

3. Ruth shows a desire after God, as the result of her acquaintance with one of God's people. May we so live that others may be drawn to our God through us!

4. Ruth shows a spirit of helpfulness, bearing burdens and toiling for the support of Naomi. She was young, and could easily have earned her own living, but she took upon herself the burden of Naomi's support.

5. Ruth shows the reward which God gives to those who enter upon his service. She obtained a place in Israel, a home among God's people, an honored name in the record, and the privilege of being an ancestor of Jesus.

English Teacher's Notes.

It is not a light thing for a man to change his country and his people. Even when settled in some spot remote from the land of his birth he will not forget to what race he belongs nor where his home is. There is a story of an English interpreter in the East who, in conversation with a supposed Turkish officer, incautiously spoke in a somewhat contemptuous manner of Scotland and the Scots. To his surprise the officer turned and in broad Scotch threatened him with dire vengeance if he uttered another syllable against his country and people! There are cases in which a man seeks naturalization in a foreign country, becoming a subject of its king or its government, and renouncing entirely the protection of his own, but this for the sake of securing some decided advantage. It is rare for a woman to give up her native land except for her husband's sake, and even when she has been settled and has passed the greater part of her life away from the old home, she does not forget her nationality. "My fatherland," wrote one who had for years been queen of a neighboring country but who retained her affection for her German home and people. This feeling was no less strong in ancient than in modern times, and therefore the choice of Ruth, which is the subject of our lesson to-day, is one of peculiar and striking interest.

Ruth belonged to a nation whose pride is recorded in the sacred word. Isa. 16. 6; Jer. 48. 29. She herself is stated in the Mishna to have been a daughter of King Egion. From the history of her descendants it seems probable that she was at least royally connected. See 1 Sam. 22. 3, 4; comp. with chap. 4. 18. How she came to marry the son of the Israelite exile we do not know, but it is probable that Elimelech had been a man of means (comp. Naomi's words: "I came out full," ver. 21) and of position in his own country. Ruth and her sister-in-law were, however, eventually left the sole companions of the widowed Naomi, and when she started on her homeward journey they dutifully accompanied her to the borders of their own country. There, however, Naomi stopped and bade them count the cost of proceeding further. For Orpah this cost was too heavy, and she turned back to her old home. For there not only must home and friends be given up, habits altered, and new customs be conformed to; there

must be a distinct severance made between the old life and the new. Naomi could take no one with her into the land of Israel who was in heart a Moabite or had even a lurking tolerance for idol worship. The break must be made entirely and forever. And what had she to offer in return for all this? To the eye of sense, absolutely nothing. She was a widow now, poor and forgotten. The daughter who accompanied her would have to share her lot. She could not even look for a welcome in the land of her adoption. Having given up her own people she would yet be considered in Israel as an alien and a stranger. She could expect to form no new ties. Perpetual widowhood, (quite another thing to a young Eastern woman from what it is among ourselves!) poverty, and obscurity lay before her.

Of this lot Ruth made deliberate choice. Evidently there was strong affection for her mother-in-law to influence her. Yet not only would this have been in itself insufficient, but something was needed to account for its intensity. Our Golden Text tells us what this was: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." It was not mere earthly affection. Ruth loved Naomi as one who belonged to Jehovah. It was his favor, his service, his protection, that her heart was set upon, and Naomi was the one perhaps to whom she owed her knowledge of him and of his ways. And so, where to the eye of sense there was all to be lost and nothing to be gained, to the eye of faith it was just the reverse. She reckoned it enough to have the Lord for her portion.

The same definite and decided break is required now of those who would follow the Lord Jesus. With some it may require to be outward and visible. There may be the theater and the ball-room to give up. With others, whose lot is cast by circumstances among the professing children of God, it may be less apparent. But it must be none the less real. Our Golden Text no less than the story in which it finds a place teaches us this. "Thy people shall be my people," said Ruth, as well as "thy God my God." For she could not have chosen Jehovah as her God and yet have remained either actually or in heart among her own people. The adoption of the service of God carries with it an entire and irreversible change of citizenship: "Hearken, O daughter, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people and thy father's house;" "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God!"

The follower of Christ is called, as Ruth was, to renunciation. He may no longer fulfill "the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Eph. 2. 3. To the eye of sense this is loss. But the eye of faith will perceive, not only the grand outlook of the future, but the present blessedness of the companionship of Christ, of going where he goes, lodging where he lodges, and of descending with him to death and the grave. And the voice of faith can take up the words of Ruth's descendant and say: