

Ruth was gazing at an old and enchanted town, which had once been a nest for the wealthy, through the glass pane. She was wondering how beautiful it would be if the place was still adorned with luxurious items of the wealthy. Ruth was among four people selected by Mrs. Wood, who were to go to the Shire-hall to repair the ball-dresses for the nobles and the wealthy. The ball at the shire-hall was brilliant and captured the mind and eye of Miss Ruth. Then, Miss Duncombe's dress was torn with a vase of flowers. She along with Mr. Bellingham came to Ruth and asked her to repair the tear.

Miss Duncombe was harsh on Ruth, but Mr. Bellingham gave a flower for her toil in repairing the dress. The next day when Miss Ruth was going to a shop, she saw a boy drowning. Fortunately, Mr. Bellingham arrived and saved him. He gave a purse to Miss Ruth to tend to the needs of the drowned boy and to have a chance to see her on next Sunday at St. Nicolas's Church. As Jenny got sick, she did not have a chance to tend to the boy. On the appointed Sunday, Mr. Bellingham asked her to check a painting he wanted to buy in Mrs. Mason's room, which she gladly accepted. Miss Ruth's father was a farmer and mother were a sickly delicate woman.

After their marriage, Mr. Hilton was stricken with misfortunes. His father died of sorrow after her mother was found dead in her own bed. She often thought of the time when her mother was alive. The regular meeting with Mr. Bellingham and Miss Ruth at the church on Sundays evoked a sense of mixed joy and guilt in Miss Ruth's heart. One day, Mr. Bellingham arranged a long walk to her old house so that she could tell her wonderful times there. But she cried, the old house reminded her of her mother and her merry times. The old Thomas prayed for her when he saw the devil around her. Unfortunately, on her way back home, she and Mrs. Mason met incidentally, and Mrs. Mason saw that her hand had been held by a gentleman. She told her that she did not want the impertinent apprentice like her anymore and would write to her guardian. She was confounded and Mr. Bellingham told Ruth to trust him and come with him to London. After a few moments of struggle, she consented to come with him. She waited at an inn drinking tea, then she remembered she had better go to old Thomas's instead of London. But it was too late, and before she could reason with Mr. Bellingham, the carriage drove towards London. They stayed at an Inn in Wales, and Ruth felt responsible for Mr. Bellingham's loneliness.

She met an interesting, deformed man. It was a beautiful country. One night, Mr. Bellingham fell ill, and Ruth and Mrs. Morgan rushed to call the doctor, Dr. Jones. He said that it was a brain-fever and great care was needed for him. Ruth waited on him for three days, until his mother, an eccentric Mrs. Bellingham arrived with her own maids, and servants. No one was allowed to enter his room. Ruth was dying to know his condition, so she silently sneaked near the window. When Mrs. Bellingham opened the window, she asked her how he was. Mrs. Bellingham lectured his son about Ruth, and his son who was tired of her lecture consented not to see Ruth again and to settle this matter handsomely. His mother left a note with fifty pounds for Ruth before they moved out of the inn. Ruth as soon as she comprehended what was happening, she rushed out of the inn to the carriage leaving the note and money behind. On the way, she met the deformed hunchback named Benson again. She was thinking about leaving this world, but Mr. Benson stepped on a projecting stone and fell on heavy dew. She helped him get back to his lodging. She was so sick that she was found unconscious on her bed. Mr. Benson went to the inn to look for a doctor. Mrs. Morgan advised him to write to Mrs. Bellingham and he did so. Mrs. Bellingham did not send her maids, but only mentioned him about fifty pounds she left to Miss Ruth. So, Mr. Benson wrote to her sister, Faith, to come and nurse Ruth. Faith did come and nurse her until she found out that Ruth was carrying a child.

She thought that Ruth was depraved enough to carry an illegitimate child. However, she continued nursing her in a bewildered state. They decided to take her to their home as their distant relative. She had to be called a widow. They admired the fact that she sent back the fifty pounds given by Mrs. Bellingham. When Ruth arrived at Mr. Benson's, their house maid Sally suspected her of sins. Though she wore the wedding ring of Miss Benson's grandma, Sally forced her to cut her hair and wear a cap. But she felt compunction when she saw Ruth's meekness. Mr. and Miss Benson told Sally the truth, and Sally decided not to leave but to assist her master. It was a baby boy, but Ruth was afraid that there would be no father to prepare for the hard battle of life for him. Sally told Ruth that Master Dixon asked her to be her wife on his knees but got refused harshly by her. Weeks later, he got married to another woman. Ruth was sound asleep with her baby on her breast. Ruth told Miss Benson that she wants to move to a small and cheap cottage. However, Mr. Benson persuaded her to discuss the matter again only after the baby is a year old. Ruth christened her son as "Leonard" after her late grandfather. Mr. Benson taught Ruth and was amazed at her progress. One day, Mrs. Bradshaw told Miss Benson

that she wanted Ruth to be her daughter's governess. Leonard developed a habit of telling stories that are not truthful, but made a promise not to do again when he was confronted by Mr. Benson, with the blessing of her mother.

Ruth was in charge of Elizabeth and Mary, and both of them were so fond of her. Jemima Bradshaw, a dear friend of Ruth, was told by her father to behave well in front of Mr. Farquhar, as her dad wanted to arrange the profitable marriage. However, Jemima became so pale and detached after the talk with her father. So, he asked Ruth to persuade Jemima to favor Farquhar. At one dinner, Jemima becomes lively to Farquhar due to the mere presence of Ruth. However, her father thought Ruth had done a great job. Jemima found out her dad's plan from her mother and despised Ruth. To make matters worse, Farquhar transferred his attention to Ruth. One day, Elizabeth became ill and tired from a long walk with Ruth and her son, Leonard. So, Mr. Bradshaw proposed moving her child with Ruth to a seaside town as the election and an important person named Donne is coming to his house. Ruth went to Abemouth with Elizabeth and Mary, and cried hard as she missed Leonard a lot. Mr. Bradshaw, Mr. Benson, and Mr. Donne had a very good talk, and so Mr. Bradshaw wrote a letter to Ruth to prepare for Mr. Donne's visits to that town.

When Mr. Donne arrived the next day, the voice of him reminded Ruth of her lover. She remembered that he was the father of Leonard and descended into her own mirage of thoughts and debates. Through a clever scheme, Mr. Donne found out that Mrs. Deibigh was his Ruth and he tried to have a talk with her but she gave him no chance. Just before he left, he found out about the existence of their son, Leonard. Then, he wrote a letter to Ruth to meet for him and their son's sake. When he met her, he entreated, and urged Ruth to leave Leonard in his hand and to marry him. But she refused fiercely. She feared that she may not ever see him again for her fierce words. Mr. Donne Bellingham won the election and left. Ruth and the children were called back from their holiday to their home. And she learnt that Leonard was very ill. During the illness, Mr. Farquhar visited the house more often as he was courting Ruth to be her wife. Though Mr. Bradshaw won the election, he could not set his mind at ease as he gave some bribery. And Jemima also started to notice the attention shift of Mr. Farquhar to Ruth. She started feeling sad and jealous of Ruth. Her mother noticed that she was sad, so she asked her to buy a

bonnet for herself. Jemima did not want a new bonnet but went to the shop for her mother's sake, and she learnt all about the past of Ruth Hilton. From that day on, Jemima stayed cold to Ruth.

One day Jemima learnt from his brother that Mr. Donne was going to marry a meek girl. Not later, Mr. Bradshaw found out about the past of Ruth, and scolded and pushed Ruth out of her house. He came to Mr. Benson and scolded him and told him that he would stop coming to his Chapel. Ruth told Leonard the truth and she thought about going to his mother's town, Helmsy, leaving the Benson and Leonard but Mr. Benson told her not to go. Ruth has no means of earning now. Meanwhile, Jemima becomes more and more anxious to know about Ruth. And Mr. Farquhar becomes a frequent visitor to Mr. Benson's. Ruth cannot find any employment. Jemima and Mr. Farquhar married. Jemima wanted Ruth to visit her home. Ruth got employment as a sick nurse. Sick people respected her so much for her kind regard to them. Meanwhile, the young Richard forged the signature of Mr. Benson to sell the shares owned by both Mr. Benson and Mr. Bradshaw. Mrs. Bradshaw came to Benson's urging him not to prosecute his son, and they went to Mr. Farquhar and asked him to talk to Mr. Bradshaw.

The talk yielded nothing, and he was forbidden by Mr. Bradshaw. He went on to find Mr. Richard and found that his coach had overturned, and Richard was severely hurt. Jemima asked Mr. Benson to tell his father the news. Mr. Bradshaw got fit but later relieved that his son was still alive. Richard recovered and his father, Mr. Bradshaw, cut him out of their partnership. Later, Richard became more respectful in his conduct, and Mr. Farquhar told his father about his good manners. Mr. Bradshaw was seen praying at Mr. Benson's chapel again. The town was stricken with typhus fever and Ruth volunteered to be a nurse to care for those stricken with such fever. Everyone she knew warned her not to do so. Her heart was steadfast. She nursed them kindly with such tenderness and one day, Leonard came along to the hospital and heard praises for her mother's virtuous deeds from many. The fever slackened in the town, and Ruth came back home. Everyone welcomed her. The rector of the hospital came along to thank her and show her a letter of appreciation and told Ruth that he wished to be a guardian of Leonard. She asked him for a fortnight to consider. He then causally said Mr. Donne (aka Mr. Bellingham) was so sick with the fever and no one dared to nurse him. Ruth told him secretly that he was Leonard's father and allowed her to nurse him. He allowed her to nurse him for three days. On the third day, he was better, but Ruth got the fever and was rushed home. There she lay dead.

Leonard and many were in tears. Mr. Donne made a final appearance to offer any amount for Leonard's education but was scoffed at by Mr. Benson. Ruth's funeral was attended by the Bensons, the Bradshaws, and many others.

This summary was written by "Thura Htoo."

10-May-2024.