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THE WOMAN WHO ADVENTURED

The International Sunday School Lesson for April 29 is "Ruth, The Faithful Daughter."—The Book of Ruth.

By William T. Ellis.

One day I was riding up from the Jordan Valley, through a rock defile, into the land of Moab. There came toward us a little company of the sort often seen in the migratory East. There was first the man, afoot, and without shoes and in poor raiment, carrying a staff. Beside him walked a donkey on which rode his wife and little child—a picture like that of Joseph, Mary and Jesus, fleeing to Egypt. We tarried for a moment of greetings by the way, and the man told us that his home was in Beersheba, but a local famine had driven him over into the fertile uplands of Moab, there to work and live until a harvest should be gleaned. Now he was on his way home.

The incident was so like that of Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons that it has stayed in my memory. Famine, which comes so quickly and easily to primitive people living always near the hunger line, had sent these Bethlehemites to the East. They had crossed the Jordan above the Dead Sea. On the high plain of Moab, where the winds blow chill in the mornings, there is to this day successful agriculture. I saw the farmers plowing with the same sort of crooked stick and oxen used in Elimelech's day. A fat land is Moab, and it gave succor and a home to the Bethlehemite immigrants.

Life in a New Land.

Who knows the heart of an immigrant? Only he who has been a stranger in a strange land; and he is never heard to disdain the alien, be he ever so poor. The four Jews from Bethlehem made a home for themselves in the new land; and the two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, took to themselves wives of the Moabite maidens. It seemed as if the family had established itself permanently in the healthful uplands of Moab.

Death, that great nullifier of all plans, destroyed this prospect, for the father and the two sons died, after ten years of life in Moab, leaving three childless widows behind them. New ties were thus created for the survivors with the land which had so hospitably provided for them. The three graves were strong links.

Nevertheless, Naomi, the mother, and now the head of the family, found her grief-smitten heart turning back to Bethlehem and its hills. The famine was long since past. Fond memory called her to the home of her girlhood and young widowhood. What homesickness is filling the hearts of aliens in America, only the Comforter of the lonely knows.

In Bethlehem dwelt the past; and the best promise for the future also. Elimelech had property there, and there were kinsmen, ready to fulfill the obligations which the hospitable East, with its strong sense of family ties, always imposes. Sentiment and prudence alike called Naomi back to Bethlehem.

The Woman Who Stayed By.

What should be done with these young widows? The natural recourse was for them to return to their own people, and make a new beginning in the Moabite life. Orpha so chose, despite her fondness for Naomi.

As we read the silly and cynical and cruel jokes about mothers-in-law, let us remember Naomi, whose character was such that she bound her dear ones in closest affection; and whose love for her daughters-in-law was so real and tender and abiding that one of them, Ruth, even made the great adventure of forsaking her blood-kindred, and the land of her birth, for the sake of cleaving to the mother of her husband.

Ruth and Naomi are among the most cherished personalities whom the Old Testament history has given to the world. They are an answer to the sneer that women are never loyal to women; and that there cannot be a true and noble friendship between women. Everybody knows instances of love and loyalty between women as beautiful as that of Naomi and Ruth; and a fair counterpart for the friendship of David and Jonathan. Blessed for both is the reciprocated affection of an older woman for a younger. Ruth prized Naomi's love above her life's old ties.

So she cried, when unselfish Naomi would have parted from her, in that spirit of self-sacrificing love which marks human nature at its highest level—and the beautiful cry of Ruth has given literature one of its richest gems, and has voiced the loyalty of a myriad hearts since:

"Entreat me not to leave thee; and to return from following thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God; where they die, will I die, and there will I be buried; Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if I should but depart thee and me."

The Great Decision.
Courageously making choice, Ruth dared all consequences. She had turned her back upon her old home, upon her kindred, upon the possibility of a second husband from among her own people, upon her ancestral faith; and she had elected to share the fortunes, good or ill, of a lone widow. Naomi's home, Naomi's peo-

ple, Naomi's God, were henceforth to be as her own.

God blesses the daring. High faith and noble loyalty are not forgotten by Him. He favors those who are brave enough to make decisions, and to adventure new enterprises. He seems particularly a God of pioneers. The splendid fortitude of Ruth was not to go unrewarded. For to her it was to be given that, in the new land, she should become an ancestor of Israel's great king, and of the world's Prince of Peace. We hear never another word about Orpha; she sank back into the commonplace prosperity of the majority who take no risks.

Back to Bethlehem (what a place of personalities that little old town has been, and is to this very day!) we follow the two widows. The unknown writer of this beautiful story vividly pictures the welcome given Naomi by her old neighbors and kinsfolk:

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and the women said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter); for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty; why call ye me Naomi, seeing Jehovah hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

In the Hard Days.

Loyalty is more than a matter of beautiful sentiments. It costs. The genuineness of loyalty is tested when it is required, as it always is, to descend from the high plane of noble words to the dead level of humdrum living. Protestations must be supported by practice. The ecstatic mood of swearing fealty had to be followed in Ruth's case, by providing a livelihood for herself and her mother-in-law. Despite all the new dogmas concerning emancipated womanhood, most of us feel that there is something wrong with an order of society which does not provide that men shall earn a livelihood for women.

Gleaning after the reapers—how art has seized upon the picture!—Ruth gathered the stray straws of grain that remained, to provide food for her companion and herself. The pictures of the scene are romantic, but it was back-breaking, wearisome and monotonous work, with the label of poverty attached to it. Thank God for the men and women, the world around, who are daily repeating the Ruth story and bearing the day's dreary load uncomplainingly, all for love's sake.

While about this lowly task, in the field of duty, Ruth won the notice of Boaz, a wealthy landowner and a kinsman of her husband's father. The tale ends in story-book fashion for rich farmer and poor gleaner were married, and that union was blessed by a son, Obed, the grandfather of David, the great king. The woman who adventured became the woman who won.

To Honor The Loyalists.

Belleville, April 26.—Thirty-seven local organizations of this city are pledged to make the 1924 celebration of the one hundred and fortieth anniversary of the coming of the United Empire Loyalists to Upper Canada a success. W. C. Milkel, K. C., a member of the association, who was instrumental in securing the celebration for the city, has been supported by every local association and fraternity.

Belleville's New Industry.

Belleville, April 26.—The third industry this month has been added to the industrial life of the city in the incorporation of the Baby Shoe Company of Belleville. It is expected that the plant will be turning out five hundred pairs of shoes per day by summer. Local capital is behind the industry.

Saskatchewan Elevator Company will construct at least 25 new elevators at rural points, involving an expenditure of from \$200,000 to \$300,000 during the present year. Sweden and Finland will be linked by a telephone cable by way of the Aland Islands.



W. J. BLACK, Deputy Minister of Immigration, who has arranged for the settlement of 13,000 British men, women and children in the Dominion, under the Empire Settlement Act.



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SMOKE OLD CHUM TOBACCO

The St. James Hotel, Montreal, will be taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railways and converted into an office building.

Joseph S. Goodwin, general manager of the Detroit Street Railways, died on Tuesday at his home in Detroit.