convey deep conviction to the hearts of your hearers! May many of them experience the Divine change of being made new creatures in Christ!

"Sir, be fervent in prayer with God for the conviction and conversion of sinners. His power is great, and who can withstand it? He has promised to answer the prayer of faith, that is put up in his Son's name: 'Ask what ye will, it shall be granted you.' How this should strengthen our faith, when we are taught by the Word and the Spirit how to pray!"

The Rev. Richmond's thoughts on receiving the letter from Ms. Wallbridge included the following: "It is peculiarly gratifying to observe how frequently, among the poorer classes of mankind, the sunshine of mercy beams upon the heart, and bears witness to the image of Christ which the Spirit of God has impressed thereupon. Among such, the sincerity and simplicity of the Christian character appear unencumbered by those obstacles to spirituality of mind and conversation, which too often prove a great hindrance to those who live in the higher ranks. Many are the difficulties which riches, worldly consequence, high connections, and the luxuriant refinements of polished society, throw in the way of religious profession..."

If we want to see religion in its most simple and pure character, we must look for it among the poor of this world, who are rich in faith. How often is the poor man's cottage the palace of God! Many can truly declare, that they have there learned the most valuable lessons of faith and hope, and there witnessed the most striking demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God".

Zeph 3:12 I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

A B Simpson in his book continues with more of the story of the tract

That little tract fell into the hands of a young English noble who was wasting his splendid intellect in intemperate living, and William Wilberforce arose from his

reading of the tract a consecrated Christian and became the emancipator of all the slaves in the British Empire. (Side note: The life of William Wilberforce was recently featured in the full length motion picture entitled "Amazing Grace" the producers of which called the movie, "An inspiring story of how one man's life changed the world" - Yes, one man into whose hands had fallen a tract called The Dairyman's Daughter).

More Dairyman's Daughter tract excerpts from another of Ms Wallbridge's letters

"Sunday. Rev. Sir, I am this day deprived of an opportunity of attending the house of God to worship Him. But, glory be to his name! He is not confined to time nor place. I feel Him present with me where I am, and his presence makes my paradise; for where He is, is heaven. I pray God that a double portion of his grace and Holy Spirit may rest upon you this day; that his blessing may attend all your faithful labors; and that you may find the truth of his Word, assuring us, that wherever we assemble together in his name, there He is in the midst to bless every waiting soul.

"How precious are all his promises! We ought never to doubt the truth of his Word; for He will never deceive us if we go on in faith, always expecting to receive what his goodness waits to give.

"Sir, I hope Mrs. Richmond and you are both of one heart and one mind. Then you will sweetly agree in all things that make for your present and eternal happiness. Christ sent his disciples out, not singly, but two and two, that they might comfort and help each other in those ways and works which their Lord commanded them to pursue.

"It has been my lot to have been alone the greatest part of the time that I have known the ways of God. I therefore find it such a treat to my soul when I can meet with any who loves to talk of the goodness and love of God, and all his gracious dealings".

The Rev Richmond after several visits to the family's humble cottage said this about Ms Wallbridge "I soon discovered how eager and how successful also she had been in her endeavors to bring her father and mother to the knowledge and experience of the truth. This is a lovely feature in the character of a young Christian. If it have pleased God, in the free dispensation of his mercy, to call the child by his grace, while the parent remains still in ignorance and sin, how great is the duty incumbent on that child to do what is possible to promote the conversion of those to whom so much is owing. Happy is it when the ties of grace sanctify those of nature".

Prov 11:30 **The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he (She) that wins souls is wise.**

Pro 28:1 ...**The righteous are bold as a lion.**

A B Simpson continues his account of the impact of The Dairyman's Daughter

“William Wilberforce wrote a little book called “The Practical View of Religion”, and it fell into the hands of an easy-going Scottish preacher who was actually thinking of giving up his pulpit to teach mathematics; but out of that little book was born the mighty soul of Thomas Chalmers, and out of his life came the (birth of the) The Free Church of Scotland, and the great movement for Christ and missions which that noble Church has led and to which many of us owe our Christian hopes.

(And so A B Simpson was himself profoundly impacted by The Free Church of Scotland, a Church group founded by Thomas Chalmers – who was moved by a tract written by William Wilberforce, who in turn was moved by a tract called The Dairyman's Daughter. Christianity Today on its website has this to say about Thomas Chalmers: “He was an unrelenting advocate for the poor who took on a laser like focus to answer the question he himself once posed – What is the most effectual method of making Christianity so to bear on a population as that it shall reach every door and be brought into contact with all families?” The birth of The Free Church of Scotland was in part his answer to this question. Christianity Today continues “In a few years the Free Church of Scotland erected 800 Churches and 500 Schools to become the second largest Church in Scotland”.

No wonder A B Simpson concludes his account of the tract called The Dairyman's Daughter by saying “How marvelous the chain of divine working!”

The 1949 revival on the Island of Lewis

One last fact – and in what Churches do you suppose a proclamation was read that became the first step in the mighty revival on the Island of Lewis in 1949? The Free Churches of Scotland! How great is the God of Elizabeth Wallbridge The Dairyman's Daughter.

1 Cor 1:26 **For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:**

27 **But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;**

28 **And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not (are nothing), to bring to nought (nothing) things that are:**

29 **That no flesh should glory in his presence.**

KJV