

POEMS OF RUTH

But go to! thy love

Shall chant itself its own beatitudes

After its own life-working. A child's kiss

Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad;

A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich;

~~Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense~~ A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong;

Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense

Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown

I set upon thy head.

Oh, wondrous story of immortal spell!
From a forgotten age, so far and old
That even its traditions now we hold
But doubtfully, comes down this tale so well
Beloved, which we today rehearse and tell
As if Naomi's meadows had been sold
But yesterday, and in the kinsman's fold
Still shining lay the golden grains which fell
From sheaves all careless bound, that Ruth might glean.
Oh, wondrous spell of love and loyalty!
No record ever said that Ruth was fair;
And yet all thoughts have pictured her in mien
So beauteous, art itself might well despair
Seeking to paint her tender constancy.

"Entreat me not to leave thee, but convert me to the truth,"
So spake in sorrow and in tears the gently-gliding Ruth.
"Entreat me not to leave thee, nor unclasp thy loosening hand;
I'll follow thee, my mother, to the far Judean land."
But turning still in grief away from her young, pleading face,
And sadly putting back the arms so fondly that embrace,
"My daughter" thus Naomi said, in measured tones and deep,
"We have our Sabbaths in that land and holy days to keep,
And there's a bound we cannot pass upon that day, you know."
But Ruth said, "Only where thou goest, Mother, will I go."

Still spake Naomi, "Turn again - thy home is not with me;
For Judah's children must not with the outcast Gentile be."
Ruth answered, "In that stranger land with thee, oh, let me stay,
And where thou lodgest I will lodge - I cannot go away."
And then again Naomi, "We have precepts to observe,
And from our father's worship are commanded not to swerve."
Ruth answered with religious zeal, "I bow to Judah's Lord:
Thy people shall my people be - thy God shall be my God."

And now the mother's love burst forth, and rose in accents wild:
"Turn back, beloved, oh, turn back, for think you, Ruth, my child,
Your fainting heart could ever bear the woes I number now?
They must not dim those gentle eyes, nor darken o'er that brow;
For though thy mother yields to them, yet dearest daughter mine,
It were not meet that they should fall on such a head as thine."
Then Ruth, with sudden brightness in her mild and loving eye,
"However hard thy death may be, thus only will I die."
But yet once more Naomi spoke, "My daughter, for the dead
We have a house of burial"; but Ruth still answering said,
"And there will I be buried; and the Lord deal thus by me
If aught, my mother, on the earth but death part thee and me."

From Moab's hill the stranger comes,
By sorrow tried, widowed by death;
She comes to Judah's goodly homes,
Led by the trusting hand of faith.

She leaves her childhood home and all
That brothers, friends and parents gave;
The flowery fields, the lordly hall,
The green sod o'er her husband's grave.

She leaves the gods her people own --
Soulless and weak, they're hers no more;
Jehovah, He is God alone,
And Him her spirit will adore.

At Bethlehem's gate the stranger stands,
All friendless, poor, and wanting rest;
She waits the cheer of loving hands,
And kindred hearts that God hath blessed.

"Entreat me not, dear friend, to go
Or leave thy cherished side;
The Lord hath called me here, I know;
And here I will abide.

"I'll go with thee, do not deny;
I'll make with thee my home;
Where'er thou diest, I will die,
And there shall be my tomb".

- - - Robert Morris