

THE EXPOSITOR.

THE BOOK OF RUTH.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the whole gallery of Scripture portraits there are few which are more familiar to us, or more attractive, than the sweet figure of "Ruth standing amid the alien corn." Nor is it the least of her attractions to the Christian heart that the blood of Ruth ran in the veins of Jesus of Nazareth. In his genealogy of our Lord, St. Matthew inscribes the names of only four women,—Thamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba; and among these four, Ruth easily holds the pre-eminence. Thamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba were all women of dubious virtue even when judged by the standards of antiquity; but, judged by the moral standard of any age, Ruth is not only pure and sweet as the fields in which she gleaned, she rises to an heroic pitch of unselfish devotion and love. Strength veiled in gentleness, heroism enhanced yet also concealed by humility, is as truly the characteristic of Ruth as it is of the Son of Man. We may find her aptest emblem in those exquisite wild flowers which hide their perfect blooms under their broad green leaves, and only reveal their presence by the subtle fragrance they shed upon the air. Ruth

is a true lily of the valley. It is not improbable, indeed, that her very name may be that of a flower, though not of the flower just mentioned. The common and accepted derivation of the Hebrew word *ruth* is "a friend;" and truly Ruth's face is as the face of a friend to us: but a learned and ingenious scholar has conjectured, with much probability, that *ruth* is an ancient Hebrew form of the Greek *ῥόδον*, the Latin *rosa*, the English *rose*, a word which denotes the *redness* of the flower; and, to say the least of it, it is very pleasant to think of Ruth as "*the Rose of Moab.*"

At what period the events narrated in this Book occurred we are not expressly told. All we are told is that it was "in the days when the Judges judged" (Chap. i. ver. 1). But as Israel was under the Judges for nearly five centuries—as long, let us say, as from the accession of the Plantagenet Henry V. to the present day—the phrase does not go far toward dating the Book. But another phrase in it (Chap. iv. vers. 21, 22), from which we learn that Boaz was the great grandfather of David, makes it pretty certain that the Judge, in whose days Ruth the alien was admitted to the Commonwealth of Israel, was the venerable but most unhappy Eli. Ruth's son was Jesse's father; Jesse was the father of David. It is very probable, therefore, that, when he was a child, Ruth may have fondled Jesse in her arms. "The Rose of Moab" is closely connected with "the Darling of Israel."

We may be reasonably sure that the story of this Book was enacted while Eli was Judge in Israel; but when was it *written*? The question is not in

itself of grave importance, perhaps; but to find the answer to it is a good and wholesome exercise for younger students of Scripture. For all the materials of the answer are contained in the Book itself; they need no scholarship to discover them: they are accessible to all. If, then, we read the Book of Ruth carefully, and with the purpose of fixing its date in our minds, surely the very opening words of the Story must arrest our attention: "Now it came to pass, *in the days when the Judges judged*, that there was a famine in the land." Is that the tone of a man who is writing of the present, or of a past age? Obviously it is the tone of one who speaks of the past. The Judges are no longer judging: the whole form of civil government has changed in the interval between the events narrated and the time at which the narrator writes. He is as evidently looking back as we should be were we to commence a story with the words, "Now it came to pass in the days when the Lord Protector sat on the throne of England."

This is our first "note of time," the first hint we get that a considerable interval must have elapsed between the time in which Ruth lived and the time in which the story of her life was told. As we read on we come on two other hints which confirm our conclusion. In Chap. iv. vers. 6-8 we are told of a curious legal custom. The next of kin to Naomi, when he refused to redeem her inheritance and to take Ruth to wife, drew off his shoe and gave it to Boaz, so transferring the right of redemption to him. And the historian pauses to explain that this was "*formerly*" the legal mode in Israel

“concerning redeeming, and concerning exchanging.” But why should he stay to explain the custom if it had not fallen into disuse,—if it had not been so long disused that his readers had clean forgotten it? Yet old legal customs are very tenacious. They do not soon, or suddenly, become obsolete even with us, and, much less, in the unchanging East. And, therefore, we may infer that the story of Ruth was written, not only after her death, but long after it.

Verses 17, 21, and 22 of the same Chapter point to the same conclusion. For here we are told that Ruth had a son named Obed, Obed a son named Jesse, and Jesse a son named David. But how should David’s name have been written before he was born? The Story—unless at least we have recourse to the clumsy expedient of supposing additions made to the original Scripture by a later hand—must have been composed, at the very earliest, after that great Prince was born: *i. e.*, it must have been written at least four generations—say, from a hundred and twenty to a hundred and fifty years—after the events it records.

To this extent, then, the Book dates itself. That it could not have been written *before* the time of David may be inferred from the fact that David’s name is twice mentioned in it. That it was written *in* his time will become evident, I think, when we have caught the tone and purport of the Story.

Briefly told, that Story runs thus:—Under the pressure of a great famine, an ancient and honourable Hebrew family were threatened with want and misery. All that we are told of them indicates that they were Israelites indeed, devoutly attached to the land and

worship of their fathers. We may be sure, therefore, that it cost them many a pang to resolve to abandon their inheritance in the promised land and to seek bread among the idolators of Moab. They went farther than their neighbours, who were exposed to the same pressure, only to fare worse. In seeking a livelihood, they lost life. Three out of the four, Elimelech and his two sons, found a grave in the land in which they sought bread. Naomi is left alone, a childless widow. To all human appearance the family is blotted out from among the tribes of Israel. True, Naomi has her two daughters-in-law left; but these also are childless: and, moreover, they are strangers and aliens from the Hebrew Commonwealth, and of a race which had long been reckoned among the foes of the elect people. Naomi cannot endure to remain in the land which has proved so fatal to her affections and hopes. She returns to Bethlehem, but she returns "empty and afflicted," in great bitterness of soul, because the Lord has dealt very bitterly with her. Destitute and hopeless, she has but one comfort. Ruth remains with her, and will not be persuaded to leave her. She forsakes all—her country, her friends, her gods—that she may be true to her love for Naomi. But, like Naomi, she too comes to Bethlehem in poverty and sadness of heart.

When they arrive, although "the whole city is moved about them," no one offers them either succour or sympathy. Even the wealthy kinsmen of Elimelech,—one of whom, as we happen to know, was of a very noble and generous temper,—either because they are unaware of the calamities that had

overtaken Naomi, or because they had disapproved of Elimelech's sojourn among the heathen, stand aloof from her. Ruth is her sole stay. But Ruth is willing to work, and even to beg, for her. At the time of harvest she goes into the fields to glean after the reapers. A kindly providence leads her to the fields of Boaz, the wealthiest, though not the nearest, kinsman of Elimelech. Here her virtue and piety become known. Boaz honours her both for her unselfish devotion to Naomi, and because she, a heathen, has come "to trust herself under the wings of the God of Israel." For Ruth's sake, Naomi is restored to the goodwill of her kinsmen. By her modesty, her unselfishness, her pious reverence for Jehovah, the Moabitish woman conquers the Hebrew prejudice against the alien and the stranger. By these same virtues she wins the heart of Boaz and the rights of a wife and a mother in Israel. At every turn of the Story we are made to feel that the Gentile Ruth is its heroine, and that she is its heroine simply because, in virtue and in piety, she excels even the Hebrew women. Yet she is no "saint," no devotee, no prophetess, but a very woman, and a woman

"Not too bright and good
For human nature's daily food."

Wide as is the gulf of time and social habit by which we are separated from her, nevertheless we feel that she is such a woman as would even now be the crown and charm of any household.

And it surely speaks well for those ancient Jews of whom we are apt to think, not altogether without reason, as the most jealous and exclusive of men, that they should have so frankly recognized the

worth and charm of a daughter of Moab ; that they should not only have preserved the tradition of her extraordinary sweetness and nobility, but should also have written it down and have included the writing in their most sacred Scriptures.

The Story, moreover, is written in no hostile or grudging spirit. The figure of the Gentile is not placed in the shade of the background, but in the centre and full light of the narrative. The Book is not called, as with some show of reason it might have been called when gathered into the Hebrew annals, "the Book of Naomi," or, "the Book of Boaz," or, "the Descent of David," but "the Book of Ruth." *She* is placed in the foreground, and kept in it throughout.

No doubt the Story is a love story, and is designed to set forth the power of love to overcome all the alienations, hostilities, and prejudices of nature and of that second nature which we call "habit." But it is not a story of romantic love between a young man and a young woman. It is the story of a woman's love for a woman ; and, strangely as it would sound in the ears of our modern wits, it is the story of a young wife's passionate and devoted love for her mother-in-law ! Ruth's tender self-sacrificing affection for Naomi is the very charm of the Story. It is in the strength of love that she abandons Moab and her father's house ; it is in the strength of love that she also conquers the prejudices and jealousies of Bethlehem, and compels even Hebrews to admire her virtue and record her fame. And in that it was by her love for Naomi that Ruth was brought to know and serve the only wise and

true God, we may see an illustration of the fact that men and women are often led to religion by natural affection, and rise to the love of God through their love for one another. The Story, then, is a story in praise of charity ; and it *shows* the charity it praises. We have no reason to doubt that it was written by a Hebrew ; obviously it is one of the Hebrew Scriptures : and yet it contains no touch of the common Hebrew enmity against the Gentile. It is fair, and even generous, in the tone it takes toward those who were outside the Hebrew pale. It has no word of blame for Elimelech, although he left the land of his fathers to sojourn among the heathen ; nor for Orpah, although she turned back from Naomi : on the contrary, it records her kindness and self-devotion in at least intending to remain with her "mother" till Naomi herself dissuaded her ; while for Ruth it has no praise too high. It bases itself on the truth, which Christ has made the common property of the race, that in every nation a pure and unselfish love is acceptable to God. So far from asserting the exclusive privilege of the chosen people, it rather invites other races to come and put their trust under the wings of Jehovah, by shewing that, so soon as they trust in Him, the privilege and blessing of Israel become theirs.

Now it is this singular charity for the outside world, this disposition to do justice and to shew kindness to the Gentiles, which most of all renders it probable that the Story of Ruth was rescued from the stammering and uncertain lips of Tradition and fairly written out in the reign of David. For nothing is more characteristic of David and his time,

though it is a characteristic too commonly overlooked, than the fair and easy terms on which he met all foreigners, all men of alien races, and the rare fidelity with which these aliens clave to his cause, even when it was a losing cause. It is very strange, and very instructive when we think of it, that David, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, the flower and darling of his race, should have been wholly free from the Hebrew prejudice against men of heathen races,—that he should have called so many of them to his service, placed them close to his person, had them constantly about him, and have inspired them with so profound an attachment that they willingly laid down their lives for him. For from the very first, from his encounter with the Giant of Gath onward, he displayed a faith in the religious convictions peculiar to Israel which never wavered, which, if equalled, was never surpassed. And yet no prince of Israel was ever on such friendly intimate terms with the heathen about him. He fearlessly commits his father and mother to the care of the King of Moab.¹ He gratefully records the kindness shewn him by the King of Ammon.² When he took refuge in the cave, or hold, of Adullam from the vindictive hatred of Saul, his body-guard was formed of brave men of foreign origin, who afterward became the captains of his army.³ He tarried long in the city of Gath, and held the goodwill of the king, although he had slain its gigantic champion; and so won the hearts of many of the Gittites that six hundred of them followed him throughout his chequered career, and

¹ 1 Samuel xxii. 3.

² 2 Samuel x. 2.

³ The *Cherethites* and the *Pelethites* of 2 Samuel viii. 18.

were faithful to him even when Hebrew statesmen and soldiers deserted him.¹ He had no more loyal soldier in his host than Uriah *the Hittite*. When his son Absalom revolted from him, almost the only men who remained true to him were his foreign servants and captains. It was *an Ammonite* who supplied him with provisions for his hasty flight.² It was *a Phœnician* who went back to the camp of Absalom that he might serve David by thwarting the intrigues of Ahithophel.³ The spirit of utter loyalty and devotion by which these gallant men were animated received, perhaps, its finest illustration in the interview of David with Ittai, *a man of Gath*.⁴ When the treasonable designs of Absalom broke out, Ittai had but recently taken service with David. And therefore the King, generous and considerate even in his darkest hour of distress, says to him: "Wherefore goest *thou* with us? Return to thy place, and abide with the king, for thou art a stranger. If thou art banished, go to thy native land. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I to-day make thee go up and down with us, seeing I go whither I may? Return thou, and take back thy brethren. Mercy and truth be with thee." "Nay," replied the brave loyal stranger, "as Jehovah liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, in what place the lord my king shall be, whether in death or in life, even there will thy servant be also."

One hardly knows which the more to admire, the man who could inspire a loyalty so pure and

¹ 1 Samuel xxvii., xxviii. 1, 2; xxix.; and 2 Samuel xv. 18.

² 2 Samuel xvii. 27-29.

³ 2 Samuel xv. 32-37.

⁴ 2 Samuel xv. 19-22.

devoted, or the men who were capable of feeling it. But one thing is quite certain, viz., that in no other period of Jewish history do such friendly and cordial relations between Jew and Gentile come to view. And, therefore, we may well believe—what all the other indications of time in this Scripture suggest—that it was at this period that the Book of Ruth, which commemorates the fidelity and love of a Gentile, and that Gentile an ancestress of David, was written. It breathes the tone of David's life and time—the tone of a time in which all who feared God and wrought righteousness were held in honour, whether they were of Hebrew or of Heathen blood.

Some wonder has been expressed by commentators and divines that the Book of Ruth should have been included in the Sacred Canon; that a love story, charming and idyllic as it is, should have found a place among the Scriptures of the Prophets. But, though we have a strange and irrational trick of smiling a little contemptuously, or a little ironically, when so much as the name of "love" is mentioned, yet no man who reflects on how great a part love plays in human life, and how much the sweetness and dignity of human life depend upon it, and how closely the love of our neighbour is connected with the love of God, will much marvel that God should have moved a holy man to record the love of Ruth for Naomi, or even the love of Boaz for Ruth, and so to set us "a pattern how we ought to live." The place of Ruth in Holy Writ needs no other vindication than this,—that, in her, love grew to heroism. But if it did, an ample vindication might be found in the facts that this Book shews us that every pure

and unselfish affection leads to God, and is acceptable to Him; that it reveals Him to us as no less pleased by the goodness of a Heathen than by that of a Hebrew: and that it also shews us that, in their better moods, the very Jews knew that there was no respect of persons with Him.

TRANSLATION.

CHAPTER I.—*Now it came to pass in the days when the Judges judged, that there was a famine in the land. And a man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the Field of Moab, he, and his wife, and his sons. (2.) And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the Field of Moab and abode there.*

(3.) And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. (4.) And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years. (5.) Then, died these two also, Mahlon and Chilion; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

(6.) Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, and returned from the Field of Moab; for she had heard in the Field of Moab that the Lord had remembered his people to give them bread. (7.) And she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. (8.) Then said Naomi to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. (9.) The Lord grant you that ye may find an asylum, each in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. (10.) And they said unto her, Nay, but we will return with thee unto thy people. (11.) And Naomi said, Return my daughters: why will ye go with me? Are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? (12.) Return, my daughters, go; for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I should say, I have hope; if even to-night I should have a husband, and should also bear sons; (13.) would ye tarry till they were grown? would ye, for them, shut yourselves up from having husbands? Nay, my daugh-

ters. Yet is it much more bitter for me than for you, since the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. (14.) And they lifted up their voice and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. (15.) And she (Naomi) said, Behold, thy sister-in-law has gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou also after thy sister-in-law. (16.) And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people is my people, and thy God my God: (17.) where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. (18.) So when she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she ceased to dissuade her.

(19.) So they two went on till they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, This Naomi! (20.) And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara, for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me. (21.) I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty. Why, then, call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me. (22.) So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned out of the Field of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

CHAPTER II.—*And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a valiant hero, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. (2.) And Ruth, the Moabitess, said unto Naomi, Let me now go into the fields, and glean among the ears after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. (3.) And she went, and came, and gleaned in a field after the reapers. And her lot met her in the field of Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. (4.) And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee. (5.) Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? (6.) And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, She is a Moabitish damsel who came back with Naomi out of the Field of Moab; (7.) and she said, I pray thee let me glean, and I will gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came and hath continued (at work) even from the morning until now, save that she rested a little in the house. (8.) Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my*

daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: (9.) let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou (fearlessly) after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not molest thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn. (10.) Then she bent her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take note of me, seeing I am a stranger? (11.) And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath been fully shewn me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband, and that thou hast left thy father and thy mother and the land of thy nativity, and art come among a people whom thou knewest not heretofore. (12.) The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. (13.) Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord, for thou hast comforted me, and hast spoken to the heart of thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thy handmaidens. (14.) And Boaz said unto her at meal-time, Come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn,¹ and she did eat and was satisfied, and left (of that she ate). (15.) And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded the young men, saying, Let her glean even between the sheaves, and shame her not; (16.) and pull out some (ears) from the armfuls on purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. (17.) So she gleaned in the fields until evening, and beat out that she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley.

¹ Verse 14.—The parched corn which Boaz handed to Ruth is prepared thus: a few handfuls of the best ears are plucked and tied into small bundles. Then a quick fire of dried grass and thorn bushes is kindled, and the corn is held in the blaze till the chaff is mostly burned off. The grain is then sufficiently roasted to be rubbed out and eaten, and is a well-liked food throughout the East. The servants of a traveller do not scruple to help themselves and him to sufficient corn from any field they pass; nor is it thought wrong for them to help themselves to as much as they require.

“The morsel” which Ruth dipped in “vinegar,” *i.e.*, a mixture of vinegar and oil and water, was, no doubt, a piece of biscuit bread. And travellers in the East report that it is quite incredible how the biscuit, eaten with vinegar and oil, recruits the weary and exhausted frame.

(18.) *And she took it up, and came into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. And she brought out and gave to her that which she had left (at meal-time) after she was satisfied.* (19.) *And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where hast thou worked? Blessed be he that did take note of thee. And she shewed her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, The man's name with whom I worked to-day is Boaz.* (20.) *And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is akin to us, one of our goelim.* (21.) *And Ruth the Moabitess said, Moreover he said unto me, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men until they have ended all my harvest.* (22.) *And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, Good, my daughter; go out only with his maidens, lest in any other field thou be molested.* (23.) *So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz, gleaning to the end of the barley-harvest and of the wheat-harvest; and then she abode with her mother-in-law.*

CHAPTER III.—*Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek an asylum for thee, that it may be well with thee?* (2.) *And, now, is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor.* (3.) *Wash thyself, therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy (best) apparel upon thee, and get thee down to the floor, but let not thyself be seen until the man have done eating and drinking.* (4.) *And it shall be that when he lieth down, thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in and uncover (the place at) his feet, and lay thee down: and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.* (5.) *And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.* (6.) *And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.*

(7.) *And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn; and she came softly, and uncovered (the place at) his feet, and laid her down.* (8.) *And it came to pass, at midnight, that the man was startled, and bent himself over; and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.* (9.) *And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth, thine handmaid: spread therefore thy wings over thine handmaid; for thou art a goel.* (10.) *And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thy latter kindness is better than thy former, inasmuch as thou didst not go after young men, whether poor*

or rich. (11.) *And, now, my daughter, fear not ; I will do for thee all that thou askest : for all the gate of my people doth know that thou art a brave woman.*¹ (12.) *And, now, truly indeed I am a goel ; howbeit there is a goel nearer than I.* (13.) *Tarry here to-night, and it shall be, in the morning, that if he will redeem thee, well ; let him redcem : but if he will not redcem thee, then, as the Lord liveth, I will redeem thee. Lie down until the morning.* (14.) *And she lay at his feet till the morning : and she rose up before a man could recognize his friend. For he said, Let it not be known that the woman came into the floor.* (15.) *Also he said, Bring hither thy shawl that thou hast upon thee, and hold it out. And when she held it out, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her. And she went into the city.*

(16.) *And when she came to her mother-in-law, she (Naomi) said, How comest thou, my daughter ? And she told her all that the man had done unto her.* (17.) *And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me ; for he said to me, Go not empty to thy mother-in-law.* (18.) *And she (Naomi) said, Stay at home, my daughter, until thou knowest how the matter will go ; for the man will not rest until he have finished it this day.*

CHAPTER IV.—*And Boaz went up to the gate, and sat him down there : and, behold, the goel of whom Boaz spake passed by ; unto whom he said, Ho, So-and-So, turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.* (2.) *And he (Boaz) took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.* (3.) *And he said unto the goel : Naomi, who is come again out of the Field of Moab, sold the parcel of land which was our brother Elimelech's ; (4.) and I determined to advertize thee of it, and say, Acquire it before those who sit (in the gate) and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it ; but if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me, that I may know : for there is none to redeem it but thou, and I, who am next to thee. And he said, I will redeem it.* (5.) *Then said Boaz, What day thou acquirest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou acquirest it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.* (6.) *And the goel said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance ; redeem thou for thyself that which it is mine to redeem, for I cannot redeem it.* (7.) *Now this was the custom formerly in Israel in cases of redeeming and in cases of exchanging,*

¹ Literally, "a woman of strength," i.e., a woman both brave and good.

in order that at all points they might be confirmed: A man, plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbour: and this was attestation¹ in Israel. (8.) When, then, the goel said unto Boaz, Do thou acquire it, he drew off his shoe. (9.) And Boaz said unto the elders and all the people, Ye are witnesses this day that I have acquired all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. (10.) Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I acquired to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place. Ye are witnesses this day. (11.) And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that cometh into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel; and mayest thou grow strong in Ephrathah and win a name in Bethlehem: (12.) and may thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bore unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.

(13.) So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. (14.) And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who hath not left thee this day without a goel, and may his name be famous in Israel: (15.) and may he be a restorer of thy soul, and the stay of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. (16.) And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. (17.) And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

(18.) Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, (19.) and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Aminadab, (20.) and Aminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, (21.) and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, (22.) and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

¹ *Attestation, i.e., the legal form of attestation.*