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CANTICLES;

OR,

SONG OF SOLOMON:

A New Translation,

WITH NOTES.

Printed by S. Gosnell, Little Queen Street, Holborn, London.

CANTICLES;

OR,

SONG OF SOLOMON:

A New Translation,

WITH NOTES;

AND

AN ATTEMPT TO INTERPRET

THE SACRED ALLEGORIES

CONTAINED IN THAT BOOK.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ESSAY ON THE NAME AND CHARACTER

OF

THE REDEEMER.

BY THE REV. JOHN FRY, A. B.

RECTOR OF DESFORD, IN LEICESTERSHIRE, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD VISCOUNT RANELAGH.

Ὁ ἔμος ἔρως ἐσταυρωται.

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PREFACE.

The authenticity and divine inspiration of the Canticles, or Song of Solomon, have seldom been called in question. This book is well known to have formed part of those sacred writings which the ancient Jews reverenced as the Oracles of Heaven, and which, in this high character, received the sanction of the Son of God. The Canticles are therefore to be considered as included among those Scriptures of which the Apostle speaks in his Epistle to Timothy: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness[a]." No one then can doubt of the utility of studying this portion of the divine records, however extraordinary its subject may, at first sight, ap-

[a] 2 Epis. iii. 16.

pear; but the attention of the reader may be solicited to the publication now laid before him in prosecution of that general charge of our divine Master, "Search the Scriptures."

To give an account of the present attempt without any further apology, the first endeavour has been to provide an accurate translation of this interesting part of Holy Writ from the original Hebrew, illustrated with such notes and observations as appeared necessary to the comprehension of its literal meaning.

The next object has been, agreeably to what will be shown to be the nature and design of this book, to explain its several portions as so many spiritual allegories.

The former part of our undertaking could not have been omitted, for it were preposterous to attempt an improved interpretation of these allegories, without previously directing our efforts to gain a clear and distinct knowledge of the events or similes on which they are constructed. "It is the first duty of an expositor," as the Bishop of Dromore observes, "to ascertain that lower and more obvious meaning. For till this is done, it is impossible to discover what truths are couched

under it. Without this all is vague and idle conjecture[b]."

The spiritual interpretations follow, as being necessary to complete the design of the divine author of these sacred songs: the parable, except in view of its interpretation, being but of small moment to the edification of the church at large.

In accomplishing the first part of our design, it will be seen that we derive great assistance from the labours of others. And much assistance indeed was necessary: for to settle the literal meaning and distribution of the Song of Solomon, has been justly considered as a very difficult task.

As a composition and work of taste, it must be confessed that we can only, in some parts, form a guess concerning the original beauties and design of the *Song of Songs*. It may be compared to some precious relick of antiquity, whose exquisite polish and minuter ornaments time and other causes have much corroded and defaced. Notwithstanding the successive labours of many learned and ingenious

[b] New Translation, *Dodsley*, 1764.

men, in clearing away the rubbish which obscured it, and in retracing its almost obliterated workmanship, we must be satisfied, in some places, to have preserved only the general contour or outline of the work, and may be compelled perhaps to own, that we do not thoroughly comprehend the use of some of its subordinate parts.

In a religious point of view, however, this sort of imperfection in our knowledge respecting some of the original beauties of these sacred poems, is not of that consequence which might at first be imagined. The glory of the holy temple consists not in its gildings, or in its elegant carvings. These may be lost or defaced; yet, if a more spiritual worship is now celebrated beneath its consecrated roof, the glory of the house, in its latter state, may well be said to exceed its glory, in the former. And thus, in the hands of a truly enlightened Christian, the Canticles appear at this day invested with a brighter lustre, than they perhaps could discern who read them in the days of Solomon. Because, though, in regard to the exterior imagery of the allegories, some of their

beauties may be lost; yet the hidden and mystic sense is brought more to light, and manifested with fuller assurance to the believer under the Gospel dispensation. "For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them[c]."

The principle upon which the present translation and interpretation are conducted is that adopted by Mr. Mason Good[d], or, more strictly speaking, that adopted by Signior Melesigenio. What is commonly called the Song of Solomon, is considered as a collection of distinct idyls, or little poems, perfectly detached and separate from each other, with no other connexion than what they derive from a common subject, the peculiarities of the style of a common author, and perhaps some unity of design in regard of the mystic sense which they are intended to bear.

This notion of what is commonly called the Song of Solomon, is certainly a most important discovery. The mistake of considering a number of distinct pieces, in an ancient language,

[c] Luke, x. 24. [d] See Song of Songs, or Sacred Idyls, by John Mason Good, London, 1803.

as one continued work, and endeavouring to interpret them upon that principle, is in itself sufficient to account for much of the obscurity so generally complained of in reading the Canticles.

The improbability, however, that the true nature of the Song of Solomon should be left to be a modern discovery, will perhaps strike my readers. But it may be observed, that though the notion be indeed a discovery, in respect of the ages just elapsed, yet there is still surviving evidence enough to lead to the conclusion, that the same notion was entertained respecting this work by the ancients.

The plural appellation given to the song among the Latins, '*Cantica Salomonis*,' whence our 'Canticles,' seems to argue that they considered it as a collection of several songs, and not as one continued poem. The title of this book in the Chaldee paraphrase is a still more remarkable evidence; "*The Songs and Hymns which Solomon the Prophet, the King of Israel, uttered in the Spirit of Prophecy before the Lord.*" Not to mention that, according to the opinion of some Hebrew scholars, the title of

the book, as it stands in the original Hebrew, שיר השירים, which has been usually rendered The Song of Songs, and understood to signify the most excellent of songs, should be translated *A Series of Songs*[e].

It is in this view of the Canticles that the following exposition is attempted. We may borrow the language of Mr. Good, though we shall often see occasion to differ from him in its application: "I have finished the Idyl where the subject seems naturally to close, and I have recommenced it where a new subject is introduced."

In respect to the nature and design of these sacred songs, they are considered in the present publication as so many sacred allegories, intended by the Divine Spirit for our instruction and edification in the mysteries of our holy religion.

An allegory is defined by Bishop Lowth to be "a figure, which, under the literal sense of the words, conceals a foreign or a distant meaning."

[e] שיר—Nonnullis *Series* alicujus rei (ut Arab. Synon. est series lapidum (murus), series pergulata vitis; unde sec. quosdam שיר שירים Series Carminum. SIMONIS *Lex. Heb.*

Salomonis sanctissimum carmen inter Idyllia Hebrea recensendum puto. Sir WILLIAM JONES.

Of allegories in the Hebrew poetry, his Lordship reckons three kinds:—"The continued Metaphor, the parabolic Allegory, and the mystical or historic Allegory." He observes, "Supposing the Song of Solomon to be an allegory, a question will arise, to which of the three species it belongs." And considering the song as one continued drama, his Lordship places it in the third class; the nature of which sort of allegory is, under the veil of some historical fact, to conceal a meaning more sacred and sublime. The historical fact he supposes to be the marriage-feast of Solomon; the more sacred and spiritual meaning, "the Prince of Peace, whom Solomon typified, espousing his church."

But upon the plan now proposed, of considering the Canticles as a collection of many distinct idyls and allegories, we shall perhaps see reason to conclude, that only a very few of them can be properly said to belong to this class of allegories: but that they are, for the most part, of the parabolical kind—of that species of allegories, according to Bishop Lowth's definition, "which consist of a continued narration of a

fictitious event, applied, by way of simile, to the illustration of some important truth."

For the better understanding of the distinction between these two species of allegories, we may observe, from the same admirable writer, "that, in the parabolical allegory, the exterior or ostensible imagery is fiction only; the truth lies altogether in the interior and remote sense which is veiled as it were under this thin and pellucid covering. But in the historical allegory, the exterior or ostensible image is not a shadowy colouring of the interior sense, but is itself a reality; and although it sustains another character, it does wholly lay aside its own." The one, in short, is a fable, with its intended moral—a parable contrived only for the sake of its interpretation: of which sort were probably all the parables of our blessed Saviour. The other is some event or occurrence in the history of the times, moralized or spiritualized, or considered as destined by divine Providence to typify some similar but more important event to come to pass in a future age. Of this species of allegory the Scriptures of the Old Testament afford us many instances; and the fourth chapter of St. Paul's

Epistle to the Galatians may be referred to for a particular example[f].

The historical events, upon which it may be supposed some few of these allegories are built, will be noticed when the particular idyl is considered, which contains the allusion. Speaking of them generally, for the exceptions are very few, we may pronounce them to be allegories of the parabolical kind.

And here my readers, who are acquainted with some of the existing expositions of the Canticles, will perceive that we escape a great deal of very useless and uninteresting inquiry respecting who was the literal bride, whether Pharaoh's daughter, or some other woman; with a variety of vague conjecture and disgusting detail, not less offensive to true taste, than unprofitable to every practical purpose. Since, if we suppose them to be parabolical allegories, it is obviously as unnecessary to ask who was the particular bride, and what the particular marriage, as to ask, who were the particular parties in any of the parables of our Lord; who was the king that made a marriage for his son; or who the man that came

[f] Ver. 24, &c.

in among the guests, not having on a wedding garment. All that is necessary to the understanding of such allegories, being, to gain a clear conception of the case supposed, and then to search out the truths intended to be taught by the comparison, or allusion.

In the allegories we are now to consider, the fictitious events are always in allusion to the intercourse of some faithful pair betrothed or espoused to each other, and about to be united together in the sacred bonds of wedded love; or, as the case is sometimes supposed, that event having already taken place.—Their declarations of affection, and partial admiration of each other; their occasional separations, and the happiness experienced when these painful interruptions are ended, with other circumstances relating to the marriage union, according to the custom of the times, will be found to form the subjects of the several idyls.

Such is the nature of the exterior and ostensible imagery of these allegories: the interior and remote sense, the true meaning covered by this veil, is the love and affection manifested by Christ, the bridegroom of souls, towards his

faithful people, and their returns of love and gratitude to him. And this view of the Song of Solomon, as being intended to represent the mutual love of Christ and his church, is indeed agreeable to the very general and almost universal opinion entertained concerning this part of Scripture, both in ancient and modern times.

The reader, however, should be informed, that one eminent critic, Professor Michaëlis, has advanced a different interpretation. He conceives, "that the chaste and conjugal affections so carefully implanted by the Deity in the human heart, and upon which so great a portion of human happiness depends, are not unworthy of a muse fraught even with inspiration. Only let us suppose," he continues, "contrary to the general opinion concerning the Canticles, that the affection which is described in this poem is not that of lovers previous to their nuptials, but the attachment of two delicate persons, who have been long united in the sacred bond. Can we suppose such happiness unworthy of being recommended as a pattern to mankind, and of being celebrated as a subject of gratitude to the great Author of happiness? This is indeed a

branch of morals, which may be treated in a more artificial and philosophical manner; and such a manner perhaps will be more convincing to the understanding, but will never affect the heart with such tender sentiments as the Song of Solomon, in which there exists all the fervour of passion, with the utmost chastity of expression, and with that delicacy and reserve which is ever necessary to the life and preservation of conjugal love."

Though we feel ourselves compelled to adopt the opinion of the general body of interpreters, in preference to this of the learned Professor, yet we need not totally exclude the moral instruction, which he supposes to be deducible from the Canticles, since St. Paul has referred us to the love of Christ towards his church, which we state to be the subject of these songs, for an example of the same virtue—" Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church[g]."

But to suppose this moral instruction the only, or, in any respect, the chief design of the Divine Spirit in these sacred poems, is to suppose

[g] Eph. v. 25.

a subject far too mean and homely for such a theme. That the Holy Spirit "should not disdain," according to the reasoning of Michaëlis, "in the didactic parts of Scripture, as in the book of Proverbs, minutely to describe the felicities and infelicities of the conjugal state," is scarcely sufficient to reconcile us to the notion, that songs and hymns are inspired by that same Divine Being to extol and celebrate the same.

Supposing no allegory, the moral instruction to be gathered from these songs must be acknowledged to be very small, and the effusion of praise to the great Author of happiness not very obvious. It were strange indeed, supposing only a literal sense, to find beauty of person, profusion of odours, magnificence of dress and of equipage, held forth as the chief subjects of panegyric, and mutually rehearsed between the lovers, as though they formed the chief motives of endearment. For this may almost be said to be the case in every part of these idyls; while the qualities of the heart and mind, upon the goodness and beauty of which a true affection can alone be founded, are hardly mentioned.

Far different were the instructions of that wisdom with which Solomon was inspired! "*Grace* is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised[h]."

It will appear, however, inconceivable to some, that there should, in reality, exist any such relation and intercourse between the souls of poor, abject, and sinful mortals, and the eternal Majesty of Heaven, as is here supposed: an intercourse which can, with any degree of propriety, be compared to the endearments and familiar converse of two earthly lovers. And there is too much reason to fear that many persons, in their most deliberate judgments, will pronounce the notion extravagant and enthusiastical; and some perhaps forgetting that the *theme* is scriptural, whatever are the errors of the comment, will not spare, on this occasion, the shafts of profane wit and ridicule.

But the happy experience of many humble and pious Christians, in every age, and in every clime, does attest the fact, that in that "mysterious commerce" which the Almighty condescends to hold with their souls, there are those

[h] חֵן. Prov. xxxi. 30.

manifestations of his love, and those affections kindled in their hearts towards the person of God their Saviour, which may well borrow their allusions from the tenderest and most powerful affection which subsists among men. And, as will be shown in the course of this publication, in these attestations the followers of Christ profess to experience nothing but what the Scriptures do clearly warrant them to expect.

We have not in our view, it should be remembered, the penitent trembling before his judge. Though it is obvious to remark, that sinful mortals, by nature the children of wrath, must first of all be brought into these circumstances, before any friendship with a holy God can be imagined. Neither are the scenes described in the following parables, supposed to refer to the first application of the believer to the cross of his Saviour, nor perhaps to his first apprehensions of Christ's pity and mercy; but rather to those subsequent manifestations of the divine love which the established Christian is taught to expect, from the effusion of the Holy Ghost the comforter.

The progress of true religious experience is

thus stated, by a safe guide, the Apostle Paul, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand and rejoice, in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." And, after describing the nature of this love, the Apostle concludes, "and not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement[i]."

It is in these circumstances, when, to use the expressions of Isaiah, "the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness, and assurance for ever[k]," that the believing soul becomes the subject of those espousals with her heavenly Bridegroom, which

[i] Υπομονη—Δοκιμη—Ελπις—Καταλλαγη.——Rom. v. 1, &c.
[k] Isa. xxxii. 17. Isa. lxii. 5.

are celebrated in these songs of love. To persons brought into this happy state, the language of the Prophet may be addressed, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." To the favoured believer so circumstanced, the terms Hephzibah and Beulah apply. And the spouse of Christ is enabled to exclaim, in the animated language of the same Prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels[l]."

With this blessed experience we come individually to enjoy that happy state of the church described by the prophet Hosea; "And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi (my husband); and shalt call me no more Baali[m] (my master). And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies; and I

[l] Isa. lxi. 10. [m] Hos. ii. 16.

will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord[n]."

For let it here be once for all observed, that what is spoken of the church in these Scriptures, is not only true of it in its collective capacity, but applies respectively to every member of which that church is composed. No one indeed will doubt, when a false church is termed an adultress, a very common metaphor in Scripture, whether the spiritual fornication is chargeable or not upon each individul participating in her idolatries. Neither can it reasonably be questioned, whether the love declared by Christ towards his spouse the Church, belongs severally, as well as conjointly, to all his faithful people.

Why should the love of Christ be considered as nothing more than an affection only true in the general abstract, but applicable in point of fact to no one? "O, taste and see!!" The love of Christ is not lost in generalities, neither is it lessened by division. Like the great luminary of heaven, in the communications of his grace, he shines with the same fulness upon all the objects of his love;—each alike discerns the com-

[n] Hos. ii. 19, 20.

plete disk of the Sun of righteousness to be turned towards himself, as though no creature besides participated in his beams. And (to draw another comparison from these material objects) as the heavenly bodies, because of their immense distance, in comparison of the objects which surround us here upon the surface of the earth, seem as if they attended each of us in our course; to go with us when we go, and to take their stations where we rest; so, in reality, from that glorious height, from whence the Omnipotent beholds the things which are in heaven and in earth, he is always seen as present to the believer's soul. He is about his path, and about his bed[o]. "As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them[p]."

An objection, indeed, has been urged against this interpretation of the Song of Solomon, which we are endeavouring to establish, drawn from the consideration that we find no plain and express allusion to this book in the New Testament, under the notion of its veiling so great a mystery. But it is sufficient to reply, that the same allegory, as portraying the same truth,

[o] Ps. cxxxix. 2. [p] 2 Cor. vi. 16.

evidently appears to have been familiar to the minds of the writers of the New Testament, and to the minds also of the people whom they addressed.

Not more abruptly does John the Baptist, for instance, refer to our Lord, as the Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world, as being a character of the Messiah, which all would know and understand, than he does to the same blessed person in the character of the Bridegroom of the Church. "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the Bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled[q]." So again, St. Paul, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ[r]." And how remarkable is the language of the same Apostle, when speaking of the duties of husbands and wives! "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore,

[q] John, iii. 29. [r] 2 Cor. xi. 2.

as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his flesh, of his body, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and his church. Nevertheless, let each one of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself: and let the wife see that she reverence her husband[s]."

We perceive, therefore, that the allegory pursued in the Canticles, and understood by the

[s] Eph. v. 22, &c.

Jews to be therein contained, is not unnoticed in the New Testament, but was an acknowledged simile in use among the Apostles of Christ.

It may be necessary, however, to observe, that even the human passion itself, which is allegorized in these sacred songs, as an emblem of the divine love, is totally unknown to some gross minds; and that all susceptibility of a real affection is often destroyed in others, at a very early age in life, by sensuality, ambition, or avarice. For it is not the mercenary bargain which unites so many couples at our altars, that can be "employed to signify to us the mystical union that there is betwixt Christ and his church:" nor yet those plighted vows, which too truly may be said "to be enterprised and taken in hand unadvisedly, wantonly to satisfy man's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding." In these contracts, as might be expected, it soon appears, that "the mutual society, help and comfort which one has of the other," will afford but a poor comparison whereby to illustrate the love of Christ towards his spouse the church.

But it will be asked, Do we suppose that a meet example of conjugal affection could be found in the voluptuous establishment of an eastern prince, like Solomon? No: and I think that the Canticles contain more than one indication of this. For though King Solomon is mentioned, and his marriage-processions perhaps gave occasion to some of these allegories, yet we shall notice as we proceed, that the scene is every now and then changed, and we are led, from the processions of the royal marriage, to contemplate the intercourse and concerns of some rural or domestic pair in humble life. As though the heavenly wisdom would instruct us: "You see in Solomon indeed a type of the regal dignity and prosperity of the celestial bridegroom; but a prototype of the loves intended to be celebrated, is not to be found in courts and palaces."—"There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her." We must look, therefore, for the desired example, to those scenes

and situations where, comparatively speaking, luxury or profligacy has not

——banished from man's life, his happiest life,
Simplicity and spotless innocence!

The Scripture has recorded the histories of Abraham and Sarah; of Isaac and Rebecca; of the injured Jacob, whose love for Rachel made the servitude of seven years, of seven years twice numbered, to appear but 'a few days:' and no doubt there were many others, even in the days of Solomon. Nor is the prototype yet lost among mankind. You may witness still, in many a domestic circle, an union of those who once were strangers to each other; nearer than kindred can create, and dearer than friendship can cement.—

Hail, wedded Love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In paradise, of all things common else!
By thee adult'rous lust was driven from man
Among the bestial herds to range: by thee
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
Relations dear; and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother, first were known.
Far be it that I should write thee sin, or blame,
Or think thee unbefitting holiest place.
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweet;

Whose bed is undefiled, and chaste pronounced,
Present or past, as saints or patriarchs used.
Here Love his golden shafts employs; here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings;
Reigns here, and revels——

It is this attachment then, the dearest and tenderest known to the breast of man, which our gracious Lord has made choice of as a comparison of his love to his faithful people. Nay, the first new moments of this attachment are chosen to supply the comparison, "The love of the espousals." For Christ is ever new, and ever young; "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." His love is everlasting, and in no degree kindled by circumstances of a changeable nature. "He is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent[t]."

The hidings of his countenance may indeed be compared to the lamented separations of earthly lovers; but no time or accident, or unforeseen event, can alter the disposition of Christ towards his redeemed people, or affect their union with him. "For I am persuaded," says

[t] Rom. viii. 37.

the Apostle, " that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord[u]."

But, in concluding, we seem called upon to reflect, how extremely unimportant it is to search the meaning of these allegories if our hearts are strangers to the sacred passion which they describe! Is the blessed Jesus then, indeed, the object of our choice, " fairer" in our eyes " than the children of men;" the object on whom our " thoughts find all repose," and whose loved image the busiest scenes and most alluring pleasures cannot long banish from our minds? Is he our " glory," our " perfection?" Is it the prospect of being taken to his heavenly abode, and placed for ever near his dear person, that is our solace in toil and trouble, the recompense and rich amends which we propose to ourselves for every loss and sacrifice? If such an affection has been kindled in our hearts towards

[u] Rom. viii. 38, 39.

him, who "first loved us," then we may hope to read the Canticles with pleasure and profit. But if, from all that we know concerning the Saviour of the world, nothing in his person and character has particularly struck our wayward fancies, or served to give Christ the pre-eminence in our affections above other objects; if, with the ungrateful world at large, we are compelled to acknowledge, "he has no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;" then, indeed, it were in vain to think of reading these songs of love: they cannot be to our taste and mind. "Frustra enim ad legendum amoris carmen, qui non amat accedit, quia non potest capere ignitum eloquium frigidum pectus."—"Lingua amoris ei, qui non amat barbara erit."

"For this cause," therefore, let us bow our "knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant" us, "according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in" our "hearts by faith; that"

we, "being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know *the love of Christ*, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God." AMEN.

CANTICLES;

OR,

SONG OF SOLOMON.

IDYL THE FIRST.

Corresponding with the first six Verses of the first Chapter of our public Translation.

THIS Idyl may perhaps, with propriety, be considered as introductory to the series. The fictitious event, or simile, which forms the exterior or ostensible part of the allegory, appears to be the conducting of a bride to her home. She is plainly supposed, as we shall discover, to have been a person in a low station: one at least who, by the ill treatment of her relations, had been employed in servile labours. The bridegroom, into whose house she is conducted, is said to be the King; and as Jerusalem is mentioned, it is of course the King of Israel. But as no real incident, that we know of, was the occasion of the idyl, we may consider the allegory as belonging to the parabolical species, according to the distinctions noticed in the Preface.

This little poem consists of a dialogue between the bride and the daughters of Jerusalem, who are sent to accompany her to the palace, and whose observations and answers form in this, and in several of the following idyls, a kind of

chorus. But, besides these virgins, we discover in the present idyl another character, bearing part in the dialogue, whom we may term The Messenger. The reason for this conjecture is, that some one is addressed by the bride in the singular number, and masculine gender. He appears, moreover, as the conductor of the procession.

From these observations it will occur to the reader, that the imagery of the following idyl very much resembles a part of that described more at length in the forty-fifth Psalm; "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work: the virgins, her companions, that follow her, shall be brought unto thee; with gládness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace *."

An apparent abruptness will perhaps strike us in the language attributed to the bride, with which the dialogue begins. But we are to suppose a previous address of the messenger, or rather a previous contract and preparation. The messenger comes only to execute an expected office—that of conducting the bride, at the time appointed, to the house of her husband.

* Ver. 14, 15.

BRIDE.

LET him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth[a].

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[a] This declaration is merely expressive of the anxiety of the bride, that she may meet with a gracious reception from her royal bridegroom, and may receive the solemn token and pledge of the espousals. We are informed by the Jewish writers, that kisses were used in token of the espousals, and that then the parties were reckoned as man and wife †. The

† See Dr. Gill, Comment.

MESSENGER.

—Yea! more grateful will be thy love than wine[b]!

VIRGINS.

As the fragrance of thy sweet perfumes[c]:
—A perfume poured forth is thy name,
Therefore do the Virgins love thee[d].

BRIDE.

Conduct me[e]—

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same ceremony was practised among the primitive Christians *. Indeed the solemn kiss is made by the civil law a ceremony, in some respects, of importance to the validity of the contract †.

[b] 'Be assured he will, for greatly will he delight in thy beauty.' We may observe, that the literal meaning of דדים, at least according to the Septuagint and Vulgate, who render μαστοι and ubera, as well as the change of person, leads to the conclusion, that the love of the bride, as the object, and not that of the bridegroom, as is generally represented, is intended.

[c] Essences or ointments. The virgins repeat the assurance of the messenger respecting the King's acceptance of his bride: and whilst they express, in the same figurative strain of allusion to the sweet perfumes with which the bride is scented, their own affection to her person, they welcome her to their society.

[d] 'The pleasing report which they have heard of her has been most grateful to them, and has already conciliated all their affections.' שמן is by some considered as occurring here in the fem. gen. By others, תורה is considered as a noun.

[e] משכני 'Draw me.'—'Lead on, O Messenger.' The word is used (Judges, iv. 6, 7.) for the conducting or leading

* Bingham's Antiquities, b. xxii. c. iii. s. vi.

† Cod. Justin. lib. 5. tit. 3. de Donation. ante Nuptias, leg. 16.

VIRGINS.

—After thee will we hasten.

BRIDE.

The King has caused me to be brought into his
inner-chambers [f].

VIRGINS.

We will exult and rejoice over thee;
We will celebrate thy loves,
Than wine more grateful:
Justly art thou beloved [g].

BRIDE.

I am black [h]—

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out of an army; and also for the drawing of the enemy to the desired spot. "Go, and *draw* towards Mount Tabor," "and I will *draw* unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera the Captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude:"—"And he went up with ten thousand men at his feet" (ver. 10.). The transition to the conducting of a procession is easy.

[f] These words are spoken by the bride on entering the royal apartments.—"With the virgins, her companions which follow her, she is brought into the King's palace." חדר signifies properly a veil;—the veil or curtain especially, which separated the farther part of the tent from the midst. Hence it is applied to the interior of a building, by whatever means separated from the rest. It signifies in this place the private apartments of the palace, secluded from public view and access.

[g] מישרים אהבוך. 'They do right in loving thee.' Recte agentes, rectissime.' *Simonis Lex. Heb.* 'Thou art every way lovely.' *Percy* and *Good.*

[h] The bride speaks this as if abashed at their flattering commendations, conscious of her own defect in point of beauty: her complexion, from a cause afterwards to be mentioned, having become brown and tawny.

VIRGINS.

—Yet most beautiful[i]!

BRIDE.

O Daughters of Jerusalem,—as the tents of Kedar[k]!

VIRGINS.

—As the hangings 'of the pavilion' of Solomon[l]!

BRIDE.

Look not on me; for I am very black[m]!

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[i] נאוה. admodum pulchra. *Simons.* If we suppose a dialogue, there can, I think, need no argument to show the probability that these words are spoken by the virgins, and not, as has been usually imagined, by the bride, in commendation of her own beauty.

[k] קדר. it appears, from Gen. xxv. 13. was a name of one of the sons of Ishmael, from whom the Arabians are descended. Dr. Shaw and Mr. Volney inform us, that the tents of the Bedouins, the Arabians of the desert, are woven of goats' or camels' hair, and are of a black or brown appearance. It is to these that the bride compares the complexion of her sun-burnt skin.

[l] יריעות. rendered in our public translation 'Curtains,' always, I believe, denotes something belonging to a tent—the different hangings of which it was composed. "I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble†." The beauty and elegance of these hangings in the royal tent of the magnificent Solomon, we may easily conjecture, would form a complete contrast with the sackcloth tents of the wild Arabs.

[m] שחרחרת q. d. Nigra nigra; *i. e.* tota nigra, admodum nigra. Discoloured, scorched, or tanned. שזף proprie rigore penetrante perstrinxit vel oculus vel sol.

† Hab. iii. 7.

Because the sun has discoloured me:
The sons of my mother despised me[n],
They set me to look[o] after the vineyards[p]:
A vineyard of my own I have not looked after[q].

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[n] Literally, snorted at me.

[o] To keep or watch.

[p] כרם. Is used generally of vineyards, gardens, and plantations. "Nobilior pars terræ quæ in horti modum colitur." 'Simon.'

[q] In hot countries, like Palestine, travellers inform us, that the greatest difference imaginable subsists between the complexions of the women. Those of any condition seldom go abroad, and are ever accustomed to be shaded from the sun with the greatest attention: their skin is consequently fair and beautiful. But women in the lower ranks of life, in the country especially, being, from the nature of their employment, more exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, are, in their complexions, remarkably tawny and swarthy. Under such circumstances, a high value would, of course, be set, by the eastern ladies, upon the fairness of their complexions, as a distinguishing mark of their superior quality, no less than as an enhancement of their beauty. We perceive, therefore, how natural was the bride's self-abasing reflection respecting her tawny complexion among the fair daughters of Jerusalem, who, as attendants upon a royal marriage, we may suppose to have been of the first ranks. She assigns the cause of her mean appearance, she had been exposed to the drudgery of the field.

This certainly bespeaks the bride, in this idyl, as was noticed above, to have been of low extraction, in comparison of her royal bridegroom: for we are not to suppose, in the reign of Solomon, the simple equality of the patriarchal age.

She complains, besides, of the ill treatment of relations in exposing her to these servile employments; by which, I think, she is to be understood as meaning to depicture still more the

misery of her former situation. You see me discoloured by the sun; it arises from my having been employed in the labours of husbandry, not that I myself have reaped any fruits from my industry. I was cruelly reduced to be the slave of others; they alone have received the profits of my toil and labour.

INTERPRETATION OF THE FIRST PARABLE.

In order to explain this parable, and inquire into its interior sense, it will be first necessary to ascertain who are intended by the allegorical persons engaging, or referred to, in the dialogue.

Respecting the Bridegroom, designated as King Solomon, in addition to what has been already observed in the Preface, we may remark, in the language of St. Paul, on a similar occasion[a]: First, being by interpretation, "He who is our peace;"—and after that, also "King of Israel," which is King of the people of God; the allusion is obvious to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Upon him was the chastisement of our peace[b]."—"He has reconciled us unto God by the cross[c]:" and is now "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins[d]."

[a] Heb. vii. 2. [b] Isai. liii. 5.
[c] Eph. ii. 16. [d] Acts, v. 31.

By the name of Solomon, moreover, whose supposed bride, as we have already seen, is to be considered in these parables as a type of the church, we seem admonished in what capacity the heavenly Bridegroom must first be known, before we can participate with this redeemed people in the character of the spouse of Christ. He must be our peace; and we must submit to his sceptre as the King of Saints. Then, in due course, shall we be called to a communion with our Saviour, nearer than the intercourse of subjects with their prince, or of servants with their master; nay, more intimate than the converse of friends: we shall assume the tender relation of the espoused of Christ, and shall answer to the emblem of the bride in these Canticles.

Of the Messenger, who conducts the procession in the idyl before us, an easy interpretation offers, in referring the type to some minister of Christ, or experienced Christian, who, through grace, becomes the helper of his fellow-christians' joy. St. Paul, in fact, speaks of his apostolical office, in gathering and conducting penitent believers to Jesus Christ, almost under the same allusion, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ[e]."

By the Virgins, daughters of Jerusalem, the remaining party in the dialogue, are desig-

[e] 2 Cor. xi. 2.

nated, I conceive, either ministering angels, or christian companions; or perhaps both may be sometimes intended. This conclusion may be formed from noticing the purposes for which these virgins are constantly introduced, and the employment always assigned them in these allegories. They are the companions and attendants of the bride; they are generally described as rejoicing in her happiness, and celebrating her espousals with songs of praise. This corresponds with the notions we are authorized to form of the holy angels; "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation[f]?"—"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth[g]."

Spiritual believers also engage in the same kind offices *towards each other*. When it pleases God to convert a sinner from the evil of his way, and to introduce him into the communion of saints, they participate in his joy, and would gladly become subservient to his happiness; they rejoice over him with songs of praise.

With these observations on the characters introduced in this idyl, we may now proceed to the parable itself.

The bride, previously admonished, we may suppose "to forget her own people and her father's house," and invited to go and receive

[f] Heb. i. 14. [g] Luke, xv. 10.

the solemn pledge of her espousals, resigns herself to the conductors of the bridal procession. So when the Gospel message comes "in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance[h]" to the believer, he will freely make a surrender of himself to Christ, thankfully availing himself of whatever means his Lord shall have appointed to conduct him to his presence, and to a more intimate knowledge of his goodness.

In a comparative view, he will hate father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and wife and children, yea, and his own life also, for the sake of his Saviour and Redeemer. The language of his grateful heart will be, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ[i]."

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." The sudden exclamation of the spouse implies, perhaps, some degree of anxious doubt respecting the great honour designed her—But will the King of Israel, indeed, accept and love me, an object so mean and vile? To disperse these doubts, we perceive, the answer of the messenger is devised: "Yea," surely, "more

[h] 1 Thes. i. 5 [i] Phil. iii. 7, 8.

grateful will be thy love than wine." This the virgins, also, corroborate, "as the fragrance of thy sweet perfumes." This figurative language affords a lively representation of that solicitude with which the faithful ministers of Christ and all his people will endeavour to encourage the convert, with assurances of the greatness of the Redeemer's love. This is their perpetual theme; and this the messengers of God have in charge, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." Literally, speak to her heart—words that may animate and encourage her.

The virgins, moreover, attest their own love to the object of their master's choice. "A perfume poured forth is thy name, therefore do the virgins love thee." When "the things which accompany salvation" are discerned in any of their fellow-creatures; when the repenting sinner gives evidence of the soundness of his faith, of his increased knowledge, of the holiness and purity of his affections; when "his light so shines before men that they see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven," his name spreads abroad in the church, nay, as we are taught to conceive, among the heavenly hosts." It is "a good name which is better than precious ointment[k]." It conciliates the

[k] Eccle. vii. 1.

good will of angels, and of all that love Jesus Christ in sincerity. The report is as grateful as was the odour of that costly spikenard which filled the house when the affectionate Mary brake the alabaster box, and poured the precious perfume upon the feet of her Saviour[l].

Surrendering herself into the hands of the messenger, the bride addresses him, "Conduct me"—Lead on. The virgins, her companions, gladly join the procession: "We will hasten after thee." And, agreeably with this representation, the penitent believer is usually brought to the full knowledge of salvation, and attains to the enjoyment of the holy comforts of religion. The instructions of a spiritual guide are blessed to this end; the kind interest which his fellow-christians take in the happiness of his soul, encourages him to persevere, and, "the Lord being merciful to him," he perseveres with success.

The procession has now arrived at the destined place; the bride exclaims, on entering the royal palace, with admiration, we may suppose, at the beautiful mansion prepared for her reception: "The King has caused me to be brought into his inner-chambers." The believer "enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus[m]"—"passes through the *veil*[n]"—"and is given to know the

[l] Luke, vii. 37, 38. [m] Heb. x. 19. [n] Ver. 20.

things which are freely given to us of God[o]."—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant[p]."—"For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God! besides thee, what he has prepared for him that waiteth for him[q]."

The virgins congratulate her on her being brought into the King's palace; for they, it seems, are inhabitants of this place. "We will exult and rejoice over thee: we will celebrate thy love, than wine more grateful: justly art thou beloved." When the redeemed of Christ is brought to the enjoyment of his special love, angels rejoice over him; the righteous hear thereof, and are glad.

"Glory to God in the highest," no doubt, resounds in heaven. With the praises of the christian church we are well acquainted. The love of Christ to his people, and their returns of grateful affection to him—the narrative of the great deeds of his redemption—how sinners are *righteously* beloved—how mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other, are the continual subjects, the "copious matter" of those psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, which delight the faithful in the house of God.

[o] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [p] Ps. xxv. 14. [q] Isa. lxiv. 4.

We have next described to us the effect produced on the mind by the manifestation of the divine love. It is humility and self-abasement amidst all the favourable opinions and felicitations of others. "I am black!"—"Yet most beautiful."—"O daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar"—"as the curtains of the pavilion of Solomon." Humility will ever be found to be the characteristic mark of those whom God delighteth to honour, and every fresh manifestation of the divine presence will have a tendency to increase their conviction of their own deficiencies. It is not an unusual sight, indeed, to see a truly enlightened Christian so deeply affected with a sense of his own unworthiness, as to think himself not only unmeet for Christ, but not good enough for the society of his people. On his first introduction among them, he will perhaps feel some apprehension lest they should be ashamed of their new companion.

"Look not on me," the bride continues, in the same strain of self-disparagement, "for I am very black: because the sun has discoloured me." And, in accounting for her appearance, she mentions the misery of her former situation, a complete contrast, indeed, with the honours to which she is now advanced.

"The sons of my mother despised me; they set me to look after the vineyards, a vineyard of my own I have not looked after." Thus, under

the emblem of an injured and oppressed girl, who is taken from the toils of the field, and introduced, as the chosen partner of the prince, among the inhabitants of a palace, we are led to consider the circumstances, in which the love of Christ is accustomed, in its first manifestation, to find its objects.

It finds them the wretched slaves of sin[r], serving divers lusts and pleasures[s], wearying themselves to no profit in the service of vanity; and having contracted a stain more black and indelible than the Ethiopian's skin, or the leopard's spots[t]. It may be too (for God doth choose the poor of this world[u]), labouring under the full weight of the original curse. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life[w]." And, to arrive at the summit of human wretchedness, groaning perhaps, besides, under the yoke of some merciless tyrant.

In some sense or other, indeed, "weary and heavy laden[x]," will be descriptive of all the chosen of God. Each will acknowledge, in application to himself, the demand of the Apostle, "What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed[y]?" Hence we find them sometimes designated as "poor in spirit,"

[r] Rom. vi. 17. [s] Tit. iii. 3. [t] Jer, xiii. 23.
[u] James, ii. 5. [w] Gen. iii. 19. 17.
[x] Mat. xi. 28. [y] Rom. vi. 21.

—"mourners",—"persecuted;" sorrowing, while the world rejoices[z].

But how great the change of circumstance, when the love of Jesus is manifested to their souls! when, "being justified by faith, they have peace with God, and have access by faith into this grace, wherein they stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Then the prophetic song is fulfilled: "The Lord raises the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

The most honourable employment, indeed, among men, even the administration of a kingdom, is mean, base, and abject, when compared to the occupation of the spiritual Christian, the espoused of Christ, admitted into his gracious presence. The contrast, however, appears the greater, when the hardships of a mean station in life, its servile employments, or the ill-treatment of earthly superiors, are opposed to the tender endearments of the heavenly Bridegroom; when the tired labourer, or the abused slave, finds a secret retreat, or enters into the house of prayer, and holds communion in spirit with his gracious Redeemer. Poor and despised as he is among men, and mean as may be his appearance; what honours are conferred upon him in the pre-

[z] Mat. v.

sence of God! The messengers of grace, and all the ordinances of Christ's church, are made subservient to his happiness and exaltation! The espousals of his soul are celebrated! "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold[a]."

[a] Ps. lxviii. 13.

IDYL THE SECOND.

Containing the seventh and eighth Verses of the first Chapter.

THE reason why I suppose a new poem to commence in this place, is the entire change of imagery which we here perceive.

Instead of a royal bride, conducted by a number of attendants into the palace, the spouse is now a shepherdess, tending her kids; and her husband, in the room of the King of Israel, a shepherd leading his flock to pasture. A short conversation between this affectionate pair, on a topic most suitable to their pastoral situation, forms the dialogue of this idyl.

That Solomon and his royal partner should address each other in this language, is hard to imagine. It is true, "the employment of a shepherd was not dishonourable among the Hebrews, and had been the occupation of their revered ancestors." We must remember, however, that, at this period, the state of manners in the metropolis and court of Solomon, had made rapid strides, from patriarchal simplicity, towards that refined voluptuousness, which ever distinguished the Asiatic monarchies.

BRIDE OR SHEPHERDESS.

TELL me, 'O thou,' that art the love of my soul,
Where shalt thou feed 'the flock,'

[a] Where shalt thou rest 'them' at noon?
[b] For why should I be as a stranger
By the flocks of thy companions?

BRIDEGROOM OR SHEPHERD.

If thou shalt not thyself perceive,
O thou fairest among women,
Go forth along the footsteps of the flock,
[c] And feed thy kids
Beside the tents of the shepherds.

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[a] Desirous to be separated as little as possible from her husband during the labours of the day, and anxious, especially, to enjoy his company at noon; when, according to the practice of those hot countries, his flock would lie down in the shade, his affectionate wife requests directions where she shall find him.

[b] עטיה wrapt up, veiled, muffled up. *Parkhurst.* Like a mourner, or like a woman among strangers. "Operta, deliquium animi patiens." *Simon.* "As a wanderer." *Percy* and *Good.*

The language is exceedingly beautiful, and full of tenderness. If she lose sight of him, and find herself at a distance from him, when the sultry hour shall compel her to desist from her employments, and retire somewhere for shelter, how uncomfortable will it be to her to spend that season of leisure and retirement among other shepherds! Amidst their flocks she shall be as one sorrowful and forlorn, under the inconvenient restraints, at least, of a stranger.

[c] "Feed or assemble." She too, it appears, has a charge to attend, the flock of kids, while her husband is employed with the flock in general. In such circumstances, it might easily happen in an open desert, that, in following their respective cares, they would be separated from each other. Should this be the case, and she should lose him, she is to follow

the track made by his flock; the tents, also, of his under-shepherds, objects discernible at a distance, will serve her for a guide and a signal.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SECOND IDYL, OR PARABLE.

The imagination of mankind seems, in a particular manner, to have singled out the scene described in this idyl, as the summit of ideal felicity. The shepherdess and her faithful shepherd, happy in each other's affection, following together, at a distance from the noisy contest and contaminating crowd, their not laborious employ amidst the beauties of nature, is the perpetual theme of almost every poet. In comparison of the supposed happiness of such a pair, the enjoyments of more cultivated life, the rewards of industry and ambition, and the splendid amusements of courts, are affected to be despised.

The picture, it is feared, as it has been wont to be painted, exists not but in imagination. However, we have the opinion of the poets, whose peculiar study is human nature, that, amidst the more refined pleasures of polished society, true and satisfactory happiness in love has not usually been obtained.

The reason of this disappointment is not, indeed, in the artificial structure of society alone, nor in the multiplied wants of man in a state highly civilized. The cause is more deeply rooted in human nature: it must be sought for in the moral depravity of mankind. It is a cause which would affect the shepherds in Arcadia, as well as the corrupted inhabitants of the luxurious metropolis. Yet it must be admitted, that where there has been a considerable departure in the manners of society from primitive simplicity, such a state of society will be still less likely to afford examples of conjugal affection and domestic happiness.

This I conceive to be the reason why, in order to exhibit a better prototype for the loves of Christ and his church, the spirit of inspiration has, by the introduction of this parable, led us from the palace of Solomon, to the cot of the shepherd.

But, in actual life, whether among princes or peasants, the reflection forces itself upon us, how are the pleasures of love mixed with alloy! —how liable to be turned into sorrows the most painful to the feeling mind! The best beloved is not always faithful; the adored idol not always worthy of the passion, or found, on further acquaintance, by no means resembling the picture presented to the fond imagination! How many are betrayed, forsaken, or quit the indulgent

guidance of gentle parents, for what turns out nothing better than the service of an unfeeling stranger!

And, supposing all circumstances of the union to be favourable, how uncertain still the tenure of this happiness!—how liable, all along this troublesome pilgrimage, to be made an additional source of care and anxiety! And whence the widow and the fatherless? the parent bereaved of his children, "refusing to be comforted because they are not?" Ah, dream not of lasting happiness on earth, made up of earthly things. Look not to a mortal to fill the place of God. Have you felt of what your heart is capable, even towards a fellow-creature, when your partial regards overlooked his imperfections, and you forgot his perishable nature? O remember there is an object revealed to the children of men worthy of your affections, one whose beauty and whose goodness ought to call them forth in their tenderest form. Here no suspicion of treachery, no anticipated change, need check your confidence; nor will you hazard the shame of disappointment in the indulgence of the fondest expectations.

O that those who are already become the victims of some unfortunate attachment, or who are about, through the deception of a lying imagination, to part, perhaps for ever, with quiet and peace of mind, could be brought to transfer

their passion to this heavenly Lover! Ah, check your roving fancies, feigning what is not, what cannot be!—sure to cover you with shame and remorse! And come, meditate on *his* excellencies, whom having not seen the faithful Christian loves, in whom, though now he sees him not, yet, believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory[a].

The beloved spouse, in the parable before us, is supposed to express her anxiety on going forth to the labours of the day, lest she should be separated from the object of her affections: "Tell me, O thou that art the love of my soul, where shalt thou feed the flock, where shalt thou rest them at noon." To hold communion with Christ, and enjoy his presence, is the great delight of the spiritual mind. This to some will necessarily appear as fancy and enthusiasm. There are those, however, whose experience can attest, and it is an experience warranted by the word of God, that a sense of joy, such as no tongue can describe, or earthly comparison reach, is, at certain seasons, vouchsafed to the followers of Christ—"times" they are, indeed, "of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

To those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, how painful the apprehension of the loss of his presence, of being employed at a

[a] 1 Pet. i. 8.

distance, as it were, from him who is "the love of the soul!" But duties call for attention. Much time in this lower world must, in usual circumstances, be occupied in the want of all sensible experience of the divine presence:—in employments, frequently, which cannot but abstract the mind from religious meditation. It is this consideration which makes it the earnest desire and prayer of the renewed and spiritual Christian, that the wisdom of God would inspire him so to conduct himself in the management of temporal affairs; and his providence so overrule events, and order the circumstances of his situation, society, and employment, that he may have his Lord and Saviour constantly before his eyes, or frequent opportunities, at least, of access into his presence.

And as this is the prayer, so will it be the endeavour of the faithful: in choosing his residence, in forming his connexions, his inquiry will be, not only, What means of earthly gain, or opportunities of earthly pleasure, shall I acquire, but what religious privileges, what advantages in regard to the communion of saints?

"Where shalt thou rest them at noon?" By the hour of noon may be signified those intervals from active duties which, in almost every man's situation, allow of relaxation, and afford leisure, if he be so disposed, for purposes of devotion. Or the hour of noon may denote those seasons of

affliction and trial, which so frequently incapacitate from duty, and render the comforts of religion, to those who are acquainted with them, more than ever desirable.

These intervals of labour, or these seasons of trouble, the Christian is particularly anxious to spend, or endure, in the presence of his Lord: as the Psalmist frames his only earthly wish, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock [b]."

"For why should I be as a stranger," or as one dejected, "by the flocks of thy companions?" These imaginary associates, I conceive, are other shepherds following the same employ, in the same wilderness. The spouse, pleased only with the society of her beloved, dreads the thought, that, when the sultry hour shall oppress, she may be forced to seek for shelter among these other shepherds.

So fares it with the truly enlightened Christian, who is compelled to spend his sabbaths, or to seek the consolations of religion, in times of difficulty

[b] Psal. xxvii. 4, 5.

and distress, among pastors and teachers who know not the good Shepherd, nor make mention of his name; but who appear, in a manner, as rivals and competitors of the only Saviour. Among these the spouse of Christ cannot be satisfied: though to others it seems a matter of indifference—they are pleased, and at home; she stands by as a dejected stranger, disconsolate, because of the absence of her beloved.

"If thou shalt not thyself perceive, O thou fairest among women, go forth along the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." Such is the answer of the allegorical husband. If she have lost sight of him, and cannot discover *herself* where he is gone, the track of the flock, and the tents of his shepherds, will be sufficient guides to her, where she may find him.

The moral of this is plain. He who loves and seeks communion with Christ, shall not be at a loss to find the way into his presence. Infinite indeed are the mazes of error, and various the deceptions which perplex and bewilder the mind in its search after truth; but, if our object is to go to Christ, we have here a plain direction to observe. The sheep know the shepherd's voice, and follow him; their footsteps, therefore, will have left a track along the pathless desert, sufficiently plain to conduct the attentive inquirer to the retreat of the shepherd.

There is, it is true, a great outcry in the world respecting the disagreement and differences of opinion among professed Christians; and an artful adversary is ever busy to raise and increase these disputes, in order to bewilder unstable souls. And we must perhaps admit, that there may be "a dark and cloudy day," when the flock of Christ are partially "scattered." But, generally speaking, these differences among true Christians—among those who have fairly made out a title to that name, are more apparent than real, as to all essential points.

Those doctrines, which have been known to be blessed to the conversion of sinners, and to the establishment of believers in peace and love—those doctrines, through the hearing of which the Holy Ghost has been received, have ever been of the same tendency, and will be found grounded on the same foundation—Christ crucified—admitted to be "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption [c]." The account moreover given by all enlightened Christians, persons of habits the most unlike, of ages and countries the most remote from each other, when consulted respecting the operation of divine grace upon their souls, and concerning "the plague of their own heart," if fairly examined and compared, proves

[c] 1 Cor. i. 30.

to be but a different narrative of the same events;—at least of a similar contest between the same hostile powers, the victory depending on the assistance of the same heavenly agent.

It is true, you may point out some particular statements of doctrine, and particular rehearsals of experience, as the peculiar marks of certain separate divisions of the flock; but a little inquiry, and careful investigation, will enable us, without difficulty, to distinguish the track in which the grand body of the flock have followed their shepherd. Our direction is, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls[d]."

It follows, indeed, as an useful precept, that all novelties of doctrine, all peculiarities of favourite teachers, and particular sects, are to be avoided and discountenanced; and their exclusive claims treated with more than suspicion. It is a good argument against innovators in religion: "we have no such custom, neither the churches of God[e]."—"From the beginning it was not so[f]."

There is also another part of the direction of the mystic shepherd to his spouse, which we are to remark—

[d] Jer. vi 16. [e] 1 Cor. xi. 16. [f] Mat. xix. 8.

"And feed thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds." Since the flock of Christ's pasture are men, the shepherds whose tents are here mentioned, can be no other than the appointed ministers of his church, under-pastors in the employ of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. We are, of course, to distinguish these shepherds from the companions of the former verse. Those were rivals, false Christs, false prophets, or false teachers; but these are the servants of the good Shepherd, whom he sends to feed his flock.

"Beware of false prophets," is, to all Christians, a needful caution; and therefore we are to take in conjunction "the track of the flock." The track of the flock is first to be marked, because we are to be followers of Christian pastors, as they are of Christ; and not when they scatter the flock, or when "there arise among them men speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them[g]." Yet, notwithstanding, the ministerial office is an appointment of Jesus Christ, to be respected and submitted to by all his people. When he calls himself chief Shepherd, it is in reference to his plan of employing inferior shepherds, in the gathering, and in the feeding of his flock.

Himself has described their characters and

[g] Acts, xx. 30.

their duties: "Householders bringing out of their treasures things new and old[h]"—"Stewards, whom their Lord shall make rulers over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season[i]." And, accordingly, we find that his first commissioned Apostles "ordained Elders in every city[k]." These Elders, or Presbyters, the Scripture tells us, "were made overseers over the flock by the Holy Ghost[l]." Such an order of men, we know, has always existed in the visible church of Christ, and the edifying of the saints has generally been through their instrumentality: the treasure, destined by the great Master for the enriching of his family, has been usually put in these earthly vessels.

Those, then, who would seek communion with Christ, must not despise the ministrations of his servants, either by "separating themselves[m]," as though they could obtain their object by private exercises of devotion, according to the proud conceit of some in these latter days: or by indiscriminately countenancing every forward person who chooses to take upon himself the character of a minister of Christ, and thus rendering the holy office contemptible in the eyes of all.

Let us remember, that one direction to the spouse of Christ, how she may find the love of her soul, is the tents of the shepherds; and this

[h] Mat. xiii. 52. [i] Luke, xii. 42. com. 1 Cor. iv. 1.
[k] Tit. i. 5. [l] Acts, xx. 28. [m] Jude, 19.

way, most unquestionably, the track of the flock does lead: for that neglect and light esteem of the ministerial office, that unconcern with which the people witness the omission of its most sacred duties, and the violation of its best established orders, has scarcely a precedent in the former practice of the church at any one period of her existence. And whether this boasted liberty of modern times, though it supplies indeed a speedy remedy to some incoveniencies and abuses, and has seemed to some, in the simplicity of their hearts, to promise much good, has, on the whole, tended to the advantage of Christianity, will much be questioned. But there is a more important inquiry than that of expediency—Has not the divine precept been infringed: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account[n]?"

By the tents of the shepherds, therefore, where they assemble the people, and feed their master's flock, the faithful are to seek the manifestations of a Saviour's love. His promise to his servants was, "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world[o]." He has said again, but not, I humbly conceive (for he is ever consistent with himself), respecting little parties of professed Christians assembled in arrogant

[n] Heb. xiii. 17. [o] Mat. xxviii. 2.

opposition to the minister, or in slight and neglect of his office, but respecting the blessed assemblies of his church under their appointed pastors, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them [p]." —"I will make them joyful in my house of prayer [q]." And will not the experience of the gracious presence of Christ make it the cordial declaration of all his faithful followers? "How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God!"—"One day in thy courts is better than a thousand [r]."

[p] Mat. xviii. 20. [q] Isai. lvi. 7. [r] Ps. lxxxiv.

IDYL THE THIRD.

Corresponding with that Portion of the public Translation contained in the last nine Verses of the first Chapter, and in the seven first of the second.

MUTUAL congratulations and expressions of affection between a Bride and Bridegroom, of royal dignity, as we discover, who have just retired from the public procession of their marriage, and await, in the private recess of their beautiful garden, the preparation of the nuptial feast, appear to form the greater part of this Idyl: the feast itself being, as I conjecture, the closing scene.

BRIDEGROOM.

I COMPARED thee, my partner,
To the horse in the chariots of Pharaoh [a].

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[a] According to our notions, we must acknowledge, there is something extremely inappropriate in the comparison of a beautiful female to a horse. If, however, such a comparison must be admitted in this place, the same allusion, we may observe, has been pointed out by several commentators in one of the admired poets of antiquity. The similitude, therefore, may have appeared in a different light to people of other times and habits of life.

But we are to notice, that the allusion before us is not to one particular horse, but to a number of horses: for such

Most beautiful were thy cheeks with jewels,
And thy neck with strings 'of beads.'
Borderings of gold will we make for thee,
With pointings of silver.

BRIDE.

[b] While the King was in his circuit,

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is the import of סוסתי, "Η ἵππος,"—"Collective Equitium." *Parkhurst* and *Simon*. Again, the point of comparison between the bride and *these horse* in the chariot of Pharaoh, is neither form, nor action, nor docility; but merely, as far as appears, splendid decoration: "Most beautiful were thy cheeks with jewels, and thy neck with strings of beads." This leads to the conjecture, that these celebrated horses of the royal Egyptian breed, richly caparisoned, as we may suppose, and loaded with all the display of golden ornament and precious stones, which the treasury of the magnificent Solomon could supply, were accustomed to be led forth on days of state, and had appeared a conspicuous object perhaps in some late procession of a royal marriage.

On retiring, therefore, in private with his bride, the bridegroom, meaning to compliment her on her appearance, is supposed to declare, that, in the late procession, the most splendid objects, which the royal state of his kingdom could produce in honour of the event, appeared not in his eyes more beautiful. At the same time, he promises to add to her ornaments. For, though she had appeared so engaging, and every thing about her had seemed so elegant and becoming in the partial view of her lover, yet, probably, her decorations in themselves could by no means be compared, in value or in beauty, to "the peculiar treasure of kings."—But henceforth all that her royal bridegroom possessed should be devoted to her service: "Borderings of gold will we make for thee, with pointings of silver."

[b] This reply of the bride is confessedly obscure to us. The

My nard emitted its fragrance.
A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me,
It shall lie all night in my bosom[c].

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allusion, however, we are supposing in this idyl to a marriage-procession, from whence the royal pair have just retired, will perhaps afford a more probable solution than has been usually given. The King in his circuit, may either refer to his going round in some part of the procession, or to his taking his stand in the midst of his retinue, while the procession passed before him, or, as is the common interpretation, to his sitting at table: or we may translate the line, "Until the King had taken his seat." Whichever interpretation is preferred, it should be recollected, that, among the eastern nations, the throwing of flowers and perfumes upon a person was, on many occasions, and is to this day, practised as a token of high respect and complimentary congratulation. Let us suppose this to be the circumstance alluded to, and the reply of the bride, in answer to the satisfaction which her husband had just expressed at her appearance, will be beautiful and appropriate. It is as much as to say, "My hand was among the first to congratulate the King as he passed, with a profusion of sweets."

It is not improbable that there is a similar allusion to this same mode of salutation in the xlvth Psalm: "All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad:" or,

"Thy garments are all 'over'
Myrrh, aloes, 'and' cassia,
From the ivory palaces,
From whence they have greeted thee."

The ivory palaces may either denote the receptacles of the perfumes (see the following note), or may describe some part of the royal residence where those persons were stationed, who, in the manner above supposed, congratulated the King.

[c] "צרור המור is, according to Castalio, a wreath or nosegay of flowery myrrh. Mr. Parkhurst has a better conjecture,

A cluster of hennah is my beloved to me
From the gardens of En-gedi [d].

BRIDEGROOM.

Lo, thou art beautiful, my partner,
Lo, thou art beautiful, thine eyes are doves.

BRIDE.

Lo, thou art beautiful, my beloved.
———How delightful 'the spot' [e]!
How luxuriant our carpet [f]!
Cedars 'are' the beams of our house,
Cypresses 'are' our roof [g]!

"It seems to be," says he, "what Dioscorides, lib. i. 74. calls σταχτη stacte, and which he informs us makes a perfume of itself. It is very fragrant and dear, and is said to be at present unknown. The eastern ladies were accustomed to enclose this, as well as many other perfumes, in a casket of gold or ivory of the figure of a turret, or small tower—as the Hebrew term expressly signifies היבלי שן—and to place such ornaments in their bosoms, suspended by an elegant chain from their neck. The Persians employ a little casket for the same purpose, which they denominate *Nafeh*." *Mr. Good.*

[d] A bunch or nosegay of henna, or cyprus. Dr. Shaw describes it as a beautiful and odoriferous plant—"putting out its little flowers in clusters."—(Travels, p. 113, 114.)—See *Parkhurst.*

[e] The bride appears in this passage to be admiring some beautiful arbour or bower, into which she is led by her husband: "How delightful the spot!" Compare Ps. xvi. 7. בנעימים. in pleasant 'places.'

[f] רענן "To flourish very much." ערש, the carpet or mattress which is usually spread over the divans of the Orientals.—*Parkhurst.*

[g] Our roof, Impluvia nostra. *Simon.*

I am a 'wild' rose of the field[h],
A lily of the vallies.

BRIDEGROOM.

As the lily among the thorns,
So is my partner among the daughters[i].

No conjecture which we can form, respecting this arbour in the royal gardens, can so well illustrate the passage before us, as Milton's description of Adam's bower in his Paradise Lost:

"It was a place
Chos'n by the sov'reign Planter, when he fram'd
All things to man's delightful use; the roof
Of thickest covert was inwoven shade
Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grow
Of firm and fragrant leaf; on either side
Acanthus, and each odorous bushy shrub
Fenc'd by the verdant wall; each beauteous flower,
Iris all hues, roses, and jessamine
Rear'd high their flourish'd heads between, and wrought
Mosaic; underfoot the violet,
Crocus, and hyacinth, with rich inlay
Broider'd the ground, more colour'd than with stone
Of costliest emblem—"

[h] A rose of the field or plain. Εγω ανθος τȣ πεδιȣ. "I am a flower of the plain."—*Septuagint.* See also Pool's Synopsis.

"But I am a 'mere' rose of the fields of Sharon."—*Good.*

"But I am a 'mere' rose of the field."—*Bp. of Dromore.*

The bride speaks of herself as an object mean and contemptible amidst the beauties of the surrounding scene.—She must appear like some diminutive, wild flower among the selected plants of a garden or parterre.

[i] The lily, or whatever flower is meant by the term, though in itself small and insignificant, might, nevertheless, from the

BRIDE.

As the citron among the trees of the forest[k],
So is my beloved among the sons:
For its shade I longed, 'in its shade' will I sit,
And its fruit will be sweet to my taste[l].
— O bear me to the house of the banquet,
They have set up their banner for me, O love[m]!
Refresh me with cordials, support me with citrons,
For I am fainting with love[n]!

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situations in which it was usually found, be an appropriate emblem of comparative beauty.

[k] The Holy Land is of all others most celebrated for the excellence of its citrons.

[l] Here I conceive the endearing conversation, in the private retreat above described, terminates. For unless we consider the following lines very much involved in figure indeed, the scene is now described as changed to the banqueting-house, whither the bride asks to be conducted: "O bear me, "&c. The Septuagint reads in the imperative mood. Hitherto we have discovered no marks of any other persons being present except the bride and bridegroom; but in the following lines it will be seen that attendants, both male and female, are addressed.

[m] דגלו I consider as the 3d per. plu. pret. We find the same word as a verb in Ps. xx. 6. "In the name of our God will we set up our banners" (נדגל). One of Dr. Kennicott's MSS. reads it as a verb in the singular number in this passage. "A banner or luminous standard, consisting of a number of lights, was accustomed to be carried before the new-married couple on the night of their wedding."—*Parkhurst.* A reference to a custom of this sort appears 2 Esdras, x. 1, 2.

[n] On entering the place where the supper or banquet had

—His left 'arm' is under my head,
His right doth infold me[o]!
—I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
'As' with the gazels, or 'as' with the deer of
the plain[p],

been prepared, we suppose the bride to repeat these lines. The suffixes to the verbs are in the masculine plural—a number of male attendants are of course addressed.

[o] The bridegroom himself supports her in his arms, and conveys her to her seat, or perhaps, if the custom was indeed so ancient, to the couch on which they reclined at table; or, what is more congenial still with eastern manners, to the carpeted divan where the supper was served.

[p] The construction of these words, it must be acknowledged, is in the usual style of adjuration, and might be literally rendered, "I adjure you by the gazels," &c. But the impiety, according to the scriptural precept, of such an oath, besides its total want of solemnity, forbids us to imagine that these words ought to be interpreted as having the force of an adjuration. To understand them, with some, as though the bride should say, "I implore you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by or for the sake of these objects which you hold so dear," &c. seems also to render the meaning too insignificant.

The most eligible interpretation is, that these gazels and deer are mentioned in allusion to their extreme wildness, and timorous nature. Animals of these kinds, as is well known, at the slightest stir, at the least noise, will suddenly start and bound off, with inconceivable rapidity, to their distant retreats. The sense of the passage then will be, that the bride bids her attendants to be as cautious not to disturb or call off the attention of her husband, whose society she so coveted, as though they were approaching the gazels, or the deer of the plain.

The last-mentioned term, אילות, is a general name for the stag, hart, or deer kind.—*Parkhurst.* The former, צבאות,

That ye stir not, nor raise up 'my' beloved, till he please.

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denotes the gazel, a kind of antelope, the emblem of beauty among the eastern poets. It is thus described by Mr. Jackson, in his Account of Marocco: "The gazel is that pretty, light, and elegant animal, swift as the wind, timid as a virgin, with soft, beautiful, large and prominent black eyes, which seems to interest you in its favour. In its general appearance the gazel resembles our deer; it is, however, much smaller, and has straight black horns, curved a little backwards."—"Wild as the hare, more swift than the Barbary courser, I have seen them bounding over the plains in large numbers."

INTERPRETATION OF THE THIRD IDYL.

The exterior imagery of this parable we conceive to be the mutual congratulations of a bride and bridegroom, retiring from the public procession of their marriage to the wedding-feast; where they are regaled in the midst of their friends and attendants.

With regard to faithful Christians, respecting whom we are preparing to interpret this parable, it will not be esteemed an undue stretch of imagination to say, that all the public ordinances and ceremonies of religion, as often as they are administered with a divine blessing, are, in a

sort, the ceremonies attending their spiritual nuptials—the procession for conducting the spouse of Christ into the presence of her Lord.

The solemnities of the Christian worship may, in the eye of an unbelieving world, and in the estimation of lukewarm professors of our holy religion, appear of small account; or they may exist as empty forms when the spirit and the power are gone; but "the friends of the Bridegroom," who delight to hear his voice, will, in their attendance upon these means of grace, often have "this their joy fulfilled[a]." All indeed, who have the spiritual good of mankind at heart, must think highly of public ordinances: and as the honouring of Christ in the eyes of the world is one object of public worship, for this reason every thing which is considered among men as expressive of respect and veneration, ought to attend its celebration. All negligence and appearance of indifference is therefore highly blameable, and all affectation of abstracted spirituality, that would treat mankind as if they had no eyes, or as if their eyes affected not their hearts, is much to be reprehended in the conducting of public worship.

Amidst the solemnities of the most splendid ceremonial, however, with which either the Jewish or Christian congregation has at any

[a] John, iii. 29.

time attempted to exhibit an acknowledgment of the government of the Almighty, or to set forth the praises of Redeeming Love, we know where the eyes of the heavenly King would be fixed, with greatest delight and complacency, on that little knot of faithful worshippers, Israelites indeed, who appeared as the worshippers of God in spirit and in truth, in the midst of the formal multitude. But for the bride, indeed, the marriage-ceremony were an empty pageantry. The daughter of Tyre may be there with a gift; even the rich among the people may entreat his favour. These are honourable circumstances.—But "upon his right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir[b];" all besides is lost sight of in her presence: she only is noticed, she only is addressed.

"I compared thee, my partner, to the horse in the chariots of Pharaoh; most beautiful were thy cheeks with jewels, and thy neck with strings of beads." The bridegroom, as we have conjectured, means to declare, that the appearance of his bride in the late procession was, in his view, worthy to be compared with the most magnificent objects which the state of kings could furnish. And can we suppose that the Almighty Jesus looks with so great complacency upon any object in his earthly courts, or on the

[b] Psal. xlv.

Cherubim "and burning Seraphim" which attend his "twenty thousand chariots[c]," as on the purchase of his blood, clad before him in the garments of salvation, and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband[d]?

I abstain from the description of these garments, and these ornaments, since in a subsequent parable we shall be expressly invited to consider them. Suffice it to say, that their whiteness, which "fears not the snow," results from this—that they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb: that these ornaments upon the spouse of Christ, which seem so beautiful in his sight, consist not in "the wearing of gold or pearls, but in the hidden man of the heart, in that which is incorruptible[e]."

But how beautiful soever the espoused soul appears, even when covered with a Saviour's righteousness, and adorned with the fruits of the Spirit, the King thinks them not yet enough. "Borderings of gold will we make for thee, with pointings of silver." Those whom Christ chooses and justifies, and whom he enables to adorn his doctrine with good works, he will also *glorify*. And though a merciful and affectionate Saviour sets a high value upon the fruits of his grace, as discerned at present in the hearts and lives of his people; though he is more gratified at the

[c] Ps. lxviii. 17. [d] Rev. xxi. 2. [e] 1 Pet. iii. 4.

sight of the one lost sheep, which he has recovered with so great cost and labour, than of the ninety and nine that went not astray; yet, for the bride of the Lamb, in order to her appearing among the heavenly train, her present ornaments must be acknowledged as still unmeet and imperfect.

He that has begun the good work, however, will finish it[f]. Christ will present his redeemed "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy[g];" as one anticipates,—and one, who, in the figurative language of the book before us, was indeed "beautiful with jewels, and his neck with strings of beads."—"Henceforth there is laid up for me in heaven a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all that love his appearing[h]."

"While the King was in his circuit, my nard emitted its fragance." Having before us the assembly of the visible church of Christ engaged in his holy worship—to do him honour, and to celebrate his love, in this circle the King is present; "there am I in the midst of you." The sweet odours that greet his presence are the prayers and praises of his church[i]." And who so forward on these occasions to pour out their souls before the Lord, and to offer to him the

[f] Phil. i. 6. [g] Jude, 24. [h] 2 Tim. iv. 8.
[i] Compare Lev. xxvi. 31. and Rev. v. 8.

sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving[k], as those who have received the special manifestation of his love? "My lips," says one, "shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul which thou hast redeemed."—"Therefore will I praise thee and thy faithfulness, O God, playing upon an instrument of music: unto thee will I sing upon the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel[l]."

"A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, it shall lie all night in my bosom. A cluster of hennah is my beloved to me, from the gardens of En-gedi." The comparison of the constant recollection of a beloved object to a casket of perfume, or nosegay of sweetest flowers, placed in the bosom, and worn there continually, is exceedingly beautiful. The lover will perceive the propriety of the allusion:—

> "While the fond soul,
> Wrapt in gay visions of unreal bliss,
> Still paints th' illusive form——
> —All nature fades extinct; and she alone
> Heard, felt, and seen, possesses every thought,
> Fills every sense, and pants in every vein."

And if it be thus in respect of "the constant image of the *creature* that is beloved," shall not the spouse of Christ carry some such sweet and lasting savour from the sanctuary where she has seen the Lord? "Have I not remembered thee

[k] See Heb. xiii. 15. [l] Ps. lxxi. 22.

upon my bed, and thought upon thee when I was waking[m]?"—"Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy word[n]."—"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food[o]."

Such are the views which the believer has of Christ, and to such communion, though the flesh is weak, the renewed spirit ever aspires; and when the energies which some late manifestation of Christ's love has given to the mind, are still fresh and operative, this happy communion is sometimes realized,—

——"What is the world to them,
Its pomp, its pleasure, and its nonsense all!"

"Lo, thou art fair, my partner! lo, thou art fair: thine eyes are doves." The enamoured language of the fond lover, we observe, is borrowed to express the delight with which the Lord Jesus looks down upon the fruits of his labour, and hears the effusions of the grateful heart which has been won by his love. Nor will this surprise us, when we recollect, that the love of Christ is so great towards his people, that, while they were yet sinners, he died for them: thus exhibiting, as the Apostle teaches us to reflect, towards the ungodly, that highest proof of love which mortals can attest towards

[m] Ps. lxiii. [n] Ps. cxix. 148. [o] Job, xxiii. 12.

the most worthy and amiable! "much more then being now justified by his blood[p]!"

And, when the redeemed soul feels satisfied of the love of Christ, and while she meditates upon all the instances of his great goodness, a sweet persuasion grows that the heavenly Bridegroom is present, and speaks to her in all the promises of his holy word—"when the Spirit of God testifies to the believer's spirit that he is a child of God[q]"—when he fixes his seal upon him, and puts the earnest of heavenly joy into his heart[r]." What more suitable than the reply of the bride in the parable, "Lo, thou art beautiful, my beloved!—yea, fairer than the children of men[s]." How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty[t]!!

In these happy moments, moreover, an unusual splendour seems to be cast on all surrounding objects. Whether the believer to whom the manifestation is vouchsafed, is standing in the courts of the Lord, or is in retirement; whether he is following his daily labours, or, if such be the will of God, is confined on the bed of sickness, or even in the lonesome dungeon, a sense of the divine presence will convert the scene into a paradise. The imagination of the lover attaches not more the idea of beauty to the scene of his enchanting pleasures. How delightful the

[p] Rom. v. 6—10. [q] Rom. viii. 16. [r] Eph. i. 13, 14.
[s] Ps. xlv. 2. [t] Zech. ix. 17.

spot! How luxuriant our carpet! Cedars are the beams of our house, cypresses are our roof!

And here we again notice the genuine effect of a real manifestation of God to the soul. Every one so favoured is humbled and abashed, under a sense of his own meanness and unworthiness. "I am a wild rose of the field, a lily of the vallies." I must appear in the midst of his saints and angels like some contemptible wild flower among the selected plants of a garden.

This state of mind, however, is, we know, beyond all others, pleasing in the sight of God. When we are little in our own eyes, it is then that the Lord delighteth to honour us. "He will beautify the meek with salvation[u]."—"A meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price[w]." It is this, perhaps, that the mystic language of the songs designates by "Eyes like doves." The bridegroom, accordingly, again expresses his approbation.

"As the lily among the thorns, so is my partner among the daughters." With the same strong attachment, with which the lover contemplates the object of his choice, and singles her out amidst all her companions with such regard, we are taught, does the blessed Jesus look down upon his faithful followers—with such affection does he distinguish among their fellow-

[u] Ps. cxlix. 4. [w] 1 Pet. iii. 4.

creatures his ransomed people, who, clothed with humility, pray and meditate upon his word. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him[x]."

In the reply of the bride, we are admonished by a similar comparison, with what estimation and partiality the beloved of Christ should look up to him, above every other object that can possibly engross the affections of men. "As the citron among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the sons. For its shade I longed, in its shade will I sit, and its fruit will be sweet to my taste." The picture is beautiful, and needs no illustration. It truly represents that "pre-eminence" above all other objects, which Christ must necessarily have in the eyes of those who know his love, and are daily "receiving out of his fulness grace for grace."—"Whom have I," says the Psalmist, "in heaven but thee? and in earth there is none that I desire in comparison of thee[y]."—"Yea, doubtless,"

[x] Mal. iii. 16, 17. [y] Psal. lxxiii. 25.

agrees St. Paul, "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ[z]."

In the parable, as we conceive, the wedding-feast has been all this time preparing.—All things are now ready, the attendants are in waiting, the virgins have trimmed their lamps: an opportunity of public worship is returned, some high ordinance is to be celebrated.

Will the soul that, in private, has been in a spiritual frame, and been indulged with the divine presence, beg to have herself excused? No, no! It is to her, the celebration of her nuptials! "The king is again in his circuit."—"O bear me to the house of the banquet, they have erected their banner for me, O love."—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem[a]."

The Christian believer, as was before observed, may consider all the attendants of God's house as his own: he may regard the ordinances of worship as celebrated on his account. "For all are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, —all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's[b]." And how comes the favoured soul to

[z] Phil. iii. 8. [a] Ps. cxxii. 1, 2. [b] 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

this banquet of love?—as rich and having need of nothing[c]? In a far different spirit, she calls to the attendants, "Refresh me with cordials, support me with citrons; for I am fainting with love."—"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord's house. O when shall I come to appear in the presence of God[d]!"—"As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God[e]!"

Such an interest and delight in religious ordinances will ever be created in that heart which has experienced much of the love of Christ. And however extravagant the above expressions may appear in the eyes of the world; however unsuitable to the ideas which many modern professors of Christianity entertain of public worship, let the followers of Christ remember the divine promise, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled[f]."—"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures[g]."

"His left arm was under my head, his right did infold me." The King himself approaches—she is prest to his bosom as the object of his fondest affection; and supported by his arm, she enjoys his society, and partakes of the banquet.

[c] Rev. iii. 17. [d] Ps. lxxxiv. 2. [e] Ps. xlii. 1.
[f] Mat. v. 6. [g] Ps. xxxvi. 8.

And we may notice, that, in the interpretation of the parable, the royal bridegroom, and the marriage-supper, are the same. "Christ is the bread of life."—"His body is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed."

The question was once put to our Lord by one of his disciples, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world[h]?" The conversation of Christ had raised the expectation, that such manifestations would be vouchsafed. His answer, in the passage referred to, confirms the hope. He leads the inquirer moreover to the consideration of the office of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. It is, therefore, through the agency of this divine Being, that the communion and presence of Christ are enjoyed in the soul. Hence we read of "Joy in the Holy Ghost[i]."—"Of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us[k]."

The constant experience also of his faithful people does attest, and in every age has attested, that these spiritual manifestations of Christ, unknown and unsuspected by the world, are, occasionally, vouchsafed to them; and the strongest assurances conveyed to their minds of his favour and unchanging affection. These discoveries of the divine love, moreover, as the

[h] John, xiv. [i] Rom. xiv. 17. [k] Rom. v. 5.

parable before us seems to intimate, may sometimes be expected as a blessing upon the public ordinances of religious worship.

To perpetuate these happy seasons would be, indeed, to convert earth into heaven; but the believer needs not to be admonished, that these holy transports are, in this present life, only occasionally granted, and but for a short time. —They are transient, unfixed, and evanescent, like the bow in the clouds, which pledges the covenant in the day of rain. Yet the bride of Christ cannot but wish to retain, as long as possible, the heavenly vision; and would, especially, be cautious, that no unnecessary interruption may occur, to banish from her mind the pleasing image of her beloved. "I charge ye, O daughters of Jerusalem, as with the gazels, and as with the deer of the plain, that ye stir not, nor raise up my beloved, till he please."

Like Peter on the mount of transfiguration, the Christian thinks "it good to be here," and would fain build a tabernacle to prolong the stay of the heavenly visitor. But though the thought of losing sight of the blissful scene is painful to him, and he descends again into this lower world with some reluctance, yet the kind intent of the gracious Saviour towards him is answered: a pledge, and earnest, and happy foretaste of joys to come has been conveyed to his soul. This inspires him with a lively hope, and animates

him to press forward towards the mark for the prize of his high calling.

Besides, in these manifestations of the divine benevolence, such a heavenly light is wont to be left upon the believer's mind, beaming forth in "good will towards men," that he can look round upon his friends and upon his earthly charge, and, in submissive patience, say with the Apostle, "To depart and be with Christ is far better; but to abide in the flesh is more needful for you[1]."

[1] Phil. i. 24.

IDYL THE FOURTH.

Corresponding with that Part of the public Translation contained in the latter Part of the second Chapter, beginning with the eighth Verse.

THE Idyl now before us is altogether pastoral; no connexion whatever in its exterior imagery, except that both are poems upon the common subject of Love, can be pointed out between this and the preceding parable.

The lovers are here supposed to reside at a great distance from each other:—the imaginary fair relates a visit she had received from her beloved:—she records his affectionate address to her—how she enjoyed his society—and concludes with expressing an earnest desire for the frequent repetitions of his visits.

'T WAS the voice of my beloved! Lo, he is come!
Leaping on the mountains, bounding o'er the hills[a]!

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[a] She suddenly hears, while in the retirement of her garden, the well-known sound of her beloved's voice: he had arrived unexpectedly, it should seem, from a distance over intervening hills and mountains.

הנה עתה זה באן, "Behold, even now there are come."

2 Kings, v. 22.

My beloved is like the gazel, or the fawn of the
deer[b].
Lo, he stood behind our fence[c],
Looking through the openings,
Showing himself at the lattice;
My beloved addressed me, and said,—

"Arise, my partner, my fair one, and come:
"For lo, the winter is over,
"The rain 'is' passed away, 'and' is gone[d]:
"The flowers appear on the ground:
"The time of the singing 'of birds' is arrived[e]:

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[b] In admiration at the ease and swiftness with which her beloved traverses the interposed mountains, she compares him to the animals here mentioned: a comparison not unusual in Scripture; "Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe."—2 *Sam.* ii. 18. "He shall make my feet like hart's feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places."—*Hab.* iii. 19.

[c] כחלנו, "paries noster,"—*Simon.* "Mr. Harmer supposes the word rendered 'fence' to mean the green wall, as it were, of a chiosk or eastern arbour;" which is thus described by Lady M. W. Montague: "In the midst of the garden is the chiosk, that is, a large room commonly beautified with a fine fountain in the midst of it. It is raised nine or ten steps, and inclosed with gilded lattices, round which vines, jessamines, and honeysuckles, make a sort of green wall," &c.
(Harmer's Outlines.)—*Parkhurst.*

In this well-known retreat, coming from the scene of his distant abode and occupation, he finds the object of his choice, and invites her abroad.

[d] The winter or rainy season continues in these countries from November to February, when the spring, the most beautiful season of the year, succeeds.

[e] The season of the song is come. The song here referred to Mr. Harmer conjectures to be peculiarly that of the nightingale.

"The voice of the turtle is heard in our land:
"The fig-tree is embalming its fruit[f]:
"The vines in blossom are yielding their fragrance[g]:
"Arise, my partner, my fair 'one,' and come.
—"My dove, 'that art' in the clefts of the rocks,
"In the hiding-place of the precipice[h],
"Show me thy countenance, let me hear thy voice;
"For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is beautiful."

[i] —"Go catch for us the foxes,

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[f] "Filling them with that clammy delicious juice which is so well known."—*Parkhurst.*

[g] Vitium pubescentium sive florentium odori nullam suavitatem præferri testis est Plinius.—*Simon.*

The above assemblage of beautiful figures is evidently intended to describe the pleasant season of the year after the rainy months are gone, and previous to the setting in of the excessive heats of summer. The duration of this season, and the order of the successive productions of the spring here mentioned, would much depend on peculiarities of situation; for no country, we are told, of equal dimensions, contains within it such a variety of climate as Syria, owing to the uneven surface of this district, and the very great elevation of some of its mountains.

[h] In allusion to the security of her place of retirement, which she may now, however, leave in safety, since the winter is over, the rain is passed away, and is gone.

[i] Some servants of the bridegroom seem here to have been dismissed on their assigned employ: the suffix to the verb is in the masculine plural.

"The little foxes, that destroy the vineyards[k],
"For our vineyards are in bloom[l]."

"My beloved is mine, and I am his,
"Let him eat among the flowers[m]."

Till the day shall breathe, and the shades be fled[n],
Be on every side, my beloved, like the gazel,
Or the fawn of the deer on the mountains of Bether[o].

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[k] "Hasselquist informs us in his Travels, p. 184. that the foxes (canis vulpes) are common in Palestine."—"There is also plenty of them near the convent of St. John in the desert, about vintage-time: for they destroy all the vines unless they are strictly watched."—*Parkhurst.*

See also Theocritus Idyl E. 112.

[l] Perhaps, are setting their fruit.

[m] "My beloved is for me, and I am for him; let him feed among the lilies." Let him drive his flock to pasture in the flowery meads, and I will accompany him. Or, perhaps, I consent to go with my beloved, but will he not first regale himself amidst the beauties of our garden?—Comp. ch. vi. 2.

[n] The breathing of the day denotes, evidently, the breaking of the morning. Some suppose the phrase contains an allusion to the easterly gale, which frequently accompanies the approach of the sun to the horizon.—See *Parkhurst.* Others consider the "breathing of the day" to be a figurative expression for the reviving of the day.—See *Good.*

[o] I must acknowledge some difficulty in these last lines. The generality of interpreters seem content to consider סב as synonymous with שב, and render it in the sense of "Return to." But סבב, or סב, though a word which very frequently occurs in Scripture, is never, as far as I am able to discover, used in this sense. It is indeed sometimes used in direct

opposition to שב, as Gen. xlii. 24.; and its general signification is, "to turn away, to depart," or, more correctly perhaps, "to turn round," in order to depart. We might therefore translate in this place "He departed." But there is a second meaning, "to surround, to encompass, to environ;" which meaning I have been induced to prefer: and have, in imitation of our public translators, in Ps. lxxi. 21. (where the two verbs וחסב תנחמני, are rendered "And comfort me on every side"), translated the verbs סב דמה—"On every side be like."

Mountains of Bether. בתר signifies to divide asunder; we may understand, mountains of division, or craggy mountains.

INTERPRETATION OF THE FOURTH IDYL.

The circumstance and scenery of this parable will point out to us the occasion to which it is to be applied, in the spiritual concerns of the faithful.

Joy and peace are indeed the imperishable inheritance of the beloved of Christ, yet there are times when they are, notwithstanding, "in heaviness through manifold temptations." The beloved of their souls is withdrawn. While the children of the world rejoice, having their good things, the children of the bridechamber are seen "to mourn and lament, because the Bridegroom is taken from them."—It is the gloom of the wintry season. But these intermissions of joy, though painful and distressing, cannot ex-

ceed their limited time. He who has said "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease[a]," has said also to his afflicted, "That though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies[b]." "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid myself from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer[c]."

The pleasant season of the spring returns, more pleasant still from the contrast of the gloomy season, to which it succeeds; so, after a time of spiritual distress or inactivity, the light of the divine countenance shines again upon the soul:—the espoused of Christ, after a time of separation, is gladdened with the presence of her Lord.

"'T was the voice of my beloved. Lo, he is come!—leaping on the mountains, bounding o'er the hills!—My beloved is like the gazel, or the fawn of the deer." The language is expressive of agreeable surprise. On a sudden, the well-known voice is recognised: her beloved appears in sight. She speaks with astonishment and rapture at the ease with which he traverses the rugged path which leads to her abode.

[a] Gen. viii. 22. [b] Lam. iii. 32. [c] Isa. liv. 7, 8.

It is thus, perhaps, that, after a season of grief or deadness, it may be after long waiting in vain, the communion of Christ is restored to the soul, and restored so easily, that the believer is struck with wonder and admiration. Fear and an "evil heart of unbelief," had raised mountains of divisions between him and the only comforter of his soul. The desponding language of the Psalmist too nearly expressed the sad surmises of his despairing mind. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy gone for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies [c]?" But the language of reviving hope will be, according to the beautiful turn given to the following verse of this Psalm, in our old poetical version :—

"At last I said, This surely is mine own infirmity!
"But his right hand can help all this, and change it speedily."

And, when the happy season of spiritual joy arrives, how every difficulty seems to vanish before the merciful and all-powerful Saviour!! How easily does he surmount every obstacle, which the afflicted and tempted Saint had contemplated with dread, as the eternal barrier of his hope! "Leaping on the mountains, bounding o'er the hills! My beloved is like the gazel, or the fawn of the deer!" Or, in the still more elevated language of the Prophet, the believer

[c] lxxvii. 7. 8. 9.

will address the object of his former apprehensions. "And what art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain[d]."

In the parable the nearer approach of the welcome visitor is next described. "Lo, he stood behind our fence, looking through the openings, and showing himself at the lattice." And here let us remark where the object of this visit is found. Alone, and in retirement. Not endeavouring to supply his absence by some other object, or to dissipate her sorrows in the vain amusements of the world. When a concern for an absent lover can indeed be so easily beguiled, a suspicion cannot but arise that there is no true affection.

"'T is nought but gloom around; the darken'd sun
Loses his light; the rosy-bosom'd Spring
To weeping Fancy pines; and yon bright arch,
Contracted, bends into a dusky vault.
All nature fades extinct."

And it will also be admitted to be a good sign, in regard to the reality and strength of the believer's love to Christ, that when the joys of salvation are withdrawn, and he seems banished from the divine presence, no worldly interest can absorb his cares, nor earthly pleasures console and satisfy his mind; but, in fixed resolution, he determines "to wait *for* him who hideth

[d] Zech. iv. 7.

his face[e]."—"Blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find so doing." —"If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me[f]."

"My beloved addressed me, and said, "Arise, my partner, my fair one, and come. For, lo, the winter is over, the rain is passed away, and is gone: the flowers appear on the ground: the time of the singing of 'birds' is arrived. The voice of the turtle is heard in our land: the fig-tree is embalming its fruit: the vines in blossom yield their fragrance. Arise, my partner, my fair one, and come." This affectionate address of the imaginary lover, the beautiful description of the spring, with his invitation to his espoused to come abroad, and enjoy the delightful scene, are clearly emblematical, as we have noticed, of a revival, in the hopes and religious affections of the Christian, when, after a season of doubt or temptation, of distress or heaviness, the God of all consolation is pleased to restore to him the joys of the Spirit, and a persuasion of the divine presence and approbation. Then indeed it may be said, "The winter is over, the rain is passed away, and is gone." Or, to use the beautiful language of the Psalmist, "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth,

[e] Isa. viii. 17. [f] Rev. iii. 20.

even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain[g]."—The rainy season appeared, perhaps, unpleasant and gloomy, but it has left a blessing behind. So, we may observe, in pursuing the comparison, "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby[h]."

The transition from winter to spring, in countries under the same parallel of latitude with the Holy Land, is, we are told, remarkably sudden and distinct. The change would therefore be the more observable. In the space only of a very few days, the cold deluging rains, accompanied with the most tremendous thunders, are succeeded by the gayest scenes of verdure and foliage: where the storm so lately roared, and the wintry torrent dashed from the mountains, are heard the welcome notes of the birds of spring, the turtle, and the eastern nightingale. The vine and fig-tree, at the same time, exhibit to the pleased beholder the quickened progress of vegetation, and while they regale his sense with the sweetest odours, contain the promise of a rich and plentiful harvest.

So fares it with the mind, when, after a time

[g] 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. [h] Heb. xii. 11.

of trial and sorrow, it is again comforted with the Saviour's presence, and feels again the invigorating influence of the Holy Spirit: every thing in the state of its experience undergoes a sudden change. The storm ceases: the clouds of spiritual darkness quickly disperse and roll away. Faith, which, like the leafless tree, scarcely retained the semblance of life, and stood with difficulty against the blast of winter, again flourishes, and becomes pregnant with good. Hope, which languished and faded, feels the influence of the genial season: fair and sweet are its blossoms, while songs of praise and thanksgiving, more melodious than "the concert of the groves," are heard around. Love too, that had spent its energies in mourning for an absent and long-lost object, now, "satisfied with favour," goes forth cheerfully to its labours.

In a similar strain, we find the Prophet Isaiah describing a revival in the church at some future period: "The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God[1]."

[1] Isai. xxxv. 1, 2.

"My dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding-place of the precipice." It were impossible perhaps to conceive a more striking emblem of a helpless being, secure through powerful protection, than that of a defenceless dove, who, as is here depictured, has fled to some great rock for shelter, and has concealed herself in the deep crevices of its rugged sides, where no foe can penetrate, and where no arrow can be aimed. There is another fine allusion to this circumstance in the Prophet Jeremiah: "O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities and dwell in the rock; be like the dove that putteth her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth [k]."

In the exterior of the parable, the allusion we are considering was in reference perhaps to the sheltered situation of the bride's retreat, from whence, now the winter was past, her beloved would invite her to come. In the interior of the parable it appears as a striking admonition to the believer of his perfect security in the gloomy period of his spiritual distress, though no sensible comforts give assurance to his mind. In the season of his greatest fear, "kept by the power of God through faith into salvation [l]," he is safe; while he trembles at the raging storm, his defence is the "munition of rocks." The dove, moreover, hasting to escape from the

[k] Jer. xlviii. 28. [l] 1 Pet. i. 5.

stormy wind and tempest, from the barbed arrow, or the bird of prey, and flying to the clefted sides of some mighty rock for protection, affords a true illustration of the act of saving faith:—the application of the helpless and alarmed sinner to an all-sufficient Saviour, whose pierced side may indeed be said to afford a refuge and a shelter from every evil, a hiding-place in every trouble.

"Show me thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is beautiful." This, as we have seen, is part of the invitation of the beloved to his espoused, now that the season admits, to come abroad, and gratify him with her society. "Add to your faith virtue [m]," is the evangelical precept: that is, fortitude and resolution—resolution to come forth and appear on the part of God, exhibiting, in the midst of a wicked and adulterous generation, the beauty and consistency of the Christian character—a sight most pleasing in the eyes of our great Master! And he delighteth also to hear the voice of his redeemed people, in prayer, in praise, in the confession of his holy religion. As he has said, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God [n]."

[m] 2 Pet. i. 5. [n] Ps. l. 23.

"Go catch us the foxes, the little foxes which destroy the vineyard; for our vineyard is in bloom." The season of spring is the season of enjoyment and activity indeed, but it brings with it its peculiar dangers, and corresponding cares. The same genial warmth which restores the verdant and blooming scenes, and matures the fruits of summer, nourishes also, and brings forth from their retreats, the noxious vermin of the earth. These demand, at this season, the redoubled efforts of industry in order to their riddance, or the harvest and the vintage will be expected in vain.

And thus, in the concerns of the soul, it should seem, that the point of danger, the time when she is most susceptible of injury, is not in the stormy season of her troubles when she feels most alarm; for that alarm has conduced to her security—she has fled to the rock for safety: but in those seasons of peace and joy, when she is encouraged to venture abroad, and to engage actively in the duties of her heavenly vocation. "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation[o]." "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour[p]."

"My beloved is mine and I am his, let him eat among the flowers;" or "let him feed among

[o] Mat. xxvi. 41. [p] 1 Pet. v. 8.

the lilies." She obeys his call, and, accompanying him abroad, or entertaining him in her garden, is blessed with his society.—A picture of the Christian who receives the proffered love of Christ, and in grateful return makes a surrender of himself to his service: he is refreshed with the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and is led forth in the ways of God, in fellowship with his Lord and Saviour.

But, as we are perpetually admonished, these seasons of extraordinary joy are granted only for a short time during this our earthly pilgrimage. —The night approaches, her beloved ends his visit. But, as it should seem, has named a day when he shall no longer continue to abide at a distance from the object of his affections, but will come and take her to himself. Until this day shall breathe, and the shades which obscure its dawn be fled, it is the object of her constant and most earnest wish for a repetition of these visits from her beloved. "Till the day shall breathe, and the shades be fled, be on every side, my beloved, like the gazel, or the fawn of the deer, upon the mountains of Bether."

The same mountains of division, which had been before the barriers of her hope, are again, we find, contemplated as intervening between her and the beloved. And the soul, we may observe, after a season of spiritual communion, relapses into herself again, and feels the same inability to recover her departed comforts

—the same insufficiency in herself, "so much as to think a good thought." There is, however, this difference—her reliance on the power and faithfulness of her Lord increases. Having experienced the futility of her former apprehensions, and the exact fulfilment of his promise; having seen, more than once, with what ease all her fears and difficulties were surmounted by Almighty Love, she offers the fervent prayer, full of faith, and full of hope:—"Be on every side, my beloved, like the gazel, or the fawn of the deer, upon the mountains of Bether." Thus tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.

IDYL THE FIFTH.

Corresponding with the first five Verses of the third Chapter.

A CIRCUMSTANCE in domestic life, among the lower or middling classes of society, forms the subject of this Idyl. The scene is not, as is usual in these allegorical poems, when the nuptials of the King of Israel do not serve for the prototype, laid in the country, but in the city: we find ourselves in the streets and broad places, instead of the flowery meads; among watchmen or guards going their rounds, instead of shepherds feeding their flocks.

The faithful wife, it is supposed, had in vain been expecting the return of her husband at the hour of rest. Filled with anxiety, she leaves the house in quest of him; and after long search, by the direction of the nightly watch, which she meets, she at length finds him.—The idyl closes with a description of her great earnestness to retain his society, on which her late disappointment had taught her to set a higher value.

The wife, for she is here evidently the married wife, is the sole speaker in this idyl, as the espoused, to adopt that term, was in the last.

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[a] ON my bed at night, I sought the beloved of my soul;

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[a] Those commentators, who, in explaining the exterior of the allegory, confine their notions to the nuptials of King

I sought him, but I could not find him.
I will arise now, and go round the city;
In the streets and broad places, I will seek the
beloved of my soul;
I sought him, but I could not find him:
The keepers, who go round the city, found me.
—"Have you seen the beloved of my soul?"
'T was 'but' a little that I had passed them,
Until I found the beloved of my soul.
I held him, nor would I release him,
Till I brought him to the house of my mother,
[b] To the chamber of her that conceived me.

Solomon, are driven to the necessity of supposing a dream, in order to account for the extraordinary circumstances of this idyl: for extraordinary they must be considered, as occurring to a royal bride. Not only, however, have we no intimation of a dream in the sacred text; but such a dream, in the circumstance supposed, must still be acknowledged to be improbable: "Not as wont—of works of day past, or morrow's next design;" but of incidents altogether uncongenial to the situation of the parties.

[b] חדר, "an enclosed place or room, a chamber" (see note [f], Idyl 1st). It is particularly applied to what is called a *bed-chamber*. What Dr. Shaw says (Travels, p. 208-9. 2d edit.) concerning the structure of houses in Barbary (and the Levant), may give some light. "Their chambers are large and spacious, one of them frequently serving a whole family. At one end of each chamber there is a little gallery raised four or five feet, with a ballustrade (and doubtless a veil to draw in the front of it). Here they place their beds." This shows the meaning of חדר בחדר, "a chamber in a chamber. 1 Kings, xx. 30, &c." —*Parkhurst*. And hence, we are at no loss to account for the

" I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
" 'As' with the gazels, and 'as' with the deer of the plain,
" That ye stir not, nor raise up 'my' beloved till he please."

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supposition of the bride's conducting her husband into the house, and even into the chamber of her mother. For the chamber of the young couple was, in fact, a part of that chamber.

INTERPRETATION OF THE FIFTH IDYL.

As the affectionate wife, separated from her husband during the day, while his employments call him abroad, expects with delight his return in the evening, and seems to claim that season as her own; so the Christian believer, compelled by the duties of his station to divest himself of heavenly meditations, and to spend the greater share of his time and attention on secular cares and occupations, looks with earnest expectation for his appointed seasons of prayer and retirement. And, generally speaking, the gracious Saviour is found of them that seek him: the peace and consolation which his presence can alone create, are enjoyed by his people, when they have " entered into their closet, and have shut their door, and pray to Him which seeth in

secret[a]"—"Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways[b]."

But it may be, for purposes of trial or of discipline, that these comforts are withdrawn: the soul misses her beloved: the peace and satisfaction usually experienced by the devout mind, is sought in the accustomed means, and at the accustomed hour, and sought in vain. To such a circumstance we would apply the opening of the parable before us, "On my bed at night I sought the beloved of my soul; I sought him, but I could not find him."

His absence, however, is intolerable. Nor can that which is very precious in the enjoyment, be lost without proportionate regret. "I will arise now, and go round the city. In the streets and broad places I will seek the beloved of my soul." The believer, who is distressed in his feelings, and finds no relief in the private exercises of religion, seems admonished, that he should seek the society of the faithful, wherever they dwell. If spiritual distress is felt in the mind, or an unusual deadness oppresses its affections and hopes, a melancholy retirement is by no means to be resorted to; for we know that it is the Lord's pleasure to bless the intercourse of Christians one with another, to their mutual

[a] Mat. vi. 6. [b] Isa. lxiv. 5.

benefit and comfort. Hence the direction, "Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another." —"Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak [c]."

The great Apostle himself seems to have looked to this resource: we read, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, that one advantage which he proposed to himself in visiting the eminent Christians at Rome, was, "that I may be comforted, together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me [d]." And doubtless the design of our heavenly Father, in thus constituting a kind of reciprocal dependence between the members of his family, is, to teach them to love one another, and to hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

And oh, how are the poor and afflicted members of Christ robbed of their happiness by those divisions and separations which exist among us! Never surely ought the affectionate address of the Apostle to the Philippians to be more enforced than in the present day. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind [e]."

But in the parable before us, this second source

[c] 1 Thes. v. 2—14. [d] Ver. 12. [e] Phil. ii. 1, 2.

of religious comfort is supposed to fail; even in the society of christian friends, consolation is not obtained: "I sought him, but I could not find him." Accordingly, a still further means is pointed out.

"The keepers," or "watchmen, who go round the city, found me." By this incident the ministerial office is clearly intended to be represented, since one of the duties of those who bear this office is, "to watch for souls," and to be ready at their appointed stations to advise the wanderer, or to comfort the afflicted. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence[f]."

To these watchmen the inquirer applies.—"Have ye seen the beloved of my soul?" And the distressed and tempted Christian should certainly avail himself of the benefit of the divine institution of the ministry. The answer given by these watchmen appears to have been satisfactory: very soon after her application to them, the wanderer finds the object of her search. This doubtless teaches us that God will honour his appointed means, and so bless the ministrations of his servants, that they shall not labour in vain, nor shall his people be finally disap-

[f] Isa. lxii. 6.

pointed, who "seek the law at their mouth, for they are the messengers of the Lord of Hosts[5]." —"'T was but a little that I had passed them, until I found the beloved of my soul."

The temptation, of whatever kind it was, is dispersed: or that, which had caused the Lord to hide his face, is discovered and removed. Peace and joy in the Holy Ghost are again vouchsafed; and on such an occasion, with what eagerness of mind will the mourner embrace the happy moment of returning consolation! "I held him, nor would I release him till I brought him to the house of my mother, to the chamber of her that conceived me."

Has the distressed or tempted Christian recovered a sense of the divine approbation? Was it through the advice and comfortable exhortations of friends or Christian pastors, or was it "too hard for him till he went into the sanctuary of God?" Wherever he has recovered his Saviour's presence, how anxious will he be to carry home his happy frame of mind, and to meditate in private on the manifestation of the heavenly love!

And being taught also, by the loss he had lately sustained, to value more the possession of spiritual peace and joy, how careful will he be—how tremblingly alive to the apprehension, lest

[5] Mal. ii. 7.

he should lose them again, or be interrupted in their enjoyment! "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, as with the gazels, and as with the deer of the plain, that ye stir not, nor raise up my beloved till he please!!"

IDYL THE SIXTH.

Containing the last six Verses of the third Chapter.

THE exterior imagery in this Idyl bears some resemblance to that of the first allegory. It is a marriage-procession, for the purpose of conveying the bride of the King of Israel to his royal residence.

The circumstances of the processions, however, are very different. The dialogue in the first idyl was maintained between the bride herself, a messenger, and the virgins; but the dialogue in this poem is carried on between the virgins alone, as the spectators of the ceremony.

They describe a scene which passes before their eyes.—On the one part appears the bride, borne from a distance, in the royal palanquin of Solomon, surrounded with his guards: on the other part, our attention is suddenly called to the King himself, "Solomon in all his glory," who comes forth to meet his bride on her arrival. This, supposing, which is not improbable, an allusion to a real event, was, no doubt, a *high day* in Jerusalem; and, like some other circumstances of the times, is allegorized, to veil and typify the mysteries of the everlasting reign of the true Solomon—the "Prince of Peace."

FIRST VIRGIN.

[a] WHO is this coming up from the wilderness?

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[a] "Or what is this," &c.—*Percy, Green,* and *Good.* But the most faithful translation is, "Who is this?" What woman,

Like columns of smoke,
From incense of myrrh and frankincense,
From all the powders of the merchant?

SECOND VIRGIN.

[b] Lo! it is the palanquin of Solomon:
Sixty valiant men surround it,
Of the valiant of Israel:
All are swords-men [c],
Disciplined for war:
Each has his sword on his thigh
Because of fear in the night [d].

---

or bride, as she is known to be, from her appearance? מי very rarely refers to things: זאת is the 3d per. sing. fem. עלה too is fem. as in 1 Kings, xviii. 44.

"Τις αυτη η αναβαινουσα απο της ερημου;" *Septuagint.*

[b] They are supposed to see a bridal couch or palanquin at a distance, with a multitude of attendants. They compare it to columns of smoke, to the fuming incense of the altar. The attendants perhaps were burning perfumes; or their smoking torches, their *cottors* or luminous standards, might give the procession the appearance here attributed to it. Or, it is possible, the allusion may be to the columns of dust raised by the feet of the attendants, the signal usually observed of the approach of travellers in the desert of Arabia.

[c] אחוי חרב "comprehensi, i. e. accincti gladio, vel qui adhæserunt, adjuncti gladio, per Hypallagen, pro, quibus gladius adhæsit sive adjunctus est." *Simonis Heb. Lex.*

"Possessed or seised of a sword." *Parkhurst.*

[d] A party of the royal guards we may suppose to have been sent with the royal vehicle. They conduct the bride, as it appears, from a distance. This vehicle, a description of which follows, must undoubtedly, according to Mr. Harmer and other commentators, have been a kind of palanquin. For

A palanquin King Solomon made him,
He formed it of the woods of Lebanon;
Its supporters he made of silver;
Its mattress of 'cloth of' gold;
Its hangings 'are' of purple[e];
Its inside 'is' spread over with love[f]
By the daughters of Jerusalem.

THIRD VIRGIN.

[g] Go forth, and see, O daughters of Zion, King Solomon,

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first, it is called מטה, a bed or couch, something which would admit a person to lay himself at length. Secondly, it is, evidently, portable, and surrounded with attendants for a journey. Of the other term, by which it is called אפריון, *Simon* observes, "Compositum ex 2 synonymis אפר Arab. cucurrit, latus est; et ex Chald. פרא. cucurrit, latus est."—"It is used in the Misnah for the nuptial bed, or open chariot, in which the bride was carried from her father's house to her husband's."—*Dr. Gill.*

[e] The chariot or body part, stragula.

[f] Its inner lining was spread over, literally paved, worked so as to resemble a pavement, with appropriate devices and mottos, by the women of Jerusalem.—*Harmer's Outlines.*

"And to illustrate, if not confirm, this supposition, I observe, from Lady M. W. Montague, Let. xxv. vol. i. p. 158. that the inside of the Turkish coaches is (in our times) painted with baskets and nosegays of flowers, intermixed commonly with little poetical mottos."—*Parkhurst.*

[g] While the company of virgins are contemplating the equipage of the bride, and are admiring its beautiful construction, their attention is suddenly called to another quarter: they have notice that the bridegroom is coming, "decked" with his splendid "ornaments." The marriage-ceremonies of the

With the crown with which his mother has
crowned him,
On the day of his espousals,
On the day of the gladness of his heart!

Jews, and other eastern nations, were always grand and imposing: we may easily imagine, therefore, the magnificence which would accompany a bridal procession of King Solomon.

We cannot, indeed, require a more convincing proof of the rich decoration of the person of the bridegroom on these occasions, than the circumstance of the royal Psalmist's having alluded to it, for a comparison of the most grand and beautiful object in nature—the rising sun: "He cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber."

INTERPRETATION OF THE SIXTH IDYL.

The conducting home of a bride espoused to King Solomon is, as we have seen, the exterior and ostensible imagery of this allegory. The conducting of the purchased people of Christ to his presence and blessed abode in heaven above, is, I think, the interior and remote sense which is veiled under this thin and pellucid covering.

The first idyl, the subject of which is, in like manner, the conducting home of a royal bride, has been explained of the first introduction of the favoured Christian into that state of joy and sense of the divine favour, which is wont to

accompany that first fruits of the Spirit, by which the believer is sealed until the day of redemption.

The very different circumstances, however, of the procession we are now to contemplate, lead to the notion, that a different event is intended by the emblem. We explain the present allegory, therefore, with reference to the anticipated conveyance of the espoused of Christ from this world to the mansions above: and, in its full amount, to the manifestation of the sons of God in the last day, when the New Jerusalem will be seen as a bride adorned for her husband, and the assembled universe will be called to celebrate the "marriage supper of the Lamb[a]."

In view of these two events, the entrance of the soul of the faithful into paradise, and the glory to be brought to the church at large at the revelation of Jesus Christ, we may consider this present world as the wilderness, through which the perilous journey, supposed in the opening of the parable, has just been effected.

"Who is this," or "what bride is this that cometh up from the wilderness?" The beautiful land of Canaan, it is well known, was bordered on the south and south-east by the dreary and

[a] Rev. xix. 9.

arid desert of Arabia. Through this desert, Israel had journeyed from Egypt to the land of promise. From this circumstance, and from the inevitable inconveniencies of the journey by which their country was approached on this side, and the pleasing change which opened to the traveller's view when he had once passed the boundary, "coming up from the wilderness" appears to have been a constituted emblem among the Jews of the faithful servants of God, who, finishing their earthly pilgrimage, enter into their heavenly rest.

The question in the allegory before us amounts therefore, in fact, to that put to St. John in the Apocalypse, while he stood contemplating a large assembly of the redeemed from among men, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?"—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, &c. &c.[b]"

The columns of smoke which are noticed, as if ascending from the burning of myrrh and frankincense, and all the aromatic powders of the merchant, and which first attract the attention of the virgins, is emblematical, I conceive, of the prayers and praises of the saints, as offered in the name of Christ, and in reference to his atoning sacrifice: ascending, to use the Scripture metaphor, as a sweet-smelling savour

[b] Rev. vii.

before the mercy-seat of the heavenly tabernacle. "And another" angel "came and stood by the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand[c]."

To relieve the tiresome way, through which his bride must pass, to shelter from the parching sun by day, and to defend from midnight robbers, King Solomon, it seems, had sent a magnificent palanquin, attended by threescore valiant soldiers. The virgins recognise the equipage, and perceive, of course, whose bride it conveys. "Lo! it is the palanquin of Solomon! sixty valiant men surround it, of the valiant of Israel."

So He, who is the peace of his people, the King of the heavenly Zion, has carefully provided for the safe and pleasant conveyance of his redeemed, through the wilderness of this world, to the mansion prepared for them in his Father's house. "They are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time[d]." This world in itself is a comfortless desert; yet they, through his care, enjoy many comforts in passing through

[c] Rev. viii. 34. [d] 1 Pet. i. 5.

it. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace[e]."

"In the time of trouble," says one, "he will hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me[f]." Compare too the remarkable declaration in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you[g]."

If we inquire particularly respecting the armed attendance which guard the royal couch, the Scripture affords an easy solution: "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone[h];" —"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them[i]." Of the angels again we read, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation[k]?"

We come next to consider the description of the bridal palanquin itself. "A palanquin King Solomon has made him: he formed it of the woods of Lebanon. Its supporters he made of

[e] John, xvi. 33. [f] Ps. xxvii. 5. [g] Isa. lvi. 3, 4.
[h] Ps. xci. 11, 12. [i] Ps. xxxiv. 7. [k] Heb. i. 14.

silver; its mattress of cloth of gold; its hangings are of purple; its inside is spread over with love by the daughters of Jerusalem." The vehicle, we observe, was contrived for rest, and easy conveyance: but its beauty and magnificence bespake, at the same time, the quality and riches of its possessor.

The emblem well applies to the provisions which have been made in the scheme of redemption for the present peace, safety, and happiness of the objects of the divine compassion and love. Their comfort, and the relief of their many infirmities during the toilsome and perilous journey of life, have been graciously considered and provided for by their all-wise and powerful Saviour; so that, notwithstanding the dreary scene around them, and the inconveniencies necessarily incident to travellers in a desert, the followers of Christ shall not fail to find the words of the heavenly wisdom true, that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace[l]."

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee[m]." The God of mercy has bid them "cast their burden upon him, promising to sustain them[n]."—"To be careful for nothing, but by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let

[l] Prov. iii. 17. [m] Isai. xxxvi. 3. [n] Ps. lv. 22.

their requests be known unto him [o]." Remarkable are the words of our Lord, even when comparing his service to a yoke: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls [p]." The believer, therefore, relying upon a Saviour's promise, and so far placed above the cares and troubles of life, and secure from harm, while passing through this world to a better world above, fully answers to the emblem before us.

This palanquin, or travelling couch, which Solomon had sent to convey his bride across the desert, could not indeed, from its very nature and purpose, display all the rich magnificence of that Prince's court; yet still, we see, it displayed in its minor ornaments the royal munificence of its owner. The cedar, the silver and gold, the purple and rich embroidery, were, so to speak, the decorations of a palace on a smaller scale. On the occasion which supplied the exterior of the allegory, this beautiful means of conveyance, we may easily conceive, would exhibit to Solomon's chosen an encouraging pledge and specimen of her splendid entertainment, when she should once arrive at the residence of her royal Bridegroom.

[o] Phil. iv. 6. [p] Mat. xi. 29, 30.

In like manner, the state of grace, as entered and enjoyed by the people of God here below, though it cannot be thought to bear comparison with that glory which is to be revealed—with that "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, which is reserved in heaven for them;" yet does it exhibit, in its rich provisions, and in the present joys which it affords, an animating specimen of the munificence of the King of Glory.—It contains that which is to the believer an earnest and a foretaste of those pleasures that are at God's right hand for ever. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him, but God has revealed them to us by his Spirit[q]".

The silver, and the gold, and the purple, therefore, we consider as emblematical of the true and more durable riches of faith, of the heavenly joy that hope can realize on earth, and of those manifestations of the "*bleeding* love" of Christ, which, in the midst of an otherwise miserable world, satisfy and comfort the Christian's heart. And, adopting the ingenious idea given above, respecting the emblems and mottos worked by the daughters of Jerusalem for the inside of the royal couch, the communion of saints, with all the records and memo-

[q] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

rials they have left, testifying their own happy experience of the love of Christ—his faithfulness in the trying hour—their dying sayings especially, will be readily admitted to correspond with this *storied lining* of the bridal palanquin.

But, to proceed with the counter-part of the allegory, while the eyes of these daughters of Zion are fixed upon the company which is conducting the Bride from the wilderness, and while they are employed in listening to the description of her conveyance, a cry is heard—"Behold, the bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet him."—"Go forth and see, O daughters of Zion, King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him, on the day of his espousals, on the day of the gladness of his heart."

In 'Solomon,' decked 'in all his glory,' in the character of "a bridegroom, coming out of his chamber" to meet his bride on her entrance into his capital, we have a type of our Lord and Saviour, when he shall welcome his redeemed to glory:—when he shall welcome the departing saint to that mansion in his Father's house, which he has prepared for him; and, especially, in that great day when he shall meet his whole church in the character of her Bridegroom.

In the days of his flesh, our gracious Master prayed, and his prayer was heard; "Father, I will that those, whom thou hast given me, be

with me where I am, that they may behold my glory[r]." The effect of this prayer the soul of the dying saint shall find when angels shall carry her to the Paradise of God. She departs to meet her heavenly Bridegroom. For to depart from the body is to be with Christ. And He who bought her with his precious blood, and has espoused her to himself, in righteousness, in loving kindness, and in mercy, will welcome her arrival. The effect of this prayer will be further seen, and the type we are considering receive its full accomplishment, when the whole assembled church of Christ shall receive their perfect consummation of bliss both in body and soul:—"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels"—"when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe[s]."

We have a description of this great event under the same allusion in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation; "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she

[r] John, xvii. 24. [s] 2 Thes. i. 8—10.

should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.—And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousnees he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies which were in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean—and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS[t]."

On the head of the King of Zion, you are told, there are many crowns.—There is the regal crown. For a kingdom and dominion, which shall be for ever, is given to him.—There is the crown of victory. For he went forth conquering, and to conquer: and all his enemies are subdued under his feet.—There is the crown of merit. For he is exalted above his fellows, "because he has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity[u]."

But there is another crown which, in a particular manner, marks him out to the attention of his faithful people—the bridal crown.

[t] Rev. xix. 6, &c. [u] Ps. xlv.

"Go forth and see, O daughters of Zion, King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother has crowned him," on the day of his espousals, on the day of the gladness of his heart. His faithful people will meet him on that day in the character of the Bridegroom of souls.—"Blessed and happy is he that shall be called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb."

It is the day of the gladness of his heart. It is the day that brings the recompense of all the Redeemer's toil and trouble. To wear this crown, so great was his love to his church, he emptied himself of his eternal majesty, and became a man of sorrows, and suffered the bitterest agonies of death. To wear this crown was the joy set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross, despising the shame.

Contemplating him in the midst of his strange sufferings, the prophetic Spirit declared, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied[w]." And, as the good shepherd gathers, one by one, his scattered flock, we are told, "that he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing[x]." When the hour of their departure comes, again we read, "Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints[y]." When, finally, all the

[w] Isai. liii. 11. [x] Luke, xv. 5. [y] Ps. cxvi. 15.

members of the church, which he has bought with his own blood, shall be brought to glory, then shall the Redeemer's joy be full.—Then, in the most emphatic sense, will be "the day of the gladness of his heart."

IDYL THE SEVENTH.

Including the fourth Chapter and the first Verse of the fifth.

THE various and discordant opinions of the most respectable expositors respecting the literal meaning of that portion of the Canticles on which we are now entering, forewarn us of difficulties; and demand from the reader an extraordinary degree of candour and indulgence towards the present attempt.

This Idyl, according to the division which I have adopted, begins with a description of the personal charms of the fair one, as they appeared in the eyes of her admirer.—He next declares his intention of departing—and taking his leave, with expressions of his entire satisfaction with his espoused, promises one day to take her with him to his home, and acknowledge her as his bride.—He then describes the residence he has provided for her, where she may wait in pleasure and security the arrival of this appointed day.—Lastly, the spouse entertains her beloved and his companions.

Such, if I am right in my conjectures, is the exterior imagery of this beautiful allegory. The scene of the poem is distinctly marked as lying on the northern borders of the Land of Promise.

BRIDEGROOM.

Lo, thou art most beautiful, my partner,
Lo, thou art most beautiful:—

[a] Thine eyes are doves behind thy tresses[b]:
Thy hair is like a flock of the goats,
That go in the morning to water[c] from Mount Gilead:
Thy teeth like a flock of even-sized 'ewes'[d],

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[a] Or, "Thine eyes are the eyes of doves." There is some uncertainty whether the dove itself, or the eye of the dove, be the intended comparison. It may be necessary also to observe, that several of the following comparisons, as illustrations of female beauty, though they may appear to us obscure or inapt, might, nevertheless, in the times and circumstances when these poems were composed, have been most appropriate and elegant.—The figurative language before us is probably of that sort, which any enamoured lover of the age of Solomon would have employed to panegyrize the admired object of his passion.

[b] *Parkhurst*, after *Michaëlis*, renders עמה a vail, and so does Dr. *Percy*. But the more probable meaning appears to be, the projecting hairs ornamenting the forehead, and flowing down the sides of the face. "Cirrus."—*Simon*. "Beneath thy shadowy hair."—*Good*.

[c] So *Shultens*, and after him *Simon*, give the force of the single word גלשו. mane aquatum iverunt. *Parkhurst* renders it glisten (nitent), and observes, that the bride's hair is compared not merely to the long curled hair of the eastern goats, but to a flock of goats glistening from Mount Gilead; in allusion not only to its glossiness, but also to the numerous ringlets or tresses into which it was broken, and which adorned the head of the bride, as the glistening goats did the sides and precipices of the mountain.—To perceive the aptness and beauty of this image, we should, of course, have been acquainted with the local scenery of Mount Gilead in the time and circumstances supposed.

[d] קצובות præcisæ: determinatæ, ordinatæ, i. e. invicem si-

Which ascend from the wash-'pool,'
Which go all of them in pairs[e],
And no one among them 'is' bereaved 'of her fellow.'
Like a thread of scarlet 'are' thy lips,
And thy mouth 'is' most beautiful:
[f] Like a section of pomegranate 'is' thy cheek behind thy tresses.

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miles, q. d. ejusdem cæsionis, h. e. proportionis. Coll. 1 Reg. vii. 37. ut Bochartus et Clericus interpretantur.

Simonis Heb. Lex.

[e] תאם. geminus duplex fuit.—*Simonis.* "The Arabic verb תאם denotes not only to bring forth twins, but also to have a companion."—See Henley's note in Gregory's trans. of Lowth's Lectures.

[f] פלח is properly a fragment, a piece split off, some understand it of the bloom. So Simon, 'Eruptio floris.' Others, of the fruit when the shell bursts of itself. So Dr. Gill, "The rind being broken, it appears full of grains and kernels, of a white colour, interspersed with a reddish, purple juice, like blood, as Pausanias remarks, and looks very beautiful." So that one might almost conclude, that the comparison is intended for the mouth, and not for the temple or cheek. רקה from רקק, is generally indeed translated The temple; but the order of the above comparisons forbids us to suppose that this part of the face is intended in this place. The Septuagint and many other interpreters render it cheek. The meaning of the verb רקק, however, tenuis fuit vel factus est, attenuatus est, as well as the nature of the comparison, may be supposed to favour the notion, that the lower or narrow part of the face, where the mouth is situated, is intended. Mr. Good, though he understands the comparison of the cheek, "As the blossom of the pomegranate, so are thy cheeks beneath thy locks;"

Thy neck is like the tower of David,
Erected for the suspending of trophies[g]:
A thousand shields are hung upon it,
All armour of the mighty:
Thy two breasts 'are' like two fawns,
Twins of the gazel, feeding among lilies.
Until the day shall breathe, and the shades be fled,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
—To the hill of frankincense[h].

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yet, in another part of his work, p. 129, in a long quotation, which he has given us from the Gitá-govindà, has accidentally afforded a very similar use of the same comparison.—"O thou whose lips, which outshine the grains of the pomegranate, are embellished, when thou speakest, by the brightness of thy teeth!"

[g] Some tower built by David, which we may conjecture to have been, from its situation, and the symmetry of its proportions, an object of general admiration, and which, from the additional circumstance of its being used for the suspending of armour, might have afforded an appropriate comparison for the neck and its ornaments. Compare Ezek. xxvii. 2. חלפיות. "armamentaria."—*Simon.*

[h] The mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense, most commentators agree in supposing to be Mount Moriah, where the temple was built—the hill appropriated to the burning of incense and sacrifice.

The connexion and meaning I conceive to be, "I am about to depart and return to my distant abode, but let her be assured from no dissatisfaction with the object of my affections.—The day too will come when I will take her with me, and acknowledge her as my bride, in my father's house."—כלה is an appellation of the bride here, for the first time introduced. It corresponds indeed with our bride, inasmuch as it belongs to a new-married

—Thou art fair, my partner,
There is no spot in thee!
—With me from Lebanon, espoused,
With me from Lebanon shalt thou come;
Thou shalt look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Senir and Hermon;
From the Lions' dens, from the Leopard-mountains[k].

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woman (Isa. lxi. 10. Jer. ii. 32.); but it appears, she did not afterwards lose the title in her adoptive family, as least so long as her husband's parents were living (Gen. xxxviii. 11. 16. 24. Ruth, i. 6, 7, 8.). For it should be remarked, that the term is not used in direct reference to the husband, but to his parents: she is their כלה, not his כלה (Lev. xviii. 15.). It corresponds therefore more nearly with our term daughter-in-law: and the French term for daughter-in-law, une belle fille, i. e. a fine daughter, is almost equivalent, as Mr. Parkhurst observes, to the Hebrew כלה.—"A perfecto ornatu vel a coronâ qua ornari solebat; vel quod tecta sive velata ad sponsum adduceretur, et post hac tecta incederat.—*Simon.*"

[k]As the mention of the mountain of myrrh, designated Mount Moriah, or Jerusalem, as the abode of the departing lover, so it now appears from these lines, that the supposed residence of the espoused was situated somewhere beyond the north or north-east borders of the land of Canaan. Mount Lebanon is well known. Amana, if the conjecture be right, which places it at the rise of the celebrated river of Damascus, Abana, or, as the margin reads, Amana, was an eminence at no great distance. Senir, Shenir, or Sirion, is also a mountain in the same parts, as appears from Deut. iii. 8, 9. and 1 Chron. v. 23. In the poetical language of the royal Psalmist, it is mentioned as a compeer of the lofty Lebanon (Ps. xxix. 6.). Hermon, an appellation given to several mountains, belongs particularly to

that mountainous track where the Jordan originates, which still fixes our attention to the same northern border. The Mountain of Leopards is also mentioned as being the name of a round and high mountain very near to Lebanon (see Andrichomius in Gill, and Pool's Syn.). And the spot called the Lions'-dens, though we discover no vestige of the name, was, in all probability, not very remotely situated.

In order to go to the residence of her beloved, the spouse must pass this border; and on the eminences here mentioned, spots, I conceive, celebrated for the extent of view which they commanded, she would be first gratified with a prospect of the land of promise, and of the distant abode of her husband.

That this conjectural interpretation is countenanced by the general appearance of the country, the following very interesting extracts from Volney's Travels will show †.

"Whether we approach Syria from the side of the sea, or by the immense plains of the desert, we first discover, at a distance, a clouded ridge, which runs north and south as far as the sight extends; and, as we advance, distinguish the summits of mountains, which, sometimes detached, and sometimes united in chains, uniformly terminate in one principal line which overtops them all; we may follow this line, without interruption, from its entry by the north, quite into Arabia. It first runs close to the sea, between Alexandretta and the Orontes, and, after opening a passage to that river, continues its course to the southward, quitting, for a short distance, the shore, and, in a chain of continued summits, stretches as far as the sources of the Jordan, where it separates into two branches, to enclose, as it were, in a basin, this river, and its three lakes. In its course it detaches from this line, as from a main trunk, an infinity of ramifications, &c."

"A view of the country will convince us that the most elevated point of all Syria is Lebanon, on the south-east of Tri-

† Volney's Travels in Egypt and Syria, third Edition.

poli. Scarcely do we depart from Larneca, in Cyprus, which is thirty leagues distance, before we discover its summit, capped with clouds.. This is also distinctly perceivable on the map, from the course of the rivers. The Orontes, which flows from the mountains of Damascus, and loses itself below Antioch; the Kasmia, which, from the north of Balbec, takes its course towards Tyre; the Jordan, forced by the declivities towards the south, prove that this is the highest point."—P. 272.

"Lebanon, which gives its name to the whole extensive chain of the Kesraowan, and the country of the Druzes, presents us every where with majestic mountains.—The loftiness and steep ascent of this mountainous ridge, which seems to enclose the country; those gigantic masses which shoot into the clouds; inspire astonishment and awe. Should the curious traveller then climb these summits, which bounded his view, the wide-extended space which he discovers becomes a fresh subject of admiration; but completely to enjoy this majestic scene, he must ascend the very point of Lebanon, or the *Sannin*. There, on every side, he will view an horizon without bounds; while in clear weather the sight is lost over the desert, which extends to the Persian Gulf, and over the sea which bathes the coast of Europe. He seems to command the whole world, while the wandering eye, now surveying the successive chains of mountains, transports the imagination in an instant from Antioch to Jerusalem; and now approaching the surrounding objects, observes the distant profundity of the coast, till the attention, at length, fixed by distincter objects, more minutely examines the rocks, woods, torrents, hill-sides, villages, and towns; and the mind secretly exults at the diminution of things, which before appeared so great."—P. 274.

"To the west is the vast liquid plain of the Mediterranean; to the east the plain of the desert, no less vast, but absolutely dry; in the midst of these two level surfaces rise the mountains, whose summits are so many observatories, from whence the sight may discern full thirty leagues."—P. 305.

[l] Thou hast affected my heart, my sister, espoused,
Thou hast affected my heart!
[m] With one 'look' of thine eyes,
[n] With one 'turn' of thy neck.
How pleasant is thy love, my sister, espoused,
How much better is thy love than wine,
And the odour of thy perfumes beyond all
'other' perfumes [o];
Thy lips, espoused, distil the virgin honey [p]:
Honey and milk 'are' under thy tongue:

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[l] לבב. To take away, to ravish the heart.—*Parkhurst.* Εκαρδίωσας ημας, Septuagint.

[m] Supply, ראי.—See Dr. *Percy* and Mr. *Good.*

[n] So *Percy* and *Good.* The meaning is, I conceive, that he had resolved, and had declared his intention to depart; but the anxiety expressed in the parting look—the turn of the head—the "long-lingering look," which was meant to bid farewell, had much affected him, and called forth the tenderest emotions of his heart. He declares his entire satisfaction, and tells her, that the day will come, when she shall be welcomed to his home as his acknowledged bride. The terms אחתי כלה, my sister—daughter-in-law to my parents, if we may be allowed to imitate the force of the original word (see note [h]), are a sort of anticipated welcome to his family.

[o] The same comparisons have occurred in a former idyl.

[p] נפת, honey which parts and distils from the comb of its own accord, without pressing, virgin honey.—*Parkhurst.*

The comparison of persuasive eloquence to a comb dropping honey, will be familiar to most readers. "So Pindar compares his ode to honey mixed with milk."—And in Plautus, "Your words are honey and milk."—*Gill.*

Prov. v. 3. "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil."

And the odour of thy garments 'is' like the fragrance of Lebanon[q].

[r] A garden 'is' enclosed, my sister, espoused,

[s] A spring 'is' shut up, a fountain 'is' sealed.

[t] 'The' productions 'of' thy garden 'are' pomegranates, with precious fruits;

Hennahs with nards, nard and saffron,

Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense;

Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.

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[q] Either like the cedar-wood from Lebanon, or like the smell of its fragrant fields and woods. "See," says Isaac, "the smell of my son is as the smell of a field, which the Lord has blessed." (Gen. xxvii. 2.)

Mr. Good quotes the following passage from Musæus:—

—Λιβανου θυοεντος ενι πτερυγεσσι.

"The heights of odorous Lebanon."

[r] The following lines are thought, by Dr. Percy and Mr. Good, with other commentators, to contain certain established metaphors, which were applied by the Hebrews, upon nuptial occasions, to signify the unsullied purity of the bride, and the chastity and reserve she was to evince in the marriage state. But, for a reason afterwards to be stated, I consider these lines not as containing comparisons of the bride, but as descriptive of the residence prepared for her reception, until the day alluded to above should breathe.

[s] "A spring is locked up." As Sir John Chardin says, he has known them to be in divers parts of Asia, on account of the scarcity of water.—*Harmer.*

[t] "Thy productions," or, "Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates," &c.

[u] 'The' fountain of 'thy' gardens 'is' a well of
living waters,
And streams 'flowing' from Lebanon.

BRIDE.

Awake, O north-wind, and come,
Breathe, O south, 'upon' my garden,
That its odours may exhale.
—Let my beloved come into his garden,
And eat of its precious fruits [w].

BRIDEGROOM.

I am come into my garden, my sister, espoused,
I have gathered my myrrh with my spices;
I have eaten my honey with my conserve;

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[u] The fountain by which this beautiful garden was watered never failed: it was a perpetual spring: which is the simple meaning of the Hebraism, "well of living waters." Lebanon, on account of its immense height and extent, is the source of many of these streams and rivulets, besides the larger rivers which collect at its base. In particular, we read in Maundrell, that "there is a very deep rupture in the side of Libanus, running at least seven hours travel directly up into the mountain. It is on both sides exceedingly steep and high, clothed with fragrant greens from top to bottom, and every where refreshed with fountains, falling down from the rocks in pleasant cascades.—The streams, all uniting at the bottom, make a full and rapid torrent, whose agreeable murmuring is heard all over the place"—a satisfactory illustration of נזלים מן-לבנון "*Trickling streams from Lebanon.*"

[w] Such is the grateful language of the bride. "My beloved has placed me in this beautiful retreat. Let him come himself and enjoy its sweets, and its fruits; and O, may the hour be propitious! Awake, O north-wind," &c.

I have drunk my wine with my milk[x].
Eat, my companions—drink—
Yea, drink plentifully, my friends[y].

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[x] The bridegroom as readily complies with her request, and declares his great satisfaction in the repast which she had prepared for him.

[y] These two last lines, unless we take most unwarranted liberties with the sacred text, evidently contain an invitation and welcome, either from the bride or bridegroom, to others, his companions and beloved friends, to partake with him of the productions of this garden: which circumstance, I conceive, will be esteemed a sufficient reason to dissuade from the notion that this garden is meant, in the exterior of the allegory, as a figure of the bride herself. And if not the enclosed garden, neither is she the spring locked up, nor the fountain sealed. But, according to the interpretation given above, these are the beauties and conveniences which belong to the residence which her husband had prepared for her reception—till the day should breathe, and the shades be fled.

INTERPRETATION OF IDYL THE SEVENTH.

All that appears to the present view in what forms the exterior imagery, in the commencement of this allegory, is, as we have noticed, a lover's description of the beauty of the choice of his heart, in the taste and language of the times when these divine songs were composed.

If the individual comparisons which we have been considering, besides being illustrations of female beauty, were designed, originally, to have each of them a mystic import and meaning in application to the graces of the church, or of the faithful Christian, we must acknowledge that these significations are entirely lost:—"Thy eyes are doves behind thy tresses, thy hair like a flock of goats," &c. &c. And certainly great discredit has been done to the Canticles by the vague and fanciful guesses of some former commentators, in their attempts to spiritualize these similitudes.

But I am content to think, that all these comparisons were, even in their original state, merely descriptive of feminine beauty—that the moral of the allegory is simply this:—how great is that partiality with which a human lover looks upon the object of his passion, and which would lead him, in such strong language, to express his admiration of her personal attractions! With a similar fondness, and with the same partial delight, does the heavenly Bridegroom contemplate his church, and each faithful Christian of which it is composed.

For though black as the tents of Kedar, in her native state hateful and deformed through sin, yet, since the redeemed soul has been precious in the sight of her Saviour, she has been honourable, and he has honoured her: nay, she is

"perfect in beauty through the comeliness which he has put upon her." For Christ has loved his church, and given himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish[a]."

In what the beauties of the renewed soul consist, we may read without a figure in several passages of Scripture. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption[b]."—"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance[c]."—"Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering.—And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness; and let the peace of God rule in your heart[d]."

These are the beauties which the heavenly lover admires in his espoused—these the ornaments which he has made for her—this the salvation, with which he "beautifies the meek." And if we are permitted to reason, that the value of a thing in the estimation of the purchaser is that which he will give for it, the care and pains

[a] Ephe. v. 25, &c.
[b] 1 Cor. i. 30.
[c] Gal. v. 22, &c.
[d] Col. iii. 12, &c.

which he will bestow upon it, how dear in the sight of the Lord must his redeemed and sanctified people be!—the people whom he has bought with his most precious blood, and whose preparation for glory is now the great object of his solicitude, the great end and object of his mediatorial office!

The seeming extravagance of the following declaration will not therefore startle or offend us: That the church, as she appears in the eyes of the heavenly Bridegroom, is esteemed by him, when contrasted with all other parts of his creation, though he has made all beautiful in their place and season,

——"so lovely fair,
That what seem'd fair in all the world, seem'd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd,
And in her looks."

The beloved, as usual in these allegories, is represented as preparing to take his leave. "Until the day breathe, and the shades be fled, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, to the hill of frankincense." The day, whose expected dawn is anticipated in these songs, is doubtless that emphatic day to which the Scriptures so often refer us: "the day of the Lord:"—"the day of Jesus Christ:"—"of his appearing and glory:"—the appointed day when he is to come again, and take his people to himself.

The place whither our Lord is gone, we also

know. "Him the heavens must receive, until the times of restitution of all things[e]." The mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense, is, literally, I imagine, Mount Zion or Moriah, where the holy incense and perfume, the composition of which is so particularly described in the law of Moses[f], were, by a perpetual ordinance of the God of Israel, burnt before the ark of the testimony. Hence we read, "The Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it[g]."—"The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill, as the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever[h]."

But this choice of Zion, and all the sacrificial rites directed to be observed thereon, to distinguish that hill as the place of the divine residence, we are to consider as typical merely of heaven—of heaven as opened to penitent believers. The tabernacle and sanctuary, with all their furniture, and instruments of worship, were a little model of the preparations made in the celestial world, for receiving there the sinful sons of Adam, "through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ."—There Jehovah sitteth, as was represented in the Jewish sanctuary, in his

[e] Acts, iii. 21.
[f] Ex. xxx. 34, &c.
[g] Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14.
[h] Ps. lxviii. 15, 16.

"fearful holiness" indeed, but upon a seat of mercy, consecrated by that one offering which perfects for ever them that are sanctified, and which affords a perpetual incense to be offered up with the prayers of all saints.—Into this tabernacle Jesus, our High Priest, is for us entered.—At the door of this tabernacle the Israel of God now worship.

The bridegroom's indication of his departure, reminds us of our Lord's address to his disciples: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. And as I said to the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you." He had said to the Jews, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go ye cannot come? And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath, I am from above: ye are of this world, I am not of this world; I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins[i]."

They could not follow him to his holy habitation, for nothing unholy and unclean can enter there. The Jews, because they believe not in Christ, who alone could save them from their sins, would die in this state, and would go to

[i] John, viii. 21, &c.

their own place beneath. For this is the decisive sentence—"He that believeth not shall be damned."

But does our Lord repeat the same awful declaration to his disciples, "Whither I go ye cannot come?"—He graciously explains his meaning, "Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me hereafter." Naturally, indeed, there is the same impediment: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." All are in themselves unholy and unclean. But believers in Christ shall not die in their sins. They are "washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God[k]." But still, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." When, however, the work of grace is completed, and the regenerated and sanctified soul is considered by the heavenly Husbandman as ripe for the harvest, and proper to be severed from its earthly stock, then shall the espoused of Christ follow her Lord. And "He that appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, will, to those who wait for him, appear a second time without sin to salvation[l]."

We should notice too, that it is not in anger,

[k] 1 Cor. vi. 2. [l] Heb. ix. 28.

nor in any dissatisfaction with his espoused, that the bridegroom departs: quite the reverse.—"Thou art all fair, my partner, there is no spot in thee." Let this encourage the believer, when, after a season of extraordinary joy, without any of those culpable causes on his part, noticed in some other parables, the presence of the Saviour seems again to be withdrawn.

"Thou art all fair, my partner, there is no spot in thee." As seen in Christ, viewed as apprehending that, for which he is apprehended in Christ Jesus, the believer is perfect in holiness—he is put in the way to attain perfection, the leaven is hid in his heart which is to assimilate the mass; and Christ is his surety and his strength. And moreover, "he is not under the law, but under grace."

As called to self-examination and repentance, the people of God do find, indeed, that in many things they offend all; and they judge themselves, that they may not be judged according to that discipline which is to take away their sins: that they may not smart under that chastising rod which the heavenly Father, though unwilling to afflict, sometimes sees it necessary to use, in order to make his adopted children "partakers of his holiness [m]." But spared through mercy, till the sovereign remedy—

[m] Heb. xii. 10.

Christ set forth to be a propitiation for sins—our sanctification, as well as our righteousness, shall be applied to the cure of every corruption, as well as the pardon of every sin, they are now in the eyes of God what the blessed Jesus is: "He is well pleased for his righteousness sake[n]." And taking it for granted, what none can call in question, that Christ will fulfil his engagement, accomplish his undertaking, and redeem his pledge, we may, in confident anticipation, say with the Apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love[o]."

In addition to the declaration of his entire acceptance, the beloved in the text honours his chosen partner with the title of Espoused, or Bride, and promises one day to take her with him to his distant abode in the mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense. "With me from Lebanon, espoused, with me from Lebanon shalt thou come. Thou shalt look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the Lions'-dens, from the Leopard mountains."

[n] Isai. xlii. 21. [o] Eph. i. 3, 4.

Lebanon, and the mountains here mentioned, formed, as we have observed above, one of the boundaries of the Holy Land:—the border, in fact, which, from its situation, would be most frequently passed by the Israelites in going and returning from foreign countries. They were eminences also, which commanded extensive prospects, perhaps, over all the land of promise. The recollection of these circumstances will, I conceive, guide us to the true interpretation of this beautiful imagery. When we consider the metaphorical language of Scripture in general, and remark how every thing relating to this extraordinary people, and their habitation in the land of Canaan, is constantly allegorized by the sacred writers, to typify the concerns of Christ's church and kingdom, it seems very natural, that the passing of this celebrated boundary, and looking from the tops of these mountains in their progress homeward, should be considered as emblematical of the true Israelites entering into that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

Imagine to yourself the Jew, with his known love and superstitious reverence for his native country, returning from his sojourning, or captivity, among the hated Heathen; suppose him to reach at length these celebrated spots, where, after a long absence from the scenes of his youth, "the glory of all lands" is first disclosed to his

view: or recall to your recollection those disconsolate captives, whose sorrows are so pathetically described in the hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm: "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." Suppose them to have been addressed, by some one compassionating their distress, in the language before us, "Ye shall pass again the borders of your beloved country, ye shall look from the top of Amana, from the summits of Senir and Hermon, from the Lions'-dens, and from the Leopard mountains." In this point of view, how beautiful and striking is the allusion, considered as emblematical of the Redeemer's purpose and promise of one day taking his "pilgrims and strangers," as they appear on earth, "his banished ones," home to his blessed abode in paradise and glory!

"Let not your hearts be troubled," was one of the actual farewell declarations of our gracious Lord; "ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also[p]."

[p] John, xiv. 1, 2, 3.

And perhaps it will be permitted us to include in our interpretation of this allusion to these spots, so celebrated as we conceive for the prospects they afforded of the Holy Land, an intimation of those anticipations of hope, which disclose to the believer's view the distant landscape of the brighter world above.—The time of the bride's departure to the beloved of her soul, was not yet arrived, but she might go occasionally to these well-known spots, and gladden her heart with a prospect of that pleasant land, which contained in its remote horizon all that was most dear to her.

So the Christian, who is waiting for his Lord from heaven, and has set his affections on things above, has, through Christ, "access by faith into that grace where he stands, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God[q]," and receives those joys of the Spirit which are "the earnest of his inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."—We may compare his situation to that of the Jewish legislator, who, though he might not go over Jordan "to the good land, and that goodly mountain and Lebanon[r]," yet, before he dies, he is permitted, from the top of Pisgah, to behold it with his eyes.

"Thou hast affected my heart, my sister, espoused, thou hast affected my heart, with one

[q] Rom. v. 2. [r] Deut. iii. 25.

look of thine eyes, with one turn of thy neck." These lines need no interpretation to the feeling mind. They are particularly designed, if we have conjectured right, to represent how much the anxiety, discovered in the parting looks of the beloved object, had affected the heart of her husband. It is this, it should seem, which leads him, in the following lines, to give her fresh assurances of his love, and of his delight in her society: and which induces him to point out the conveniences and beauties of the residence, where she was to be left "till the day should breathe, and the shades be fled."

And in reading the history of our divine Master when he visited this earth in great humility, we cannot but have noticed what precious promises, what kind of assurances of his love, the sorrow discovered by the disciples, when he had intimated the approach of his departure, seemed to extort from his gracious lips.

"Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away," &c.—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because

I said, I go to the Father." But let the whole of those parting sayings of our compassionate Redeemer, contained in the fourteenth and two following chapters of St. John's gospel, be read as an exposition of this part of the Canticles. And then, I think, it must be acknowledged, that the expressions of the enraptured lover, in the symbolical representation before us, are not too strong, to paint the affection of the dying Jesus to the souls of his people.

"How pleasant is thy love, my sister, espoused, how much better is thy love than wine; and the odour of thy perfumes beyond all 'other' perfumes. Thy lips, espoused, distil the virgin honey; honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the odour of thy garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon." Some of these figures we have already considered.—We may observe in general, that things esteemed the most grateful to the human senses are referred to, in order to give us some notion and satisfactory assurance of the delight with which the gracious Saviour looks upon his people, who testify by their actions their unfeigned love towards him; and whose lips express, in prayer and praise, the effusions of a grateful heart. The grand inference which we are to draw is this, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so will the Lord thy God rejoice over thee[s]."—And thus are

[s] Isai. lxii. 5.

the nuptials of two faithful lovers consecrated to so excellent a mystery, that therein is signified and represented, the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and his church[t]."

We come next to the description of the pleasant residence, where, as we have conjectured, the spouse is left till the time appointed for her removal to the abode of her beloved. "The productions of thy garden, &c." or "Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates, with all precious fruits; hennahs with nards, nard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. The fountain of thy gardens is a well of living waters, and streams flowing from Lebanon."

The garden, or cultivated estate, is, as we have seen, described as being enclosed, and well secured from every depredator; and also as being well supplied with water, that most essential of all articles in these hot countries—springs of water are appropriated to its use. A garden it is described to be, like the paradise in which our first parents were placed, "Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food[u]."—Its waters too are not like the wintry torrents, to which Job compares the deceitful friend:

[t] Com. Pray. [u] Gen. ii. 9.

"which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: what time they wax warm they vanish; when it is hot they consume out of their place; the paths of their way are turned aside, they go to nothing, and perish[w]." But the fountain which supplies these gardens is a well of living or spring waters, and streams flowing from Lebanon.

This delicious paradise is, no doubt, meant to portray the state and condition of those happy believers, who, having received the reconciliation, and being sealed by the spirit of adoption, are kept by the power of God unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last day—"whose heart the Lord has directed into the love of God and patient waiting for Jesus Christ[x]." "Theirs is the world, and life, and death, and things present, and things to come; all are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's[y]."

The metaphor here employed to represent a state of spiritual prosperity, is very usual in Scripture. "Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall sorrow no more at all[z]." —"The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make thy bones fat: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of waters, whose waters fail not[a]."—"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,

[w] Job, vi. 16, &c. [x] 2 Thes. iii. 5. [y] 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.
[z] Jer. xxxi. 12. [a] Isai. lviii. 2.

and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord has planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters[b]."—"In that day, sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine: I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day[c]."—"Salvation will the Lord appoint for walls and bulwarks."—"Lest they which go by the way should pluck her, lest the boar out of the wood should waste it, and the wild beast of the field devour it[d]." And, "There the glorious Lord will be to us a place of broad waters and streams[e]."

The expressions indeed of our blessed Master himself, as well as the constant use of the metaphor in the Old Testament, guide to the particular interpretation of this spring locked up, this fountain sealed—well of living waters, as it was, and streams from Lebanon; nor can we hesitate, after considering the following passages, to understand it of that supply of the Holy Spirit, which God doth shed abundantly on them that believe.

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life[f]."

[b] Num. xxiv. 5, 6. [c] Isai. xxvii. 2, 3. [d] Ps. lxxx. 12, 13.
[e] Isai. xxxiii. 21. [f] John, iv. 14.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified[g]."

These streams of divine grace are, moreover, represented as wholly appropriated to the use of the church. "A spring locked up, a fountain sealed."—"God is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." But we have now before us a representation of those special influences of the Holy Ghost, which prepare and seal the heirs of heaven. "He sanctifieth all the elect people of God."—After that they believe in Christ, they are "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory[h]." —"Him the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you[i]."

Under the figure, therefore, of this blissful paradise, and its perpetual fountain, we have an exhibition of the present happy state of the spiritual believer—of his privileges in the king-

[g] John, vii. 38, 39. [h] Ephe. i. 13, 14. [i] John, xiv. 17.

dom of heaven, as that kingdom is now established "in righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost[k]."

The remaining part of the allegory seems to represent the anxious struggles of the grateful soul, to show some sense of the mercies received, and to make some return to her beneficent Lord, which, though poor and disproportioned, may nevertheless be such as his love will deign to accept.

"Awake, O north wind, and come! Breathe, O south, upon my garden, that its odours may exhale."—"Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat of its delicious fruits." The blowing of the wind is another established emblem of the Holy Ghost, that *invisible* agent, whose effects are yet so discernible on every side. "We hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth[l]."

The invocation of the Spirit on this occasion forcibly reminds us of that most true doctrine recognised in our tenth Article: "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ,

[k] Rom. xiv. 17. [l] John, iii.

preventing us, that we may have a good will, and *working with us when we have that good will.*"

We have represented to us also in this parable how graciously the Lord accepts at the hands of his people their sacrifice of praise and obedience. "I am come into my garden, my sister, espoused; I have gathered my myrrh with my spices; I have eaten my honey with my conserve; I have drunk my wine with my milk." There is an entertainment to be prepared by his faithful people for the Saviour himself—prayer and thanksgiving—even songs of praise, with every exercise of faith, of hope, and of love; of meekness and of long-suffering. By these things we are to hallow his holy name. This is the part of the sacrifice to be burnt upon the altar:—"an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet-smelling savour."

But besides, you notice that the bridegroom invites his friends and companions to partake of the repasts which his grateful spouse has prepared. "Eat, my companions; drink, yea, drink plentifully, my friends." And we are all aware that one of the most distinguishing virtues of the followers of Christ has ever been *charity to the poor*. "To do good and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased [m]." This is that labour of love [n],

[m] Heb. xiii. 16. [n] Heb. vi. 10.

which a gracious God has said "he will not forget." It is indeed considered as a personal favour shown to the Saviour. "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. For I was an-hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."—"Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me[o]."

[o] Mat. xxv.

IDYL THE EIGHTH.

From the second Verse of the fifth Chapter, to the second Verse of the sixth inclusive.

The following Idyl is certainly very distinct in its exterior imagery from the foregoing, nor is it difficult to be understood in its leading circumstances, whatever obscurity our ignorance of ancient habits may have cast upon some minor particulars. The allegory possesses a considerable affinity to the fifth, and is one of those which I conceive the most fertile imagination would find it no easy task to interpret, in its external form, of King Solomon and a royal bride.

A domestic occurrence in much humbler life very clearly supplies the present parable. The husband is one that has travelled far in the night, and returns late to his desired home and beloved companion.—He finds the door barred against his admission, and, though his wife is awakened by his call and knocking, yet her delay and trifling leading him to suppose that he was not heard, he departs to seek a lodging elsewhere.—Her distress at finding him gone—her unsuccessful search, with the unfortunate circumstances which attend it, are then described.

Such is the exterior imagery of the first part of this allegory: the second part, if it ought not rather to be separated from it, and made a distinct idyl of itself, we shall treat of afterwards. The spouse, or wife, we are to recollect, is the relater in this part of the poem.

I WAS asleep; but my heart awoke [a]:
It was the voice of my beloved, who was knocking.

"Open to me, my sister, my partner,
"My dove, my perfect 'one,'
"For my head is filled with dew,
"My hair with the drops of the night[b]."

"I have put off my clothes,
"How shall I put them on again?
"I have washed my feet,
"How shall I dirty them[c]?"

My beloved thrust his hand through the opening[d];

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[a] עוֹר. "Surrexit, excitavit se, excitatus est."—*Simon.*

"But my heart awoke." A very natural description of the manner in which the mind of one asleep, or partly asleep, is excited by some *expected* call.

[b] The copious and, in some situations, pernicious dews which fall during the night in these countries, are mentioned by many travellers.

[c] A clear description, I conceive, of the hesitation of a person half awakened, whose drowsy and impotent resolution seems in vain to encounter a thousand unreal difficulties.

[d] "It was the ancient custom to secure the door of a house by a cross-bar, or bolt, which by night was fastened by a little button or pin; in the upper part of the door was left a round hole, through which any person from without might thrust his arm, and remove the bar, unless this additional security were superadded."—*See Dr. Percy,* p. 76.

[e] My affections were stirred towards him,
I arose to open to my beloved,
My hands dropped myrrh,
My fingers pure myrrh [f], upon the handles of the bolt.
I opened to my beloved,
But my beloved had turned away and was gone:
My soul went out for his word:
I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he did not answer.
The keepers, going their rounds in the city, found me,
They struck me, and wounded me,
The guards of the wall took away my veil [g].

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[e] Bowels or pity.

[f] מור עבר. Current or passing myrrh, being, according to Bochart, that myrrh which *wept*, or dropt from the tree itself. —These were probably the unguents, or perfumes, which, according to the customs of the times, she had prepared for the refreshment and gratification of her husband on his return.—Compare Prov. vii. 17.

[g] In the estimation of an eastern lady, one of the greatest indignities that could be offered her.

PART THE SECOND.

THE bride has been hitherto, as we have noticed, the sole relater; it appears, from what follows, that she had been telling her distress to the daughters of Jerusalem. Having accounted for the state in which she appeared among them, she pours her complaint into the bosom of her friends.—She charges them with a message to her beloved:—their answer draws from her a description of his person:—they on their part declare their readiness to assist her in the search.

BRIDE.

I ADJURE you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
If you find my beloved,—
Whatever you tell him—
Tell him that I am fainting with love[a]!

VIRGINS.

What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
O fairest among women,
What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
That thou adjurest us thus[b]?

[a] "What can ye say, but that I faint for love?"—*Good.*

[b] Such is the imaginary inquiry put into the mouths of the daughters of Jerusalem, designed, as I conceive, to draw forth from her own lips a description of the person and peculiar excellencies of the beloved object.

BRIDE.

My beloved is fair and blooming[c]:
'He is' conspicuous among ten thousand[d].
His head 'is' like pure native gold[e];
His hair 'is' clustering, and black as a raven[f];
His eyes 'are' like doves beside the streams of water,
Washing in milk, cowering in the fulness 'of the stream'[g]:

Respecting this description, we may make the same reflections as on a former occasion, when the personal charms of the bride were panegyrized: That whatever seeming inaptness there may be in the allusions, or obscurity in the language, according to our modes of thinking, there can be no difficulty in admitting, that, in the age of Solomon, each individual figure would be thought beautiful and appropriate to the occasion.

[c] אדום, red.

[d] דגול, pro vexillo, vel instar vexilli supra alios erectus. Latinè dicas, insignis. Εκλελοχισμενος απο μυριαδων.—*Septuagint.*

[e] Probably in allusion to its ornaments.

[f] תלתלים, the Septuagint render Ελατας; and the Vulgate more plainly, *Elatas palmarum*, i. e. the clusters or strings of embryo fruits after they have burst from the sheaths of the female palm-tree, &c.—*See Parkhurst.*

—Copiosi penduli, i. e. crispi.—*Simon.*

[g] Or "sitting in the full channel." Simon renders it differently, "Pala sive fundula, quæ gemma insititia impletur." The comparison intended, I conjecture, is, that of the pupil of the eye to a dove washing itself, as these little creatures are accustomed to do, by running into the midst of the water, and making a quick vibratory motion with their wings. In this situation the soft colours of their beautiful plumage, as seen in

His cheeks 'are' like the frames of balm [h]—'the' raised beds of aromatics [i]:
His lips 'are' lilies [k], distilling pure myrrh;
His hands 'are like' ornaments of gold, set with topazes [l];
His body 'is like' a work of ivory, covered with sapphires [m];
His limbs 'are like' pillars of marble, founded on pedestals of gold:

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contrast with the white reflected light from the water, called in the comparison milk, would appear, perhaps, to us no inapt similitude of a handsome eye.—"His eyes are sparkling, and yet mild, like those of milk-white doves, when they are delighted as they sit by the water-side.—See Patrick, Bochart, &c."—*Percy.*

[h] ערוגה, Scala, in qua fulcimenta quærit vitis et opibalsami arbor. Vulgo areola horti, sed sine idoneis argumentis.

[i] מגדלות, Loca terræ elatiora: h. e. areola, vel *sec. Cocceium*, loca in quibus crescunt aromata et herbæ pigmentariorum.—*Simon.*

[k] Bishop Patrick supposes the lily here mentioned to be the same which, on account of its deep red colour, is particularly called by Pliny, "Rubens lilium," and which he tells us was much esteemed in Syria.

[l] ליל, in genere, in rotundum flexum et convolutum quid, opus tornatum.—See *Simon.*

"Bracelets are on his wrists, set with jewels."—*Harmer.*

תרשיש, the chrysolite of the ancients, the topaz of the modern jewellers.

[m] ספיר. "A kind of precious stone, so called, perhaps, from the number of gold-coloured spots with which it is beautified. Pliny informs us, that the sapphire glitters with golden spots, that they are of an azure or sky-blue colour, but rarely intermixed with purple."—*Parkhurst.*

His appearance 'is' like Lebanon, 'he is' tall [n] as the cedars,
His speech 'is' most sweet, he is altogether lovely [o];
This is my beloved, and this is my partner, O daughters of Jerusalem.

VIRGINS.

Whither went thy beloved, O fairest among women,
Whither turned thy beloved? for we will seek him with thee [p].

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[n] בחור, choice or majestic.

[o] It is not easy here to give the force of the original. Literally, "His mouth is sweetnesses, his whole is delights."

[p] They own him worthy to be beloved, deserving of the anxiety expressed on his behalf: they inquire which way she thinks it probable he is gone, and offer to accompany her in the search.

INTERPRETATION OF THE EIGHTH IDYL.

A PART of Christian experience, too frequent, alas! with believers in their intercourse with the heavenly Bridegroom, is illustrated in the first part of this parable. Under the notion of the returning traveller, who finds the partner of his cares asleep, and knocking in vain for admission,

retires elsewhere for shelter, is represented the loss of a season of spiritual communion and holy joy, through culpable inadvertency, the prevalence of a slothful spirit, or a too great degree of self-indulgence.

We have, at the same time, in the painful anxiety of the wife, and in her unhappy wanderings, when she finds her husband is departed, an exhibition of the distress with which the pious Christian will be affected when, perceiving the loss he has sustained through his negligence, he seeks, and for a time, perhaps, seeks in vain, to retrieve it.

"I was asleep, but my heart awoke; it was the voice of my beloved, who was knocking!" "Behold," says our Lord to the church of the Laodiceans, "I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me[a]." The language of this passage is very similar to that of the text; and, that an opportunity of spiritual communion with the beloved Saviour is indicated thereby, will not be doubted; the passage will therefore much assist us in our comment.

Stress seems evidently laid on this—"If a man hear my voice, and open the door,"—"If he obey my call, and be ready to receive me, I

[a] Rev. iii. 20.

will come in to him,"—otherwise, the opportunity would be lost. Such is the case supposed in the parable before us: the voice of the beloved is not heard, or not heard so readily as expected: his spouse does not open to him "*immediately:*" the opportunity is therefore suffered to pass unimproved. For though she is at length roused from her slumber, it is too late;—too late for her present comfort, though not too late to bewail her loss, and in her sorrow and humiliation to lay the foundation of future joys.

The sleep depictured seems indeed to be that of a drowsy slothful person; and it appears to have been in circumstances when the expectation of her husband's call should have kept her watching, and prepared to receive him. It is not, however, let us remark, that deep sleep which, during all the day of mercy, seals the eternal ruin of unbelievers: who, deaf to the invitations of the Gospel, will slumber till a louder call awake them—till the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God summon them to judgment! But we should remember, nevertheless, the admonition of our departed Lord, "Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour your Lord doth come[b]." Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like men that wait for their lord—

[b] Matt. xxiv. 42.

when he shall return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him *immediately*[c]."

The attention of the spouse in the parable is, indeed, after some time at least, excited, so that she hears the calling and the knocking: but still she is not roused to action. Like a drowsy person, between sleep and wake, all lost and impotent, difficulties upon difficulties are started, the most trifling objections stifle the rising energies of the mind. She just recognises his voice, and hears his endearing language, "Open to me, my sister, my partner, my dove, my perfect one;" but she is not ready to open to him *immediately*.

Remark also in the parable the representation of the trivial and foolish excuses which the mind of the slothful makes for itself while the precious opportunity is lost. "I have put off my clothes, how can I put them on again? I have washed my feet, how can I dirty them?" The incident, no doubt, was natural, according to the habits and manners of the times. And oh! how true and striking a picture does it afford of the state in which we are too often found, when opportunities are offered us of communicating with our heavenly Master—we had not attended to the injunction "Watch and pray." We were asleep. A temptation of sloth, or improper self-indul-

[c] Luke, xii. 35, 36.

gence, had prevailed. We might have entertained our Lord, have been gladdened with his presence, or employed in some office of love towards his dear person; but we were worn out with the cares of other things; or we were in a foolish and trifling humour; or, for some trivial reason or other, not quite at leisure for the holy meditation; were not prepared to meet the occurring trial of our faith; or not ready to seize the opportunity which presented itself of performing some act of Christian charity.

For let it never be forgotten, that it is not in the abstracted thought alone that the believer holds intercourse with his God, but in the energies of his mind also in active duties: when, while he is watering others, he is watered himself; or when, through the comforts of religion, he rises superior to worldly trouble; or, striving against evil, feels the helping hand of God, and "endures as seeing Him that is invisible."—"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him[d]."

The manner in which, according to the figurative language of the parable before us, the beloved of our souls is made to present himself, forcibly reminds us indeed of a call to acts of

[d] 1 John, iii. 18, 19.

benevolence towards our Christian brethren, "For my head is filled with dew, my hair with the drops of the night."—"Lord, when saw we thee an-hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me[e]."

Alas! what cause have we then for watchfulness, lest any backwardness to the calls of duty, lest any tardiness in the mode of performing them, or any contracted habits of sloth or self-indulgence, causing the opportunity of doing good to pass unimproved, should create a suspicion of the sincerity of our attachment to a crucified Saviour; or should cause him, at any time, to withhold his endearing presence and approbation. How needful that prayer of our Church!—"Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may be ever ready to obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness[f]."

"My beloved thrust his hand through the opening, my affections were stirred towards him. I arose to open to my beloved; my hands dropped myrrh, my fingers pure myrrh, upon the handles of the bolt." The attempt to open the door fully awakens her, and she awakens with

[e] Mat. xxv. [f] *Collect for the first Sunday in Lent.*

her wonted affections. And we may observe, that the spiritual life of the soul is not extinct in the hour of prevailing temptation; however its powers may appear benumbed and enfeebled, or suppressed by the opposite powers of the flesh. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe," is a reproof often indeed merited by the children of God from their patient Teacher; yet still they know the voice of their Shepherd, and will follow him.

"The hands dropping myrrh, &c." Whatever difficulties may attend its literal meaning, from the frequent usage of the same metaphor, is plain as to its spiritual signification. The believer is roused to the exercise of prayer: and when holy affections are stirred up within us, the voice of confession will be heard. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."—"It is like the ointment of the right hand that bewrayeth itself[g]."

But, as to her present comfort, we have observed, the soul is represented as too late recovering from her slumbers. She had quenched the spirit: and now a different exercise awaits her: instead of enjoying the communion of the Holy Ghost, she must mourn the departure of her beloved, and seek him sorrowing. "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had

[g] Prov. xxvii. 16.

turned away, and was gone." Hence we learn to trace the cause of much of the spiritual distress of the Christian. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

"My soul went out for his word."—She listens in expectation of the well-known voice—listens till her agitated mind starts at the apprehension of the unlooked-for disappointment. "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer."

But who can describe the feelings of the believer, when, on being awakened from a state of spiritual sloth, he finds himself shut out from the presence of God! "He has hid his face from him."—"He has turned away his ear, that he will not hear his prayer." This is indeed an awful moment! How earnestly does the Psalmist deprecate its occurrence! "Be not silent to me, lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit[h]." You may taste the wormwood and the gall; but it is, however, no case for despair. "Thy Maker is thy husband[i]." —"He will not cast off for ever. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies[k]." Let not then the spouse of Christ sink into despondency: but let her seek, in sure reliance upon the unchanging love of Christ, to recover her lost happiness.

[h] Ps. xxviii. 1. [i] Isai. liv. 5. [k] Lam. iii. 31, 32.

"The keepers going their rounds in the city found me; they struck and wounded me. The guards of the wall took away my veil." The watchmen, on their nightly rounds, are again introduced to our notice, as in a former idyl: to them the distressed wanderer has recourse, but receives this time no satisfactory answer; she meets, on the contrary, with severe rebuke and chastisement; she finds herself treated as a suspicious character. Whether these watchmen are supposed to have done their duty harshly, or whether it was impossible, in such circumstances, for them to distinguish, is not said.

The representation, however, is strikingly just. The Christian, through inattention, through sloth, or self-indulgence, has lost his comfortable experience, and that heavenly zeal which rendered him so lively and so fruitful. He has quenched the spirit: but roused by that voice, which will not suffer him to sleep the sleep of death, he perceives and laments his loss.

In this state of desertion, the regular returns of the appointed seasons and ordinances of religious worship find him. These opportunities had been generally found productive of joy to his mind; had, in various instances, proved sufficient for the recovery of his interrupted peace. But now he seems to perceive the word of God to be altogether against him: he hears, in application to his own case, nothing but reproof

and censure, and declarations; which painfully wound his tender conscience.

It is possible, as we intimated, that the harshness of the minister may be objectionable. In his zeal to detect the hypocrite, and to alarm the careless, he may not sufficiently discriminate; and the deserted soul is driven almost to distraction. Or, most probably, no blame attaches to the minister of Christ; he is dividing rightly the word of God. He is going his rounds, if the allusion may be applied so minutely, through the system of doctrines, through the code of precepts, or through the range of character: but it is the will of God that the negligent should meet with a sharp rebuke, and even feel himself treated as an impostor in the assembly of the saints.

PART THE SECOND.

The afflicted spouse is still represented as mourning the folly and negligence which had lost her the blissful society of her beloved: she now seems to be pouring her complaint in the bosom of her friends and companions; stating her case to them, and entreating their interposi-

tions in her behalf. "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, whatever you tell him, tell him that I am fainting with love." Christians are commanded to pray one for another. They are encouraged to think that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. "If any one among you be overtaken with a fault, ye, that are spiritual, restore such an one with the spirit of meekness[1]."

We are next called to remark, that the dialogue of the parable is so contrived, as to make the deserted spouse discover, that the image of her beloved was at no time more lovely in her eyes, than now she is deploring his loss. And never appears the Saviour more precious in the view of his people, than when they mourn his absence, and, contrasting the recollection of their former joys, perceive how inadequate is all created good, to supply the want of his presence.

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou chargest us thus?"

I do not consider the circumstance of such questions being put by the daughters of Jerusalem, as sufficient to induce the inference, that by these allegorical persons, mere professors of

[1] Gal. vi. 1.

religion, or mere inquirers after the way of salvation, are intended to be represented. The questions do not necessarily imply an ignorance of the person of the beloved: they may be meant merely to draw forth, from her own lips, a description of what they so much delight to hear.

As it happened to the two disciples going to Emmaus, one, who well knew the subject of their thoughts, addressed them by the way, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad[m]?" And one of them answered, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass in these days? And he said unto them," not surely because he did not know, but because he would hear *their* account, "What things?" Such I conceive to be the nature of the inquiries before us.—And their design is answered: they draw from the spouse the description of the beloved of her soul.

"My beloved is fair and blooming; he is conspicuous among ten thousand. His head is like pure native gold; his hair is clustering, and black as a raven; his eyes are like doves beside the streams of water, washing in milk, cowering in the fulness of the stream; his cheeks are like

[m] Luke, xxiv. 17.

the frames of balm—the raised beds of aromatics; his lips are lilies, distilling pure myrrh; his hands are like ornaments of gold, set with topazes; his body is like a work of ivory covered with sapphires; his limbs are like pillars of marble, founded on pedestals of gold; his appearance is like Lebanon, tall as the cedars; his speech is most sweet, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this my partner, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Respecting this description of the beauties of the person of the beloved, we may make the same observations, as on a former occasion, respecting the figurative expressions that set forth the personal charms of the bride—that they would form, in the language of the times, a complete portraiture of what would then be considered a perfect model of beauty of person, and grace of manners—that the aptness, and even the meaning of some of these allusions, does not perhaps appear to us; and that, if there ever was a mystic signification intended to be conveyed by each particular comparison, they are to us, of course, lost.

This, however, does not strike me as ever having been the design of these individual similitudes: but, that the intention of the divine Author is simply this,—The passion of love between two tender and amiable persons being allegorized to represent that affection which subsists

between Christ and his faithful people; among other things relating to these true lovers, we are called to remark how lovely and excellent they appear in each other's view.—In each other's view they are all perfection; every excellency is believed to unite in their persons; whatever is fair or beautiful in nature, or esteemed most choice among the works of art, seems to their partial judgment no more than a fit and appropriate emblem, whereby to illustrate the particular beauties of each other.

It is thus between the faithful soul and her heavenly Bridegroom, or the allegory would not be just and true. But then it is something far different from the charms of a human person, which is the foundation of this holy affection, and which calls for the language of admiration reciprocally between Christ and his church.

The graces of the redeemed and sanctified soul, which render her so amiable in the eyes of her heavenly Bridegroom, we have attempted, in the part of the work just referred to, to enumerate. This was indeed the part of the subject with which we were best acquainted. The character of Christ's spouse is continually exemplified before our eyes: "an epistle read and known of all men."

But how shall we describe the person of the heavenly Bridegroom himself, or enumerate his perfections? This to mortal man is impossible.

We have not yet seen him as he is. Even as manifested in spirit to his favoured people, he is seen, but 'through a glass darkly.' It is enough indeed to win all the affections of the soul: but who can satisfy the inquirer? Could Peter, who had had a much nearer view, when he descended from the mount of transfiguration?

So far, however, if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, shall we be able to answer to the question, What is thy beloved more than another beloved? "He is fairer than the children of men, grace is poured from his lips[n]." But, with respect to a full delineation of the majesty and the beauty of his person, the Christian's profession is, "Whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory[o]." Yet, whatever ideas of greatness, or of beauty, we can gather from created things, the grandeur and the beauty must be His, whose hand has made them all.

——Thine the universal frame
Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then!

Or, open the volume of Revelation, and learn the character of Emmanuel. How great is his beauty, how great is his goodness! Think of the grace that undertook to redeem lost mankind! Think of the wisdom and the

[n] Ps. xlv. [o] 1 Pet. i. 8.

mighty power that carried that plan into effect! What an idea does it give us of the excellent majesty of the Son of God,—"whom *He* has appointed the heir of all things"—"being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power[p]."

And you will remember that the Word was once made flesh, and dwelt among men. And though now we are to know him after the flesh no more, yet we shall study attentively the character of Jesus Christ during that season when he came to visit us in great humility.

It is true, the men of that generation were disappointed in his personal appearance. "His visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men[q]." But there was a cause for this—a cause which will not make him less lovely in the eyes of his faithful people, though dishonoured in their presence, and in the sight of all men. "Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;—he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; and with his stripes we are healed[r]." And if, during this sad period, he had no form nor comeliness, no beauty that we should desire him, that scene is past.

[p] Heb. i. 2, 3. [q] Isa. lii. 14. [r] Isa. liii. 4, &c.

He is returned back to his glory—the glory which he had with the Father before the world began. "For a little time was he made lower than the angels for the suffering of death—but having purged our sins, he is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high[s]."

Both Ezekiel and John saw him in his glory: the one before, the other after, his incarnation. As well as human language can convey the idea, they describe to us the impression which the divine image made upon their minds.

Ezekiel's description is, "And above the firmament that was over their heads (the heads of the cherubims as above described) was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire, round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance in the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Ezek. i. 26.

The beloved disciple describes it, "And I saw

[s] Heb. ii. 9.—i. 3.

in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Rev. i. 13.

"And the day is fast approaching when he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him."—"He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe[t]." O that each of us in that day may be able to say, "This is my beloved, and this is my partner!" Be this then now, in prosperity, or in adversity; in honour, or in dishonour; in good report, or in ill report, the constant language of our lips and of our hearts: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and in earth there is none that I desire besides thee."

[t] 2 Thes. i. 10.

IDYL THE NINTH.

From the second to the tenth Verse of the sixth Chapter.

A DIFFICULTY certainly occurs in fixing the boundaries of this Idyl, and in giving an account of the exterior of the allegory.

I have ventured to fix its commencement with the second verse of the sixth chapter: for though, at first sight, that verse appears to be an answer to the inquiries made in the preceding verse, yet, if we consider the circumstances in which the spouse is supposed to hold that conversation with the daughters of Jerusalem, it does not seem probable that she was able at that time to give so distinct an account respecting the way which her beloved was gone, as that contained in the following lines.

We may consider the fair bride, therefore, as describing, in the present idyl, an opportunity which she had lately had of enjoying the society of her beloved; and as the rehearsing affectionate language, in which he expressed his satisfaction at her appearance.

My beloved went down to his garden,
Among the frames of balsams:
To eat in his gardens, and to gather 'his' flowers.
" I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,

"Let him eat among the flowers [a]."

"Thou art fair, my partner, as Tirza,
"Beautiful as Jerusalem [b],
"Dazzling as the bannered hosts [c].
"Turn thine eyes from me, for they have greatly affected me [d]:
[e] "Thy hair 'is' like a flock of goats,
"Which go in the morning to water from mount Gilead:
"Thy teeth 'are' like a flock of ewes,
"Which ascend from the wash-pool;
"Which are all 'of them' in pairs,
"And no one among them is bereaved 'of her fellow.'

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[a] In this language she addressed and welcomed him; and in the following terms he declared his affection.

[b] These two cities are, no doubt, mentioned on account of the beauty of their situation. Tirza signifies "delightful."

[c] Much may be seen of ingenious conjecture concerning the meaning of נדגלות, both in *Parkhurst* after *Harmer*, and in *Good* after *Percy*: the former interprets it of the dazzling appearance of the bride's robes; the latter, "dazzling as an army with banners;" and in the tenth verse, where the same term occurs, "dazzling as the starry hosts."

"אימה is, properly, *amazing*, exciting awe and *consternation*, *terrible*, and hereby a synecdoche of the effect for the *cause*, *dazzling*."—*Dr. Percy*, p. 80.

[d] הרהיבני, "Animosum me reddiderunt; al. fortiter me moverunt."—*Simon*.

[e] The following lines are iterated from the seventh idyl, with the omission of one image only.

" Like a section of pomegranates is thy cheek
behind thy tresses.

[f] " Threescore 'are' they 'the' queens,

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[f] The six following lines I have endeavoured to give as literally, and as much in the air of the original, as possible, in order that my readers may be able to form their own judgment upon their meaning. For, from the different expositions which have been offered on this passage, its meaning must necessarily appear involved in some obscurity.

Taking the lines as they stand above, it is evident, on their simple inspection, that a contrast is designed to be drawn between the fair object, whose beauties have just been celebrated, and a multitude of women, forming, according to the customs of the times, the matrimonial establishment of the monarch. In opposition to this retinue of queens, and concubines, and unnumbered virgins, the speaker attests, that the object of his affections is but one: she has no partner, nor rival. But whose words are these? Can they be the words of Solomon in his proper person? The supposition is rendered almost impossible by the history of his times. In endeavouring, therefore, to account for the exterior imagery of the allegory, the passage before us, I would remark, contains a tacit intimation, that though King Solomon's name, and King Solomon's pen, were made use of by the divine Inspirer of these Canticles, to construct an allegory representative of the loves of Christ and his Church, very different loves from those of Solomon must be imagined as the archetype, even when, in the exterior of the allegory, circumstances of royalty, and circumstances connected with the Israelitish monarch, are supposed. And it is for the same reason, as we have been before called to remark, that, though King Solomon is the undoubted author of these songs, he so frequently disrobes himself of his royal character, and speaks in the person of a shepherd, or

"And fourscore 'are the' concubines;
"And 'there are' virgins without number.
[8] "One 'is' she, my dove, my perfect one,

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leads us to contemplate some faithful pair in the humbler ranks of life.

[8] In addition to what has been said in the former note, we may notice, that the fair object of this attachment is pointed out, and distinguished as being an only one to her mother, the choice one, or one separated to her that bare her, no less than as being the only one of her husband. Polygamy, and the voluptuousness of the great, had debased, it should seem, as far as their influence extended, the general character of women, and had extinguished every truly feminine grace, and amiable quality, which could make them the worthy objects of a real affection. How could it indeed be otherwise in women brought up and educated for a Harem or Seraglio!

——"so blithe, so smooth, so gay,
Yet empty of all good wherein consists
Woman's domestic honour and chief praise;
Bred only and completed to the taste
Of lustful appetence, to sing, to dance,
To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye!"

No wonder then, that, reaping the full evil of the violation of the primitive law of matrimony, Solomon, with all his wisdom, should "find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands;" and should be compelled to declare it, as the result of his experience, "One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among those have I not found." Eccles. vii. 28.

I conclude therefore, that the text contains an admonition, that the royal slave, whether concubine or queen, was as unmeet as her haughty lord, to supply the prototype required:

" One 'is' she to her mother,
" Separated 'is' she to her that bare her [h].
" The daughters beheld her,

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and that for this reason the Spirit of wisdom would guide the imagination to form to itself the picture of a tender, amiable female, the sole charge of her good mother, *separated* to her, and *pure* from all the world besides; innocent and simple; trained to domestic virtues; content and satisfied in retirement; and evincing, by her very assiduous attention to her honoured parent, that her heart was susceptible of gratitude, and capable of a faithful and tried attachment to a friend. " She is the only one of her mother, the *choice* one of her that bare her." And for every age and country, we need not scruple to assert, that we have here a general outline of that formation of the female character, which will ever prove most conducive to domestic happiness, and to the support of a real and lasting affection.

[h] ברה, " purificata, pura, nitida-um, Cant. vi. 9, 10. Ps. xix. 9."—*Simon.* ברר, however, according to the same writer, has two significations: 1. *Purus fuit*, moraliter et physicè 2. *Separavit*, quoniam purificatio fit pura ab impuris separando (Ezek. xx. 38.). And hence it is, by some, supposed to take the meaning of *choosing*, the interpretation preferred in our public translation. Parkhurst considers ברה as the fem. of בר, a son, a child, an innocent; a term of affection.

The same Hebrew word is used in the last line but one of this idyl, " *Clear* as the sun." On which Bishop Percy observes, ברה is, properly, clear, unsullied, of unobscured splendour, and therefore is well applied to the glowing surface of the great orb of day. The same author considers נדגלות as synonymous with צבאות, and translates the line, " Dazzling as all the starry hosts."

"And pronounced her happy;
"The queens and concubines,
"And extolled her praises."

"Who is this looking forth as the dawn;
"Fair as the moon; clear as the sun;
"Dazzling as the bannered hosts?"

INTERPRETATION OF THE NINTH IDYL.

A PLEASING scene opens to our view in this parable: it is laid in a beautiful garden, abounding with fruits and flowers; here the fair spouse entertains her beloved, and receives from him a renewed declaration of his affection.

The state of the believer, which this imagery is intended to designate, it is not difficult to perceive: the constant usage of the same emblem in Scripture guides us to the interpretation. Thus we read, in the prophet Isaiah, "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things which are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord thy God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations[a]."—"The seed is fallen upon the

[a] Isai. lxi. 2.

good ground."—"The earth has drank the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, and receiveth blessing from God[b]." The Christian "is spiritual[c];" and "has his fruit unto holiness[d]," abounding in the work of faith, in the patience of hope, or in the labour of love[e].

And it is to diligent and obedient children that the full assurance of hope, and the peculiar comforts of the Holy Ghost, are promised. "If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." —"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you[f]."—"My beloved went down to his garden, among the frames of balsams; to eat in his garden, and to gather his flowers."—"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. Let him eat among his flowers."—"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bare much fruit."—"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love."—"These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full[g]."

The same figurative language, which we have already considered in the interpretation of the seventh idyl, expresses again in this place the

[b] Heb. vi. 7.
[c] Gal. vi. 1.
[d] Rom. vi. 22.
[e] 1 Thes. i. 3.
[f] John, xiv. 15, 16—18.
[g] John, xv. 8, &c.

affection and satisfaction of the heavenly Bridegroom towards his faithful spouse. This is realized in the experience of the believer, when the Spirit of God bears witness to his spirit that he is his adopted child[i]—when "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto him[k]."

We have indeed, in this idyl, some additional comparisons. "Thou art fair, my partner, as Tirza, beautiful as Jerusalem, dazzling as the bannered hosts." These comparisons, however, are subject to the same reflections which have been offered on the description of the personal charms of the bride, in the idyl above-mentioned: to this description I refer; and proceed with the remainder of the allegory.

"Threescore are they the queens, and fourscore are the concubines; and there are virgins without number. One is she, my dove, my perfect one; one is she to her mother, separated to her that bare her." I have mentioned, in the preceding notes, what I suppose to be the meaning and intention of this contrast between the loves and character of some faithful pair, and the unblessed loves of the literal Solomon.

You are to suppose, in the first place, as a prototype for the heavenly Bridegroom, not the eastern despot with his crowded harem, but the

[i] Rom. viii. 16. [k] Rom. v. 5.

faithful lover, who has fixed his whole affections on one only object. For of this description is the love of Christ to his Church: she has no rival, nor partner, to divide his affections. Though, indeed, believers are many, yet they are "called in one body;" and as members of that one body, they partake of this love of Christ. And, though there are doubtless other beings who are the objects of the love of the Son of God, as well as the redeemed from among men, yet we have no grounds to suppose that they are regarded with that peculiar affection, to celebrate which is the design of this book. The church solely exists in the character of "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." The angelic beings, like John the Baptist in his ministerial capacity, may be considered as the friends of the Bridegroom; they rejoice when they hear his voice: but she that hath the bridegroom is the bride. And to which of the angels said he at any time, "Thy Maker is thy Husband[l]?"—"This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh[m]?" This relationship, we have every reason to conclude, belongs alone, and exclusively, to "the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood[n]"—"to that peculiar people whom he hath purified to himself[o]," and "whom

[l] Isai. liv. 5.
[m] Gen. ii. 23. comp. Eph. v. 30.
[n] Acts, xx. 28.
[o] Tit. ii. 14.

only he hath known of all the families of the earth[p]."

Again, you observe, that as Solomon himself, in his matrimonial relations, could not supply a correct type of Christ espousing his Church; so neither could any of his threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number, afford a type of that true and conjugal affection, which the Church bears to her spiritual husband. You are therefore to suppose, for the required emblem, a woman whose character has been differently formed, and who is united to her husband by a different bond. And it must be acknowledged, that no affection subsisting among the human race can be pointed out, more strong, more constant, and more enduring, than the affection of a virtuous and tenderly educated woman toward her husband, or the man to whom she has pledged her vows. Oh! let us seriously reflect what love have we in our hearts to Christ that will, in any sort, bear the comparison?

"The daughters saw her, and pronounced her happy: the queens and concubines, and they extolled her praises. Who is this that looketh forth as the dawn? fair as the moon; clear as the sun; dazzling as the bannered hosts?"—"All intelligent beings shall acknowledge the

[p] Amos, iii. 2.

superior excellency of the church, when He who bought her with his own blood shall present her faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy [p]." Such, I conceive, is what is here intimated by the praises bestowed upon the imaginary fair by the daughters, the queens, and the concubines.

And if the person and earthly grandeur of Solomon, mean and base as they must necessarily have been in comparison, are nevertheless chosen as typical allusions to the coming of Christ in his kingdom, it need not surprise us, that the multitude of females which, according to the circumstances of regal state in those days, formed the establishment of this monarch's palace, should be made emblematical of those superior beings which surround the Redeemer's glory in heaven, and shall be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of man when he shall sit upon the throne of his kingdom.—It is the royal magnificence of Solomon, not his moral worth, which we are to place before us when we consider him as a type of the King of Glory.

It is observed by St. Paul, respecting these angelic beings, whom we suppose to be represented in this part of the parable, when the plan of their Creator, concerning his blood-

[p] Jude, 24.

bought church, was beginning to be more clearly unfolded by the preaching of the Gospel—"to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known" or "made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord [q]."

No wonder then, that, at the consummation of the redeemed, when they shall all have been made like unto the Son of God, they should be presented in heaven in the midst of *admiring* angels. Nay, the same Apostle assures us, that the earnest expectation of the whole creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God—when the heirs of God, the joint heirs with Christ, shall be glorified together with him [r].

The visions of the Revelation often disclose something of this glorious scene: St. John in one place describes it in language very similar to that employed in the allegory before us: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet; and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."—"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and

[q] Eph. iii. 10, 11. [r] Rom. viii. 18—22.

great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints[s]."

[s] Rev. xix. 5, 6, 7, 8.

IDYL THE TENTH.

From the eleventh Verse of the sixth Chapter to the ninth of the seventh.

THE bride retiring into her garden, and tending there her pleasant cares, finds herself on a sudden unexpectedly surrounded by a company of singers, or a chorus of women, "with tabrets and dances," who immediately make her the object of their panegyric:—they celebrate her beauties, and anticipate in their song the felicity of her nuptials. Such appears to be the outline of this idyl; though difficulties not easily to be explained occur in the interpretation.

I WENT down to the retired garden [a],
To see the fruits of the valley [b],
To see whether the vines were grown,
Whether the pomegranates had blossomed.

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[a] גנת-אגוז, on the authority of the Septuagint and Vulgate, has been rendered *Garden of nuts*. Castell, Tremellius, and Parkhurst interpret it by *Pruned garden*. Schultens, from the Arabic, "*hortus reclinationis*, vel *reculitionis* ad pingendum *amœnissimum* pigris Orientalibus, et *secretissimum secessum*."

[b] אבי הנחל, "Virores rivi, h. fructices et arbores ad rivum plantatæ et virentes."—*Simon*.

———I was not aware!
My heart made me like the chariots of Aminadib[b]!!

THE CHORUS.

"Return, return, Salome,
"Return, return, that we may behold thee[c]."

BRIDE.

Why would ye behold Salome,
As 'the object of' a procession of bands[d]?

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[b] These two lines must be acknowledged to be very obscure; only so far I think seems apparent, that her retirement is suddenly interrupted by a number of persons, whose appearance at first alarms her. "My heart made me like the chariots of Aminadib," whatever be the allusion, probably describes the flutterings of her heart through fear, taken as she was by surprise, and driven to flight.

[c] This is the address, it should seem, of the people who had broken in upon her retirement: who these were, we shall see in a following note. She had, we may suppose, turned away to conceal herself. Bishop Lowth observes, that "שולמית is the same name as שלמה, with the feminine termination (which may be expressed in Greek Σολομων Σολομιτις), though the latter Jews have strangely disguised and obscured it by a vicious pronunciation: for Solomon and Solomitis have evidently the same relation to each other, as the Latin names Caius and Caia."—Lect. xxxi. Both in Josephus and in the New Testament we have preserved the pronunciation of a woman's name among the Hebrews, evidently derived from the same root as Solomon—Salome: this therefore I have ventured to adopt.—"חוה sequente ב objecti, cum studio et voluptate videre—delectare re."—*Simon.*

[d] The meaning of this passage has perhaps been generally

THE EPITHALAMIUM.

Sung by the Chorus, or Procession of Bands.

" How beautiful are thy feet in thy sandals, O noble lady,

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overlooked. כמחלת המחנים I have translated " as the object of a procession of bands." מחנה, from חנה, to pitch, as travellers their tents, signifies a camp, or any band or company of persons, marshalled in some degree of order. It is used for the bands into which Jacob divided his people and flocks; and also for the hosts of angels which he saw (Gen. xxxii.). It appears also to have been used for the *bands* of Levites, attending on the service of the Temple, in their respective charges: vid. 1 Chron. ix. 18 and 19.

מחולה, the same as מחול, signifies a chorus, or dance; or a *procession* of persons marching or parading with music in a kind of dance, or measured step.

Now it appears, from many parts of Scripture, that these *processions of bands* were constantly employed on occasions of public rejoicings. They were, indeed, even used in the divine worship of the Jews; hence we read, " Praise him in the dances." In a dance or procession of this kind, Miriam, the prophetess, led forth the women of Israel, while they sung the song of Moses, " Sing ye to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously" (Exod. xv. 20.). And these processions seem to have been, moreover, the customary mode of saluting the victorious Commander on his return, and of celebrating his achievements in battle. In this manner the unhappy Jephthah was met by his daughter, when he returned victor from the Ammonites. We read also, that when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, " the *women* came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music." And the women answered one another as they played, and said,

[e] "The mouldings of thy limbs 'are' like ornaments,
"The workmanship of a true hand!
[f] "Thy waist 'is' like a goblet filled with mixed wine;
[g] "Thy body 'is' like a heap of wheat, bounded with lilies;

"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." That these processions of bands—of women, who, in the manner above described, had formed themselves into bands for the purpose, should constitute a part of the matrimonial ceremonies, is a very probable conjecture. And such a party, to all appearance, come prepared on the occasion before us, to perform an epithalamium, taking that word in its more extensive sense, to the honour and praise of the bride, and to congratulate her on her nuptials.—Their sudden appearance, as we have seen, at first alarms her. They beseech her to stop, that they may behold and celebrate her beauties—she modestly replies, perceiving at length the design of the intruders, "Why should you behold Salome, as 'in' a procession of bands, i. e. so as to make her the object of your song?"

[e] See *Good. Ambitus femorum, Simon. Drawers, Parkhurst.*

[f] That *waist* is the real import of שרר, in this place, Mr. Good has ably and sufficiently proved.

אגן הסחר אל-יחסר, some elegantly-shaped vessel, we may suppose, appropriated to the serving of mixed wine. Parkhurst, however, interprets שרר of the clasp of the girdle, made to look like a goblet filled with mixed wines, by the disposition of its jewels.

[g] The meaning is uncertain: the most probable conjecture is that noticed by Parkhurst, which explains it of some close-fitting garment, with its ornamental edging.

"Thy two breasts 'are' like two fawns-twins of the gazel:
"Thy neck 'is' like a tower of ivory;
"Thine eyes 'are' like the pools of Heshbon,
"Beside the gate of Beth-Rabbim:
"Thy nose 'is' like the tower of Lebanon,
"Which looketh towards Damascus.
"Thy head upon thee 'is' like Carmel;
"The hair of thy head 'is' like the royal purple bound on the rafters[h]."
"How beautiful and how comely
"'Art thou,' O love, in thy elegant attire[i]!

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[h] The rendering of the Vulgate is, "Comæ capitis tui, sicut purpura regis vineta canalibus." Alluding, as Mons. Goguet supposes, to the practice of the dyers of purple, of plunging their skeins, when dyed, into running water.—See *Parkhurst.* Different interpretations are given of this similitude by other authors: a statement of them may be seen in Mr. Good's note on the place. That given from the Syriac and Arabic versions seems best deserving of notice. "Thine erect head is like Carmel: and the braided tresses of thy head as the royal purple suspended over theatres of entertainment." This probably explains the true meaning. רהטים we have had before in this book, in the sense of rafters forming a roof. אסר ב־ signifies tied, or fastened to. Hence it seems most natural to conceive the allusion to be to some rich canopy of state suspended from the roof of the palace, and which formed, in the estimation of the people of those days, a perfect model of beauty. "Cirri capitis tui velut purpura regia nodo pendens ex laquearibus."—*P. Houbigant.*

[i] תענוגים deliciæ. From the comparison of Micah, i. 16, the dress and its ornaments are probably intended, גזי על־בני תענוגיך:

"Thy person resembles the palm-'tree,'
"Thy breasts the clusters 'of its fruit.'
"I said, I will climb the palm-'tree,'
"I will lay hold on its branching top[k]:
"And now will thy breasts be like the bunches of the grape,
"And the smell of thy breath 'will be' like the citrons;
"And thy speech 'will be' like the excellent wine[l]."
"Let it move to my beloved as it ought,
"Sparkling against the lips and the teeth[m]."

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[k] סנסנים, cacumina palmæ in plures ramos divisa, vel potius spathæ, spathulæ, &c.—*Simon.*

[l] The whole of this I conceive to be the song of the Chorus of Virgins: having celebrated the personal charms of the bride, they personate the bridegroom. "How beautiful, how comely, O love, in thy elegant attire, &c." And next, under the allusion of one gathering the fruit of palm, of the vine, or of the citron-tree, they anticipate his delight in receiving his bride. And in the last two lines, they perhaps in like manner indicate how desirous the bride will be, that her conversation may be agreeable to her husband. Having supposed him to compare her speech to the excellent wine, they personate her in saying, "Let it flow or move to my beloved as it ought, sparkling against the lips and the teeth."

[m] If we adopt the reading of the Septuagint, the Syriac, and Vulgate, the translation here offered of this difficult passage puts as little force upon the original as most others which have been suggested: חולך, in Numbers, xvii. 11. has been considered by some as in the imperative mood. The word is used

for the flowing of water, Josh. iv. 18. And the expression in Prov. xxiii. 32. יתהלך במישרים so nearly resembles that of the text, הולך למישרים, that, as both phrases are used respecting wine, the probability is great that their signification is nearly the same. "May it move itself right—may it prove ripe and good, effervescing against the lips and the teeth." דובב signifies strictly *muttering repeatedly*; to understand it therefore of wine in a state of effervescence, is full as natural as in the sense of *making to speak*. The meaning, however, "*adrepens leniter*" will be perhaps preferred by some; we may then translate with Bishop Percy, "And thy speech as the choicest wine, sweetly entering my palate; flowing down smoothly, through my lips and teeth."

INTERPRETATION OF THE TENTH IDYL.

The scene of the present idyl, the retirement of a cultivated garden, where the spouse is described as going to watch the progress of vegetation in the prolific season of the spring, is a sufficient indication of what is intended to be delineated in the parable. In retirement, and in private meditation, the Christian character is formed and perfected. Not, however, in the retirement of the idle, of the self-indulgent, or of the trifler; but in a retirement consecrated to

religion, to the cultivation of holy affections, and to the devising of plans of usefulness.

"I went down to the retired garden, to see the fruits of the valley; to see whether the vines were grown, whether the pomegranates had blossomed." The Christian has renounced the world, with its pomps and vanities, and all covetous desires of the same[a]. When, therefore, he is released from the stated discharge of his duties in life, the world has no attractions for him: a secret attachment calls him from the busy haunts of men. He seeks not their praise or to be seen of them; but a far more important concern, the interest of Christ's kingdom, occupies his attention. His prayer is, that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow within him, and in this prayer he watches with all perseverance: nor is he an unconcerned spectator whether the interests of the Gospel flourish or decay round about him.

Such are the interesting cares and employments of him whom the world misses in the thronged paths of ambition, and of pleasure, and deems unhappy, or lost to his proper interests.—The "Man of God" has fled these things indeed, but he is following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

[a] Baptismal Service.

"He is fighting the good fight of faith, laying hold on eternal life[b]."

In this career, it is true, he receives no plaudits from the world. They conceive his life to be without profit, and his end without honour. But he has frequent indications, that he is compassed about with "a great cloud of witnesses," who, cheering him in his contest, seem to hail him victor. He pursues the noiseless tenour of his way unknown, unnoticed, or only noticed to be pitied; and at length a vision of approving angels shall burst upon his view, and with songs of divine rapture shall welcome his soul to the mansions of endless joy.

These processions of bands, with music and singing, which unexpectedly break into the retirement of the spouse, we may indeed consider as partly emblematical of those praises and congratulations, which the humble, unassuming Christian hears to his surprise from his fellow-christians, when the songs of the daughters of Zion especially record with honour his flourishing graces, and the labours of his love. In humility and self-abasement, he would turn away from the sight of all, but the Lord delighteth to honour him, and his works praise him in the gate.

Chiefly, however, we would decipher the em-

[b] 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12.

blem of that band of ministering angels, which shall be sent to convey the soul of the Christian, like that of the once obscure Lazarus, to Abraham's bosom: when, pouring consolations into the mind of the dying saint, they shall deliver their message, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Their approach may startle, nature may recoil at the prospect of her dissolution, and tremble to see the awful stroke prepared that will reduce her to her dust. "But precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints [c]." The departing soul shall hear the salutations of the messengers of peace; and, O transporting thought! shall hear herself congratulated as the spouse of Christ; and, while flesh and heart faileth, shall hear "the Lord proclaimed as the strength of her heart, and her portion for ever [d]."—"Therefore, the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away [e]."

"How beautiful are thy feet in thy sandals, O noble lady," &c. &c. In this song of the chorus, we have again described, in the taste of the times, the person of a beautiful female, a

[c] Ps. cxvi. 15. [d] Ps. lxxiii. 26. [e] Isai. liii.

royal bride as it should seem, dressed out in all her rich and elegant attire. The comparisons made use of, so far as we can understand them, seem to bespeak a much more magnificent display than those comparisons which celebrated the personal charms of the fair spouse in the seventh and ninth idyls.

The most admired objects of art and nature are referred to, as comparisons to illustrate her beauties. "The glory of Lebanon, the excellency of Carmel," and the perfections of other established standards of beauty and grandeur, are all supposed to unite in her person, and in the appearance of her bridal ornaments. It is "the Queen in gold of Ophir"—"all glorious within"—"her clothing of wrought gold;"—"as she is brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work[f]." When applied to the church, and to each faithful Christian, all this denotes, no doubt, the perfection of that "beauty of holiness" in which they shall one day be presented to their heavenly Bridegroom.

Of the essentials of the Christian character, and of those graces which form its present excellency in the sight of God and man, we are not uninformed. Charity we know abideth; faith also, and hope, will only be extinguished by being realized in possession. But our present

[f] Ps. xlv. 9—13, 14.

knowledge must vanish away, and that which is perfect must come, before we can describe the beauties of the glorified saint, as he appears, "clothed upon with his house, which is from heaven[g]"—as he appears in "the glory that shall be revealed in him[h]."—"It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ shall appear we shall be like him[i]."

We have an exhibition of this glorious state of the redeemed under another set of images in the Revelation of St. John, which it may be interesting to compare with that before us. "I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."—"And one of the seven angels talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the *bride, the Lamb's wife*; and he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city—having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal:—and the building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an

[g] 2 Cor. v. 2. [h] Rom. viii. 18. [i] 1 John, iii. 2.

emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, a chrysolite; the eighth, a beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst: and the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass [k]."

Only conceive to yourself such a city as this which John saw in the visions of the Almighty —how does it beggar all the riches and magnificence of man! Why, the value of the least part of its materials, a piece that you could hold in your hand, could scarce be calculated according to its current price among mankind! But here is an immense city built of all such precious stones!!!

We perceive the intent of our heavenly Instructor. It is to show—to give some idea at least, how far the riches and the glory of that inheritance, which God has prepared for them that love him, exceed all that this world can afford.

What was the appearance of the royal city of Solomon to this New Jerusalem? So far must his royal bride fall short of the saint entering into his glory: of which she is here an emblem, as Solomon himself of the King of Glory.

The part of the song, or epithalamium, of the chorus, beginning, "How beautiful and

[k] Rev. xxi.

how comely, O love, in thy elegant attire!"—where they speak in the person of the bridegroom, and under the figure of one gathering the fruit of the admired palm, of the vine, or of the citron, and praising its delicious flavour as he gathers it, they congratulate the bride, and anticipate her husband's pleasure in her society and conversation, may stand in the parable as the soul's welcome to the embraces of her Saviour, when she shall depart hence, and be with the Lord. This blessed anticipation frequently forms the subject of her songs in the house of her pilgrimage. The angels shall meet her with the same congratulation in a dying hour—when her fruit shall be ripe, and shall be gathered into the heavenly garner.

"Write from henceforth, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord! Even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."—"And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new[i]."

[i] Rev. xxi. 3—5.

IDYL THE ELEVENTH.

From the tenth Verse of the seventh Chapter to the fourth of the eighth.

ASSURED of the affections of her husband, the Bride in this Idyl would contrive to have more of his society. She would lead him from the busy scene of the populous city, where the happiness she enjoyed in his company suffered so frequent interruption. She invites him to go with her to a country residence, which the faithful pair are supposed to possess at some distance. She urges the pleasantness of the season:—the beauties of the spot would be in perfection:—the choicest fruits that could gratify his taste had been carefully provided:—Oh, that circumstances did not so often deprive her of the opportunity of entertaining him!

I AM my beloved's, and his desire is towards me[a].
Come, my beloved, we will go to the country;
We will abide all night in the villages;

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[a] Some plead for a different reading in this place תשוקתי. It would then be, "And my desire is towards him."
Dr. Hodgson and Mr. Good.

We will go early in the morning into the vineyards[b];
We will see if the vine flourishes,
—The blossom will be opened;
The pomegranate will have budded:
There will I present thee with mandrakes[c];
The mandrakes will be emitting their fragrance:

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[b] The journey proposed, I conceive, is to some remote vineyard, or rather cultivated estate: for the word we render vineyard is of more general signification, as was observed in a note of the first idyl. It would be necessary for them, it seems, to pass the night at some villages on the road; early on the following morning, they would reach the desired spot. Such are the most simple deductions we can make respecting the meaning of these lines.

[c] She would present him with mandrakes; they would by this time be in perfection. דודים and דודאים, I conjecture to be names of the same thing, or rather the same name, as appears from Jeremiah, xxiv. 1. In which passage we find the word, there translated baskets, written both דודים and דודאים. Whether these mandrakes were flowers, or plants, or fruit, has been long a subject of dispute, "Nullam aliam," says Simon, "vocem textus S. Hebr. tot explicationibus divexatam videas." The Septuagint speaks of them as fruit, μηλα μανδραγορων. Gen. xxx. 14. And it is highly probable, that a particular kind of melon, which has been noticed in the eastern parts of the world, is intended by the term. It is called *chamama*, or *breast of a woman*, because it is in that shape: which is the very meaning of the Hebrew root. It is described as very wholesome, and of a *very pleasant scent*: so much so indeed, as even to be carried in the hand by way of nosegay.

See Fragments to Calmet.

And over our doors all sorts of fruits, new and
old[d],
For thee, my beloved, I have laid up in store.
O that thou wert as my brother[e],
Sucking the breasts of my mother!
I would find thee in the street,
I would kiss thee, and no one would despise me:
I would lead thee about,
I would bring thee to the house of my mother:
Thou shouldst accustom me to give thee spiced
wines,
With the juice of pomegranates.

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[d] "And over our doors." Such is the literal rendering of the Hebrew, and it is easy to conceive an allusion to some repository, or closet, for preserving fruit, the situation of which was usually as here described. The vineyard, it appears, to which the affectionate spouse is desiring her husband to retire with her, was her peculiar charge. And in the portraiture of a virtuous woman, which Solomon has given us in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs, it is noticed as part of her industrious cares: "She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard."

[e] "O that thou wert as my brother!" The spouse expresses in this endearing language her ardent desire to have more of her husband's company. She feels herself, in public life, kept at too great a distance from him; his important avocations call him where she cannot be with him; or, she sees him among visitors and strangers, where a sense of propriety imposes upon her a painful restraint.—Her means too of performing services really needful, or of supplying gratifications to her lord, are most inadequate to her wishes. Consulting only her own af-

His left 'arm' was under my head,
His right did infold me.
I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
—Why should you stir—
Why should you raise up my beloved, till he
please?

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fection, she could wish to be his constant attendant: she could wish the circumstances were such, that it might become the perpetual object of her care to administer to his wants and comforts. "O that he were," is the fond language of her passion, "a little infant brother—a child, that she could be always following and leading about, and might have continually with her. How pleased should she be to amuse him, and to gratify his wonted requests, with spiced wines, and sweet juices of fruits!"

The conclusion, with some small variation, is similar to that of the third Idyl.

INTERPRETATION OF THE ELEVENTH IDYL.

The wish for retirement, so often felt by the truly religious, especially after being long harassed with the cares and importunities of a public situation, so destructive of holy meditation, is beautifully shadowed in this parable. The bride is persuading her beloved husband to retire from the tumultuous city, that she may enjoy, without interruption, the society she so much

coveted in the remote scene of rural felicity which she describes.

"Come, my beloved, we will go to the country, we will abide all night in the villages; we will go early in the morning into the vineyards, &c." Were it the will of God, and could it be rendered compatible with his duties and engagements in life, the spiritual Christian could form no scheme of happiness more adapted to his taste, than in some calm and peaceful retreat, far from the noisy contests of the world, undisturbed by its cares and trifles, and known only to mankind as the occasional messenger of peace or love, to spend the remainder of his days in prayer, in meditation, in the cultivation of religious knowledge, and in those exercises of devotion, which promote the communion of the soul with God [a].

Such is often the pious wish of the Christian: and it is possible, indeed, particular trials and temptations, with the vexatious contradictions of sinners, may extort from him the perhaps

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[a] "Nihil magis in votis habeo, quàm ut procul omni disputatione, in placido otio, secretaque solitudine, piis precibus, devotis meditationibus, humili sacratissimarum literarum nostrarum scrutinio, et arcanis cum Deo colloquiis, obscurus cæteroquin, et vix vicinis notus, nisi quantum pietas jubet, ad ultimum usque spiritum vacare liceat."

Witsius Misc. vol. i. p. 637.

somewhat too impatient exclamation of the Psalmist, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander afar off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest[b]." But the Lord knoweth how to deliver them that are tempted. His time is best. Nor will he finally leave unsatisfied those who seek peace and righteousness, who "seek meekness."

A scheme of retirement from the world is not unusually indeed, at a certain time of life, projected by the irreligious. They too propose to leave the scenes of business or ambition, that they may soothe their declining years with that peace which the world has failed to afford them. But ah, how unsuccessful the attempt! How difficult to embellish solitude so as to please the gay, or to find in retirement a substitute for the worldly mind which is tired of the world, or too late discovers the delusion of its flattering promises!

It is commonly found, in fact, that the *tone* of mind which could accommodate itself to harmless and innocent pleasures, and find content in obscurity, has been irrecoverably lost.—The employments of youth, so pleasing in the recollec-

[b] Ps. lv. 6, 7, 8.

tion, may be resumed; but who can restore its innocence and simplicity?

The Christian, however, retires from the world in circumstances more favourable to happiness: not in disgust nor disappointment, but "knowing in himself that he has in heaven a better and an enduring substance." He wishes for leisure to contemplate the fair inheritance. He seeks to purify himself, that he may see God. Like the ancient Patriarchs, he has seen the promises afar off, and has been persuaded of them, and embraced them, and has confessed that he is a stranger and a pilgrim on earth. The prospect of his being taken to that heavenly country becomes every day more near: he would prepare to remove; he would retire, as it were, to the utmost borders of the world, that he may be nearer God, and ready to go to him when he shall call—

> "Walk thoughtful on the silent solemn shore
> Of that vast ocean, he must sail so soon."

"We will see if the vine flourish; the blossom will be opened; the pomegranates will have budded, &c." Doubtless the place and circumstance of that religious retirement, of which we are interpreting the parable, are not essential; since in the artificer's garret, or even in the prisoner's dungeon, peace of mind may be possessed, and the joys of the Holy Ghost vouchsafed; and

there the Saviour may be entertained "with fruits new and old[c]," all the stores of the humble and sanctified heart, in which he delights. Nor can the most beautiful retreat which nature affords, in itself give joy or peace.

But yet, in the view of the retired Christian, the beauties of nature have a real and a peculiar value. If it were permitted to choose, one would not be confined, where "the works of men shut out the works of God."

The beauties of nature fail to satisfy indeed, as might be expected, when the mind itself is unhappy; when it is conscious of guilt, or ruffled with malignant passions; when it is distracted with cares, or secretly pining for earthly vanities, or earthly grandeur. But when a sense of God's mercy through Christ has been obtained by faith, and peace and charity, instilled from heaven, have allayed the restless ferment of the human breast; when the believer can cast all his cares upon that gracious God whose providence careth for him, and by the cross of his Saviour is become crucified to the world, and the world to him, in these circumstances the mind can again be pleased and satisfied with the scenes and simple pleasures of nature. Every object, and each revolving season, are found to interest and delight, and appear invested with pecu-

[c] Heb. xi. 13.

liar beauties. They are all contemplated as the possessions of a Friend; as the works and operations of his own hands, whom unseen we love, and who himself does not disdain, in the holy fellowship of his Spirit, to manifest his presence in the rural retreat.

Yes! with this knowledge of Christ, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards *me*," to contemplate the beauties of nature, is happiness enough. In the language of Milton's Eve, we can then address our great Author and Disposer, and find indeed a Paradise regained!—

"With thee conversing I forget all time;
All seasons and their change, all please alike.
Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
Glist'ring with dew; fragrant the fertile earth,
After soft show'rs; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful evening mild; then silent night
With this her solemn bird, and this fair moon,
And these the gems of heav'n, her starry train:
But neither breath of morn, when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds; nor rising sun
On this delightful land; nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glist'ring with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
Nor grateful evening mild; nor silent night,
With this her solemn bird; nor walk by noon,
Or glitt'ring star-light, without Thee is sweet."

Nay more, nature may fail, her beauties be obscured, and her wonted blessings withheld; yet still shall the Christian find a refuge and a solace in nature's God! "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation[d]."

"O that thou wert as my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother! I would find thee in the street; I would kiss thee, and no one would despise me: I would lead thee about, I would bring thee to the house of my mother. Thou shouldst accustom me to give thee spiced wine, and the juices of pomegranates." We know the affection in the bosom of a faithful wife, which would dictate such language to her beloved and honoured husband, more of whose society she coveted, lamenting at the same time the disproportion of the means she possessed to perform any service really needed by him. For this is the idea, and we may address the Christian, "Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou.—If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he at thine hand[e]?"

[d] Hab. iii. 17 18. [e] Job, xxxv. 5—7.

But we have before learned the condescension of the heavenly Bridegroom! The only question we are to put to ourselves is this—Is there indeed such an affection towards his divine person as is here implied? Is there an ardent wish that we had him more to ourselves, and could serve him more and better? Do we indeed feel the bustle and the pomp of life to be interruptions of our happiness, when they withdraw our thoughts from his loved image? Do we feel the presence of those who check our expressions of love to Christ to be, on some occasions at least, a painful restraint? In this case we shall love the retirement proposed in the song, and shall be able to appreciate fully the true enjoyments of solitude.

But, if we propose to ourselves this "nice and subtle happiness" in communion with Christ in spirit, what good things have we laid up in store to show our affection to the beloved of our souls, and induce him to prolong his visits: what fruit unto holiness?

The admonitions of the Apostle Peter will be found most appropriate to the occasion: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto

us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.—For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ[f]."

[f] 2 Pet. i. 2, &c.

IDYL THE TWELFTH.

From the fifth Verse of the eighth Chapter to the End.

In this last Idyl a happy pair is contemplated, and their conversation, as if overheard, is recorded.—First, the bride is reminded of her origin.—She then, on her part, expresses her anxiety ever to retain the affections of her husband—she is answered with the strongest assurances of his constant attachment. A conversation follows respecting a younger sister: and lastly, respecting a garden or estate, which it appears has been assigned to the bride as her residence.

Such is the plan of this last allegory, if indeed we can with propriety call it a plan; for it has much the appearance of a conclusion to the whole preceding series, wherein an opportunity is taken of making several observations having reference to the general subject: at least the exterior imagery forms so pellucid and transparent a covering, that it is difficult to account for it, except in immediate reference to the interior and remote sense.

VIRGINS.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved[a]?

[a] "Leaning herself upon her beloved;" or, according to some, "In company with her beloved."—Thus we are intro-

BRIDEGROOM.

Beneath this citron-tree I raised thee up [b],
Here thy mother brought thee forth in sorrow [c],
Here, bringing thee forth in sorrow, she bare thee.

BRIDE.

O set me as a seal upon thine heart,
As a seal upon thine arm [d]!

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duced, as it were, to the parties, who hold the chief part of the following dialogue.

[b] Perhaps, "resuscitated thee." עוררתיך.

[c] Petita significatione a nom. חבל, dolor, a gird, or girding pain. Tormen, particularly of a woman in travail.—*Parkhurst.* "Schultens sensum concipiendi tuetur."—*Simon.* "Εκει ωδινησε σε η μητηρ σου."—*Septuagint.* The case supposed, if I mistake not, is, that this royal bride was once an exposed infant, owing the preservation of her existence to the charitable interposition of her future husband: not only, as was represented in the first idyl, was she a poor oppressed girl, exalted to affluence and royalty by the monarch's partiality, but, when she first became the object of his pity and kindness, she was in a still more deplorable and wretched situation. This same metaphor the reader will find followed at length in the fourteenth chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel.

[d] These are the words of the bride. Being reminded of the pity and love shown to her in her helpless infancy by that same bountiful hand that now supports her as a bride, she prays that she may ever continue to be the object of her husband's affection. "To place as a seal upon the heart, as a seal upon the arm," are scriptural expressions denoting the cherishing of a true affection, with the exhibition of those constant attentions which bespeak a real attachment. "In that day, saith the

BRIDEGROOM.

[e] Yea, love is strong as Death,
[f] Jealousy is stubborn[g] as Hades[h];

Lord of Hosts—O Zerubbabel, my servant—I will make thee a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of Hosts."—Haggai, ii. 23. "As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah—were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence."—Jer. xxxii. 24.

[e] The reply of the bridegroom I conceive to commence in this place. The following lines will be found to contain the strongest assurances of his unchanging love, that his bride could possibly receive from his gracious lips.

[f] קנא, *Jealousy*; but not in a bad sense, as mixed with suspicion respecting the faithfulness of the beloved object: but as expressive of the notion—How choice the lover is wont to be of the object of his passion; with what solicitous care he will watch over her: how strenuously he will vindicate her as his own, and what dangers he would brave in her defence. קנא. tenerrime amavit. q. d. Zelotypia. Flagravit ad causam, jus, et dignitatem alicujus strenue defendendum, et præsertim ejus qui injuria affectus vel misere oppressus est.—*Simon.*

[g] קשה, durus, difficilis. עם־קשה־ערף, stiff-necked people, often expresses the stubborn and unyielding disposition of the Israelites. The verb is used also of the hardened Pharaoh, obstinately persisting in his refusal to let Israel go, ויהי כי־הקשה פרעה לשלחנו—Exod. xiii. 15.

[h] שאל, to which the epithet קשה is applied, denotes, not the grave, but the receptacle of departed spirits. This *unseen world* we may distinguish by the word hades, as the English word *hell* is become, in common use, appropriated to the place of torment. Whereas שאול, like Ἅιδης among the Greeks, and like Orcus, or Infernus, among the Latins, applies to the state of departed souls in general. (See Campbell's Dissertation on

Its flames are as the flames of fire[i],
Even the burning fire of Jehovah[k]!
Many waters cannot quench this love,
Neither can the floods drown it.
If a man would give all the substance of his
house for love,
He would utterly be despised.

Ἅδης and Γεεννα. Also Bp. Horsley's Sermon on the Descent into Hell.)

This notion of stubbornness and inflexibility, as applied to the personifications of the departed state, the "Inexorabilis Orcus," will be familiar to many of my readers.

—"Manesque addiît regemque tremendum
Nesciaque humanis precibus mansuescere corda."

Virgil, Georgic iv. 469.

"Non vanæ redeat sanguis imagini,
Quam virgâ semel horridâ
Non lenis precibus fata recludere
Nigro compulerit Mercurius gregi."

Horatii Liber 1. *Ode* xxiv.

"But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."—2 Sam. xii. 23.

[i] רשפים, coals glowing with heat, or flashes of fire. Compare Psalm lxxviii. 48. with Exod. ix. 23, 24.

[k] The burning fire of Jehovah. A great number of Dr. Kennicott's Codices read שלהבת־יה in two words. שלהבת, flamma vehementissima, à rad. Chald. et Syr. שלהב inflammatus arsit, recte derivat Schultens."—(Simon.) Parkhurst derives the word from של, to loose, to dissolve, and להב; a flame of fire—*The dissolving fire.*

BRIDE.

We have a sister, she is small, and has no breasts[l].
What shall we do for our sister,
In the day, when she shall be spoken for?

BRIDEGROOM.

[m] Since she is a wall,

From the order of the personified characters, we cannot mistake, I conceive, its signification. מות, שאול, and שלבת־יה, correspond exactly with θανατος, ἅδης, and γεεννα, or λιμνη τυ πυρος: death, hell or hades, and "hell-fire"—"The fire prepared for the devil and his angels,"—"That fire which never shall be quenched." The meaning therefore of the allusion is, The flame of that love with which my heart burns is unquenchable and eternal, like the flame of that everlasting fire which the Almighty has kindled for the punishment of his apostate creatures.

[l] This address appears to be an intercession on behalf of another—of an acknowledged sister. She is perhaps spoken of as defective in form. Her youth could not be the only thing complained of, as that would be remedied by the time she was demanded in marriage. But, in view of this event, there are clearly supposed some personal imperfections. The bride, happy in the assurance of her own acceptance with her husband, implores his advice respecting their common sister.

[m] "Since she is a wall, &c." These figurative expressions I understand as a gracious declaration on the part of the bridegroom, that in the allegorical sister there is nothing *materially* defective—she is a wall:—she is a door: the silver turret to this wall, the cedar wainscot to this door, may yet be supplied.—It shall be their united care to improve the appearance, and to ornament the person of their sister.

We will erect on it a turret of silver:
And since she is a door,
We will incase it with a plate of cedar.

THE YOUNGER SISTER.

[n] I am a wall!
And breasts shall 'I have' as towers!
Then am I in his eyes
As one that obtaineth favour.

BRIDE.

[o] Solomon has a vineyard in Baal-Hammon:
He has let out this vineyard to dressers,
That a man should bring of its fruits

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[n] "I am a wall, and breasts shall I have as towers, &c." These words, I conceive, are spoken by the younger sister; she is consoling herself on the gracious acknowledgment, which she hears respecting her real worth. She repeats the promise, and argues that she has therefore obtained favour in the eyes of the bridegroom.

[o] The above lines respecting the vineyard, or cultivated estate, as we might render it, are spoken by the bride. She is supposed to be presented by Solomon with this estate as her residence: but she will consider herself only as a steward: she will industriously contrive that her Lord shall be no loser. She accordingly compares the vineyard consigned to her with another vineyard of the same value, in the place mentioned in the text. This vineyard was let on hire; she notices the price which was stipulated to be paid for it.—She would take care that her grateful return, her service of love, should not be less to Solomon than the rent paid by these tenants. Her own servants also she declares should be remunerated for their trouble.

'The value' of a thousand pieces of silver.
A vineyard, which is mine, is before me:
The thousand 'shall be reserved' for thee,
O Solomon,
And two hundred 'shall be given' to the
dressers of the fruit.

ONE OF THE COMPANIONS [p].

Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions are listening to thy voice,
O let me hear it!

BRIDE.

Make haste, my beloved,
Be like the gazel or the fawn of the deer
Upon the mountains of spices!

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[p] One of the dressers just alluded to.

INTERPRETATION OF THE LAST IDYL.

Including the last ten Verses of the eighth Chapter.

"WHO is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" The meaning of this emblem in the figurative language of the Canticles we cannot easily mistake. The

soul is blessed with the Saviour's presence, is acknowledged in the character of his spouse. By the exercise of a lively faith she reclines herself upon Christ, her only refuge and strength; supported by his arm, she is travelling on in security towards the heavenly mansions, which are prepared for her reception.

The bride, as we have noticed, is first reminded of her original state, and of the obligation which she owed to her Lord. Between two earthly lovers there are wont to be reciprocal causes of affection: they meet in some respects on equal terms, if—

> "For contemplation he and valour form'd,
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace."

Far different are the circumstances of the union between Christ and the church of his redeemed. When indeed that union is completed, she is found possessed of every charm and every grace that can make her the admiration of beholders: "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, dazzling as the bannered hosts." But then this excellence and glory, and whatever is denoted in the figurative language of this book by beauty of person and ornaments of dress—every thing fair and valuable which is found in the spouse of Christ, has been owing entirely to the grace, the free gift of her beloved.

This was intimated in the imagery of the first

Idyl, where we saw one that had been raised from a state of servitude and oppression, led in a bridal procession into the palace of the King of Israel. This pointed out indeed, in some measure, the inequality between the parties, and informed us of what sort the obligation was, which was conferred by the heavenly bridegroom upon his spouse the Church. This consideration is, however, much more forcibly impressed upon us in the present Idyl, by an allusion to the case of an exposed female infant, whom the hand of a charitable benefactor first rescues from the stroke of death, and then fondly nurtures and educates till she arrives at woman's estate, when he receives her as his bride.

"Beneath this citron-tree I raised thee up; here thy mother brought thee forth in sorrow, here bringing thee forth in sorrow, she bare thee." If such had been the situation of the supposed bride, and such the commencement of her connexion with her husband, she owed, indeed, her all to him. She might be "comely," she might be "perfect in beauty," but it was all "through his comeliness which he had put upon her." In short, no emblem of a greater obligation, imposed by one individual on another, can be easily imagined; and the reader will find the same comparison, in very minute detail, employed by the prophet Ezekiel, to point out the

obligation and ingratitude of the external Jewish church to the God of Israel[a].

Strong, however, as is the language of the metaphor, the case supposed does but faintly shadow the obligations of the espoused soul to Christ. The soul, we may say, is now justified, and sanctified, and adorned with many excellent graces; so that the great Redeemer himself delights in her society, and she is honourable in the sight of all. But what was she once when he first knew her?—"By nature a child of wrath, even as others[b]"—"shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin[c]." "None eye pitied thee to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born[d]." But if we reflect upon the nature of those spiritual mercies which exalt the helpless sons of men from their native misery to the heirship of eternal glory, how much more costly are the charities of Jesus Christ, which he has bestowed upon his people, than those of this imaginary benefactor, as shown to the exposed infant, whom he afterwards espouses!

To preserve his people from the hand of justice, for their wretchedness did not arise from misfortune, the gracious Redeemer descends from his heavenly throne, and becomes a

[a] Ch. xvi. [b] Eph. ii. 3.
[c] Ps. li. 5. [d] Ezek. xvi. 5.

man; and in this his assumed nature, he offers himself a victim in their stead; "dying the just for the unjust:"—"He who knew no sin being made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." We consequently read, concerning the heavenly Bridegroom, "that he so loved the church that he gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself a glorious church." What manner of love is this? All human comparison must fail!

"O set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm." The reply of the bride contains a prayer, that that love and kindness, of which she has been the object, may be yet continued to her.—As he has condescended to bestow so much upon her to make her what she is, O, may he still account her worth his regards!—since he has been pleased to choose her for his own, let him not now discard her.

To set her as a seal upon the heart, and as a seal upon the arm, imply, that he should make her the object of his true affection, and of his constant recollection and peculiar care and acknowledgment. "Write it upon the table of thine heart[e]," is a frequent phrase in Scripture: let it be indelibly fixed in your affection and memory. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and

[e] Prov. iii. 3.—vii. 3.

with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their hearts." So again to place as a signet upon the arm, to wear as an ornament in which a person delights, on which he sets a particular value, and which he carries constantly about his person, is a beautiful emblem of that particular attention, and marked attachment, which those who love require to have constantly shown them. "But Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me[f]."

The expressions and various allusions which are made use of in the sacred writings to denote the strength and unchangeable nature of the love of Christ towards his people, are truly astonishing!—They are designed, as the Apostle assures us, "to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of the divine counsel,"—"that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." But in no part of the Scriptures, perhaps, is language found more strong upon the subject, than in the reply of the bridegroom to

[f] Isai. xlix. 14, 15, 16.

the grateful and affectionate petition which we have just been considering.

"Yea, love is strong as Death; jealousy is stubborn as Hades. Its flames are flames of fire, even the burning fire of Jehovah. Many waters cannot quench this love; neither can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be despised."

As we have seen, in considering the literal meaning of these words, love is represented as a passion, powerful as Death, who conquers all things, whose force nothing can resist. It is in its jealousy over its object, as stiff, unyielding, as obstinate, and hard to be entreated, as the inexorable Hades.—You might as soon hope to prevail by force, or by entreaty, or by artful policy, to rescue a departed spirit from its prison, or to disquiet the saints in paradise, as to prevail upon a lover to give up, or to neglect, or to cease to watch over the object of his affections; nay, it burns with a flame eternal as the flames of hell, which shall consume the ungodly—the "fire that never shall be quenched." "Many waters cannot quench this love, the floods cannot drown it."—The most costly offers to induce it to change its purpose, or to quit the beloved object, would be treated as most despicable.

The powers of love as a human passion are

sufficiently known and celebrated, and the language here used, as far as it can be applied to the fleeting concerns of frail mortals, would not be considered as inappropriate. But, in respect of that love wherewith Christ loves his church, the language is all true and correct, without a figure. Who can describe the length and breadth, the depth and height, of this love of Christ? It is a love which passes all understanding! What has it done for its objects! With what pledges is its continuance secured! The incarnation, the passion, the cross of Jesus, will evince its strength. The immutable promise, and the oath of God, who cannot lie, vouch its continuance, and that for ever!

Such indeed are the provisions and stipulations of that everlasting covenant, by the ratification of which the God of Grace is wont to dispel the fears of the believer, and to raise his hopes to heaven.—The "mercies" are so "sure," that a sense of his own unworthiness and imperfection, the consciousness of his weakness and frailty in the face of so many dangers, need not hinder his rejoicing boast. For he is allowed and instructed to reason, that if, when he was a sinner, Christ died for him, much more being now justified by his blood, shall he be saved from wrath through him. And that if, "when he was an enemy to God, he was reconciled to

him by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, shall he be saved by his life[g]."

The bride in the parable, assured of the unchangeable affection of her husband, becomes an intercessor for another: "We have a sister, she is small, and has no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day that she shall be spoken for?"

Many have thought of the Gentile church as answering to this emblem: but with what propriety I cannot see. A Gentile church was not at this time in existence: when it did exist, and Gentile converts and Gentile societies could be contrasted with converts and societies gathered from among the Jews, this comparison of the two sisters most certainly did not apply, as characteristic of these two divisions of the church. I conceive, therefore, that we are to explain the emblem, more generally, respecting those who are weak in the faith, and who, though they must be acknowledged to be real Christians, are defective in knowledge and experience: are not come, to use the Apostle's expression, "to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus."—There is evidence sufficient, we are supposing, to evince that they are regenerated by the Spirit of God; yet the flesh, with its principles, so far prevails, that they cannot

[g] Rom. v. 9, 10.

be denominated "spiritual," but "carnal, babes in Christ."

Now such characters, and the full-grown, the enlightened, and established Christian, are always seen together in every church and Christian society; and it is, without doubt, the duty of the strong to pray for the weak: and, in fact, the spiritual welfare of their weaker brethren is an object of continual solicitude with the more spiritual believers—an object often, in their happy moments, made the particular matter of prayer before God.

Such then I conclude to be the meaning of this part of the allegory; and it might be expedient to add, such a representation at the close of these divine songs, which in many parts celebrate an experience which those that are weak in the faith cannot reach at present.

The answer of the heavenly Bridegroom, we notice, is most favourable. "Since she is a wall, we will build on it a turret of silver: since she is a door, we will incase it with a plate of cedar." This is as much as to say, There are the essentials of the Christian character, and God in his good time will supply every deficiency.

"I am a wall, and breasts shall I have as towers! Then am I in his eyes as one that has obtained favour." Thus the weak and tempted Christian is represented as encouraging himself

from the kind and considerate declarations of his meek and lowly Master. He cannot enjoy the comfortable frames, and that full assurance of hope, which some Christians possess; yet is he enabled, by self-examination, to prove, according to the word of God, his sincerity and the reality of his faith: nor are there wanting in Scripture some kind assurances of the divine acceptance which he *can* apply to himself.—"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God[h]."

"King Solomon has a vineyard in Baal-Hammon: he has let out this vineyard to dressers, that a man should bring of its fruits the value of a thousand pieces of silver. A vineyard which is mine is before me; the thousand shall be reserved for thee, O Solomon, and two hundred shall be given to the dressers of the fruit."

The meaning, as we have conjectured, is this: The faithful spouse, contemplating the vineyard, the garden, or estate, which her husband had given her, compares it to another of the same size or value. She recollects the annual rent, which those who hired this vineyard paid to the

[h] Isai. li. 10.

king. The vineyard, generously bestowed upon her, shall not be less productive to her husband, under the management of his affectionate wife, than this which was let to strangers for so large a consideration.

The spiritual meaning, I conceive, has reference to the principle of Christian obedience, as contrasted with the obedience and service demanded by the original law of man. This latter was the obedience and service of an hireling: "Do this, and thou shalt live." The stipulated services were to be performed on peril of disinheritance. Not so under the Gospel dispensation. Eternal life, and every privilege, is the gift of God, bestowed freely without money, and without price. It is the gift of his love: "By grace ye are saved." But is the Christian released from all obligation to obedience and service? Far from it. Obligations the most sacred, the most forcible and effective, are laid upon him, the obligations of love—of love, not the uncertain operation of human gratitude, but of love as shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

Will a father derive less benefit, it may be asked, from the son that loves him and serves him, than from the labours of the hired servant? Will the provident care of a faithful and affectionate wife, in the management of household affairs, be less profitable to her husband than

the bought services and inspection of a stranger?

In short, so certain is the operation of faith and love in producing obedience and good works, that our divine Master has stated it, as a matter of fact, to his disciples, "Unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," the strenuous advocates, as was supposed, for the greatest strictness of morals, "ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

> "Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love!
> Thou maker of new morals to mankind!
> The grand morality is love of thee."

Upon the question, of what services are to be performed; the requisition of "the Law of Works," and of "the Law of Faith," is, essentially, the same—briefly summed up in these two commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbours as thyself."

Such was formerly the stipulated hire for holding the vineyard: and such is the obedience which every believer in Christ is called upon, faithfully, to perform to God. The terms are not specified in any covenant, or copy of agreement; but this same law is written upon the fleshly tables of the heart—"Faith worketh by love." The Grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teaches us, that, denying ungodliness

and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ[i]."—"Christ has purified to himself a people zealous of good works[k]."—"For ye are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works[l]."

Obedience is therefore a certain criterion of character. "He that doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother[m]."

The remaining circumstance, which is mentioned in the parable, that the value of two hundred pieces of silver is to be given to the dressers of the vineyard, can be intended, I conceive, to indicate nothing else, but that one of the first considerations with the church should be, to make a decent provision for her ministers. For so has Christ ordained, that as they which waited at the altar were partakers with the altar, in like manner they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel[n].

We come now to the conclusion of these heavenly songs. "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions listen to thy voice; O let me hear it." This address is, I think, most probably, not intended for the bridegroom, but for

[i] Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13. [k] Tit. ii. 14. [l] Eph. ii. 10.
[m] 1 John, iii. 10. [n] 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.

one of these companions, the labourers in the vineyard attending upon and ministering unto the faithful—" the labourers together with God." They would hear the voice of the Spouse of Christ, as dwelling in the vineyards committed to their charge. To hear a language among their people bespeaking the presence of the bride of Christ, is, doubtless, the summit of the earthly felicity of his faithful ministers.

And what is the characteristic language of the espoused of Christ? It is that which we have so often considered in these Canticles—" Make haste, my beloved; be like the gazel, or the fawn of the deer upon the mountains of spices."—So finish these divine poems. The bride is still in the enclosed garden, waiting the appointed return of her beloved. " For we are saved by," or in, "hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it[o]." The first fruits, the earnest of the spirit of adoption, is now the portion of believers in Christ, and seals them to the day of redemption; but the full manifestation of this adoption, according to the figurative language of this book, the consummation of the soul's nuptials with her heavenly Bridegroom, is still the object of wish and earnest expectation."

[o] Rom. viii. 24.

As closes therefore this portion of the word of God, so closes the sacred volume itself.—"He, which testifies these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen! Even so, come Lord Jesus!" AMEN.

END OF THE NEW TRANSLATION OF THE CANTICLES.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

NAME AND CHARACTER

OF THE

REDEEMER.

AN

ESSAY,

&c.

Our blessed Saviour was, from the earliest ages of the world, promised to mankind in the character of their Redeemer; in allusion to this appellation, we find the term Redemption used in Scripture in reference to various parts of his interposition in human affairs, and indeed, in some passages, as comprehending the whole work of our salvation.

It is the object of the present attempt—to inquire into the signification of the title of Redeemer;—and to trace, in the sacred writings, in what manner our gracious Lord has fulfilled the several parts of the character which that name implies.

I. The notion of *Repurchasing*, as referred to in the term Redeemer, agreeably with its Latin derivation, from *redimo, to ransom, to buy off:* the

notion also of a recovery of one taken captive, by the payment of a ransom, which is expressly implied in the Greek word απολυτρωσις, to which our term Redemption answers in the translation of the New Testament, will be familiar to most of my readers.

This view of Redemption will indeed be found to comprehend one very principal act, which a Redeemer would, in certain cases, be called upon to perform; and which our great Redeemer has, in fact, accomplished for us.

But, in order to a full view and comprehension of the name and character in question, and to show how the term *Redemption* applies to other parts of the Saviour's work, besides the *ransoming* of his people, it is necessary that we recall to our recollection the circumstances and prevailing customs of those remote ages, in which the office of a *Redeemer* originated, and where it is actually found to have been one of the most common and important relations of life, in which one man could stand to another. For, in our own times, though we shall find some remains of the functions of this ancient character, yet we have certainly no prototype which can afford, in the present state of civilized society, a full illustration of those duties which the Son of God undertook to discharge for us, when he assumed the style and title of our Redeemer.

We should remember, therefore, that, in the

circumstances of the primitive ages of the world, the arts and influence of government were very imperfect and unoperative. Mankind, subsisting in their separate families or clans, widely dispersed from each other, scarcely acknowledged any other tie, or public obligation, but that of kindred; nor possessed commonly any other resource for the redress of their grievances. The chief security, therefore, which they had for their lives and properties, was to stand by each other in the hour of danger, to vindicate each other's rights, and to inflict with their own hands that justice on the offending party, to execute which belongs, in better times, to the peculiar functions of the magistrate.

We find accordingly, that, in the histories of all very ancient nations, and indeed of all rude and uncivilized people down to this present time, the feuds arising from these family attachments, in prosecution especially of the sacred right of revenge for a murdered or injured kinsman, are among the most important of their transactions; and the occasions often of the most bloody conflicts.

Now the person on whom this duty immediately devolved, of vindicating the rights of an injured relative, and who was generally the person nearest related to him, of sufficient spirit and prowess to take his part, was denominated his גאל—the term in the Old Testament which

we render by *Redeemer*. It belonged to this person, as the representative of the injured party, to require the compensation of his wrongs, to effect his deliverance out of captivity, or, if it were necessary, to revenge his blood upon his murderer.

It was from the last of these awful duties, which in those ages too often called forth the exertions of the Redeemer, that some of the most eminent scholars suppose him to have taken his name of גאל[a], as signifying "one polluted, defiled with blood, an avenger of blood, because he was considered as polluted by the blood of his relation, and rendered infamous until it was revenged."

The origin of these notions, from whence the ancient Redeemers obtained their title, may perhaps be discovered in Scripture; where indeed we find the title sometimes written at length, גאל־דם—the avenger of bloods, or the bloody Redeemer. The injunction of God to Noah was, "And surely your blood of your lives will I re-

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[a] גאל polluit, contaminavit, Jer. xxxix. 3. Esr. ii. 62. Thren. iv. 14. unde גאל assumta significatione passiva pollutus, inguinatus sanguine, vindex sanguinis, quod sanguine cognati pollutus et infamis haberetur, donec ulcesceretur. Hinc 2. Goëlis jure usus est vindicavit, redimit, liberavit, speciatim jure cognationis (sic notiones in hæ rad. obviæ conjungi possunt ex conjectura, v. 1. D. Michaëlis suppl.).

Simonis Lex. Heb.

quire; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man[b]." But before the union or increase of families into nations, and the appointment of the magistrate, with sufficient authority, as "God's minister"—"a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil[c]," it is evident, that the enforcing of this primeval law must, of necessity, have depended upon the relations and friends of the murdered person. If indeed the expression in the former verse, "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man," is not to be understood as an express direction from the Almighty, that the brother, or kinsman, must exact the rights of vengeance. For however the malignant passions of the friends and relatives of the injured party might prompt them to carry this vengeance to those excesses of cruelty so frequently recorded in history, yet the right itself, as touching the person of the murderer, was sacred and indispensable.

Hence it is obvious to suppose, that those whose duty it was to exercise the part of redeemers, in these sad cases, would be considered as disgraced and dishonoured till justice had

[b] Gen. ix. 5, 6. [c] Rom. xiii.

been obtained. This notion, on an occasion not materially different, is indeed plainly recognised in the law of Moses. "For blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it[d]."

And whatever be the origin and meaning of the term גאל, this representative of the deceased, his nearest relation, is evidently acknowledged by the laws of many nations as the proper person who ought, of natural right, to demand satisfaction in the circumstances above considered.

The institution of the Cities of Refuge among the Jews was plainly devised to restrain, in particular cases, the exercise of this right in the Redeemer, or avenger of blood. And the institution evinces, beyond all contradiction, what the prevailing usage was in those days: and at the same time that it protects the unfortunate manslayer from the vengeance of the Redeemer, the law establishes his right in respect of the murderers.

In the reign of David we find, that the Redeemer was still accustomed to prosecute his rights. This appears from the feigned story of the woman of Tekoah. "Her whole family," she says, "has risen against her, saying, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill

[d] Num. xxxv. 33

him for the life of his brother, whom he slew." She prays for the interposition of the king's authority, "not to suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy her son[e]."

"Among the ancient Greeks," Professor Goguet observes, "they had no public officer charged by the state to look after murderers. The relations of the deceased alone had the right to pursue revenge. Homer shows this clearly (Iliad i. 9. v. 628, &c.). We may add to the testimony of this great poet, that of Pausanias, who speaks in many places of this ancient usage (l. 5. c. 1. p. 376. l. 8. c. 34. p. 669.): a usage that appears to have always subsisted in Greece (see Plato de Leg. i. 9. p. 930, 931, and 933.; Demosth. in Aristocrat. p. 736.; Pullux. i. 8. c. 10. segm. 118[f].)."

In our own laws, these ancient rights of the Redeemer are also plainly recognised, and in one remarkable instance—the prosecution by way of appeal in criminal cases, are allowed to this very day. Of this mode of prosecution, the following interesting account is extracted from Blackstone's Commentaries[g]:—"An appeal, when spoken of as a criminal prosecution, denotes an accusation by a private subject against

[e] 2 Sam. xiv. 7—11. comp. Gen. xxvii. 4, 5.

[f] Goguet's Origin of Laws, &c. v. 2. c. 1. art. 8.

[g] Book iv. ch. 23.

another, for some heinous crime; demanding punishment on account of the particular injury suffered, rather than for the offence against the public."—"This private process, for the punishment of public crimes, had probably its origin in those times when a private pecuniary satisfaction, called a weregild, was constantly paid to the party injured, or his relations, to expiate enormous offences. This was a custom derived to us, in common with other northern nations, from our ancestors, the ancient Germans; among whom, according to Tacitus, 'Luitur homicidium certo armentorum ac pecorum numero; recipitque satisfactionem universa domus.'

"In the same manner, by the Irish Brehon law, in case of murder, the Brehon judge was used to compound between the murderer and the friends of the deceased who prosecuted him, by causing the malefactor to give unto them, or to the child or wife of him that was slain, a recompense which they called an *eriach*. And thus we find in our Saxon laws (particularly those of King Athelstan) the several weregilds for homicide established in progressive order, from the death of the ceorl, or peasant, up to that of the king himself. And in the laws of King Henry I. we have an account of what other offences were then redeemable by weregild, and what were not so. As therefore, during the continuance of this custom, a process was certainly given

for recovering the weregild by the party to whom it was due, it seems that, when these offences by degrees grew no longer redeemable, the private process was still continued, in order to ensure the infliction of punishment upon the offender, though the party injured was allowed no pecuniary compensation of the offence.

"The only offence against one's relation, for which an appeal can be brought, is that of *killing* him, by either murder or manslaughter. But this cannot be brought by every relation: but only by the wife for the death of her husband, or by the heir male for the death of his ancestor; which heirship was also confined, by an ordinance of King Henry I. to the four nearest degrees of blood.

"If the appellee be found guilty, he shall suffer the same judgment as if he had been convicted by indictment: but with this remarkable difference—that, on an indictment which is at the suit of the king, the king may pardon and remit the execution: on an appeal, which is at the suit of a private subject, to make an atonement of the private wrong, the king can no more pardon it than he can remit the damages recovered on an action of battery. In like manner as, while the weregild continued to be paid as a fine for homicide, it could not be remitted by the king's authority. And the ancient usage was, so late as Henry the Fourth's time, that all

the relations of the slain should drag the appellee to the place of execution: a custom, founded upon that savage spirit of family resentment, which prevailed universally through Europe after the irruption of the northern nations, and is particularly attended to in their several codes of law; and which prevails even now among the wild and untutored inhabitants of America: as if *the finger of nature had pointed it out to mankind in their rude and uncultivated state*[h]."

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[h] "To restrain these private wars between great families, which disturbed the public tranquillity, and prevented the regular course of justice, many laws were made, particularly by King Edmund, who reigned from A. D. 940 to A. D. 946. By one of these laws it is declared, that a murderer shall alone be obnoxious to the resentment of the relations of him whom he had murdered, and not his whole family, as formerly."

(*Henry's History of Great Britain*, book ii. c. 7.)

"In Turkey, murder is never prosecuted by the officers of the government. It is the business of the next relations, and them only, to revenge the slaughter of their kinsmen: and if they rather choose (as they generally do) to compound the matter for money, nothing more is said about it."

(*Lady M. W. Montague*, lett. 42.)

"Among the Circassians, all the relatives of the murderers are considered as guilty. This customary infatuation to avenge the blood of relations, generates most of the feuds, and occasions great bloodshed among all the tribes of Caucasus; for unless pardon be purchased, or obtained by intermarriage between the two families, the principle of revenge is propagated to all succeeding generations.—If the thirst of vengeance is

The last observation of the learned Judge is remarkable. And we have seen that "The finger of nature," which pointed out this practice, was no other than the primeval law of God respecting the punishment of murder, which tradition has so wonderfully preserved in almost all nations of the earth. But to return.

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quenched by a price paid to the family of the deceased, this tribute is called *Thlil-Uasa*, or *the price of blood:* but neither princes nor usdens accept of such a compensation, as it is an established law among them to demand *blood for blood.*"

(*Pallas's Travels*, vol. i. p. 405.)

"The interest of the common safety has, for ages, established a law among them," the Arabians, "which decrees that the blood of every man who is slain must be avenged by that of his murderer. This vengeance is called *tar*, or retaliation; and the right of exacting it devolves on the nearest of kin to the deceased. So nice are the Arabs on this point of honour, that if any one neglects to seek his retaliation, he is disgraced for ever. He therefore watches every opportunity of revenge: if his enemy perishes from any other cause, still he is not satisfied, and his vengeance is directed against the nearest relation. These animosities are transmitted, as an inheritance, from father to children, and never cease but by the extinction of one of the families, unless they agree to sacrifice the criminal, or *purchase the blood* for a stated price, in money or in flocks. Without this satisfaction, there is neither peace, nor truce, nor alliance, between them; nor, sometimes, even between whole tribes. *There is blood between us*, say they, on every occasion; and this expression is an insurmountable barrier."—(*Volney's Travels in Egypt and Syria*, vol. i. page 367, *third edition.*)

A Redeemer then, according to the usages of ancient times, was a near relation, called upon, by some disastrous event, to stand forth as the representative of his deceased or incapacitated kinsman. From the hand of his Redeemer the captive expected the ransom price, which was to restore him to liberty. To his Redeemer he looked for those powerful exertions which were necessary to effect his deliverance by force of arms. To the Redeemer, lastly, it belonged to avenge his blood upon his murderer.

For we are to remark, that all these acts, as performed by this relative on behalf of his kinsman, would, in the Hebrew language, be denominated גאלה, Redemption. But that the same actions performed by another person, a stranger in blood, could not properly be distinguished by this term, except indeed in a figurative sense, in allusion to this גאל; and this figurative sense is extremely rare in the Holy Scriptures[i]. For when the term is used of the

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[i] Thus in some of the duties assigned to the Redeemers by the laws of Moses, respecting the ransoming of persons or estates: if a person had no relation to redeem for him, it is said he might do it for himself, and the action bears the same name (Lev. xxv. 25, &c. &c.). It is used also in this more general sense in the last chapter of Leviticus, for a man's recovery of the property which he had consecrated to God. And if any other instances can be pointed out, they are cer-

interposition of God in the concerns of mortals, it will be found generally to have a reference, more or less direct, to the incarnation of the Son of God, by which gracious act he becomes in fact our kinsman, and obtains the right of redemption in behalf of his brethren.

II. Having now pursued our inquiries to a sufficient length respecting the meaning of the term *Redeemer*, we proceed to trace, in the sacred writings, in what manner our gracious Lord has fulfilled the several parts of the character which that name implies.

From what has been said it will appear that, when Christ is promised, or spoken of, in the character of the Redeemer of his people, we are to include, in the signification of that title, together with the more common notion of a

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tainly so few, that they can by no means render questionable the proper and most frequent meaning of גאלה—The redemption, the deliverance, or the vengeance, which is accomplished by a kinsman, is his right of blood.

It should be noticed, however, that there is another term in the Hebrew language expressing the idea of redemption, פדה, with its derivatives. It is the common word, indeed, for redeeming, whether that redemption be effected by a גאל or not; or whether by price, or by power. We therefore, as might be expected, in some places meet with the terms as synonymous. But they are not equivalent, since פדה does not express the act of a relation exclusively, nor does it include the notion of vengeance.

Ransomer, that of a *Deliverer*, and an *Avenger*, of an injured brother.

And, as we shall be able to show, all these several parts of this character does the blessed Jesus sustain, in regard of his acknowledged friends and relatives—bearing in mind that we contemplate the incarnate God, in his assumed nature, as "the first-born among many brethren." For thus he is become their Redeemer in right of blood, and is found ready, as their need shall require, to discharge the several duties of a *Redeemer* towards them.

First, He is their *Ransomer*. Many indeed are the passages of Scripture that assert this fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith—that, considered as the prisoners of divine justice, apprehended, and about to receive the just recompense of their evil deeds, Christ has *redeemed*, or *bought off*, his people by the payment of a ransom for them.

I select a passage from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, as sufficient to illustrate this important point. Explaining the method of a sinner's justification in the sight of God, the Apostle asserts, that he is "justified freely by his grace through the *redemption* which is in Jesus Christ." This justification, as received by the creature from the hand of his God, is free and gratuitous; yet still, in regard to what has been transacted

between the Father and the Son, it has been obtained by a *redemption*.

So the Apostle explains this "redemption which is in Jesus Christ"—"whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness." In the setting forth or appointment of Christ to be an ἱλαστηριον, therefore, is this redemption accomplished. Ἱλαστηριον signifies, literally, propitiatory. It is by some explained of the Mercy-seat in the Jewish tabernacle: but by our translators, more justly, of the propitiatory victim itself; at least, of the propitiation effected by its vicarious sacrifice. And from this slaughtered victim, the master-type, so to call it, I conceive the mercy-seat itself obtained its epithet of propitiatory, כפרת, and not from the circumstance merely of its forming a covering for the ark of the covenant. Indeed, in the passage before us, the meaning of *propitiatory* seems necessarily restricted to the victim; for in the following clause we read of the blood of what is called a propitiatory, "In his blood to declare his righteousness [k]."

What was spoken of therefore in the former verse, under the notion of a ransom price paid for the liberation of a captive or prisoner, the

[k] See the manner of pointing this passage in Griesbach's Greek Testament.

proper meaning of απολυτρωσις, is here represented as a sacrificed victim; which, by means of its undeserved and vicarious sufferings, according to a notion so carefully inculcated in the ancient rites of religion, rendered the Deity propitious to the real offender.

It is obvious indeed, in the case before us, that the ransom price could be no other than an atonement offered to divine Justice, which, in sparing the guilty, and much more in justifying the ungodly, must necessarily have been violated; and something widely differing from silver and gold was requisite to this end.

Now it is worthy of remark, that the same word which supplies the term כפרת, propitiatory, is equally used for the ransoming of a prisoner out of captivity, as for the atonement made by the priest upon the altar; and, what will appear to some of my readers still more extraordinary, the same word is used for a bribe given to an unjust judge to induce him to screen the guilty from deserved punishment.

The meaning of this word כפר, which applies in common to these three cases, is that of *covering:* as in our own language we speak of covering a loss, or damage, when something equivalent is supplied to make good the deficiency which had been created. In the case of the captive, the price paid for his ransom, or as a commutation for his crimes, might, by an easy

figure, be supposed to cover the loss, which the conqueror, or aggrieved party, sustained in the personal services of his prisoner: or, it was what his adversary deemed an equivalent for his forfeited life. So, when the term is applied to the sacrifice offered to the Almighty, the same idea is evident; only in this case that which covers the offence, instead of being the payment of a sum of money, is the substitution of an innocent victim to suffer, in the place and stead of the guilty. Lastly, in regard to the unjust action of the venal judge, we perceive the same notion in the effects of the proffered bribe. It covers the offender and the defects of his cause; it is, in the eyes of the wicked magistrate, an equivalent for the violation of justice. "Of whose hands," says Samuel, "have I received a bribe, to blind mine eyes therewith[1]?"

The second application of this idea, as we have already seen, bears the strictest affinity of the three to the manner in which our gracious Redeemer delivers us from the wrath to come. It was in truth a practice, purposely invented, to prefigure and represent the mode in which the promised Messiah should ransom his people from the punishment of their transgressions.

The notion of a vicarious sacrifice must in itself be acknowledged to be the most extrava-

[1] כפר 1 Sam. xii. 3.

gant and unlikely means of procuring the pardon of sin, that could have entered into the mind of man—to suppose that the sufferings and slaughter of any innocent animal could render the just God propitious to the real offender, while he beheld him besprinkled with its blood, or eating its mangled limbs, or when he perceived the savour of its roasting fat ascending up to heaven! And yet this very notion has prevailed in all ages and nations; and for some great purpose or other was inculcated by Revelation itself.

Abel offered his acceptable offering from the firstlings of his flock. It was the grateful smell of a burning sacrifice, which is represented as inducing the Almighty to promise Noah that he would not again punish the wickedness of mankind by a general deluge.

The Patriarchs worshipped with sacrifice.

When the Gentiles had lost the knowledge of the true God, and adored in his stead their abominable idols, still they almost universally retained the notion, that the anger of their gods was to be appeased by bloody sacrifice. Nay, playing the fool in their imaginations [m], and supposing the more excellent the victim the more acceptable the sacrifice, they not unfrequently immolated human beings, and sometimes even their own children, in their horrid rites.

[m] Εματαιωθησαν εν τοις διαλογισμοις. Rom. i. 21.

Among the Jews, whose religious institutions and ceremonies were appointed and ordered in their minutest circumstances, by immediate Revelation, we still find the expiatory sacrifice to be the leading and most essential object in their external and public worship. From all these facts we argue, that the sacrificing of animals, as a religious ceremony, was a divine appointment, destined to prefigure to fallen man the mode of his redemption through a crucified Saviour.

We may easily conceive, that it would soon have been understood among mankind, that a כפר, a *covering*, might be found to pacify the rage of a conqueror, to induce him to spare the life of his captive, and to restore him to his friends —his redeemers. It would also too often have been found among the administrators of justice, that a כפר might be brought by those who could afford it, to screen the offender from punishment. But, unless God himself had taught it, it is inconceivable that man would ever have extended the notion of a כפר in relation to the justification of his soul in the presence of God. What could be offered to the just Judge of all the earth? Where could an equivalent be found to make a commutation, or afford a ransom? It must surely have been felt by all, that, to use the language of the Psalmist, "none of them could redeem his brother, nor give to God a ran-

sem for him (כפרו, his covering). For the redemption of their souls is precious, and it ceaseth for ever[n]."

And yet the institution of sacrifice, as we have seen, did certainly convey this notion, and mankind were taught to look forward to something of the sort, as the means of their deliverance from the displeasure of the Almighty. And moreover, by this religious rite, the worshippers of God were plainly instructed, that the כפר to be paid for them would be the substitution of an innocent being to suffer, in the place and stead of the guilty.

But where could such a victim be found? Carnal and gross indeed must have been the mind that could suppose it saw, in any of the appointed offerings of those days, an equivalent for the ransom of the soul—that could suppose it "possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin." It was a question of difficult solution indeed: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul[o]?"

[n] Ps. xlix. [o] Micah, vi. 6.

But the mystery which kings and prophets desired to see, then began to be unfolded, when the great forerunner of the Messiah, looking upon Jesus, exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world[p]." In the sacrifice therefore of the Lord Jesus Christ—dying "the just for the unjust[q]"—"He who knew no sin being made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him[r]," we contemplate that which the Almighty Sovereign considers as an equivalent for the forfeited lives of his rebellious creatures. There is in this oblation a price which forms a כפר—a covering, not to blind the eyes of an unrighteous judge while the course of justice is perverted, but which affords a consideration which the most holy God esteems to be perfectly satisfactory in behalf of the claims of violated justice, so that, in strictest equity, he may now proceed to clear the guilty, nay, to justify the wicked. "In the blood or sufferings of Christ, God's righteousness is manifested, that he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus."

Thus we are informed in what manner the great Redeemer has *ransomed* his people—they are bought with a price, not of silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb slain in sacrifice[s]. "He himself has borne

[p] John.
[q] 1 Pet. iii. 18.
[r] 2 Cor. v. 21.
[s] 1 Pet. i. 19.

our sins in his own body upon the tree[t]."—"His blood cleanseth from all sin[u]."—"By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us[w]."

Secondly, Christ is the *Deliverer* of his people from the hand of their enemies and oppressors. This, as we have seen, is one part of the character of a גאל—*a Redeemer*. This notion of redemption must be familiar to every reader of Scripture—a redemption, not by price or ransom, but by the opposing of force to force.

It was in the character of their גאל, that the God of Israel is represented as delivering his people from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and from their Egyptian bondage. "And I will redeem you (וגאלתי) with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments[x]." The deliverance of the Jews from Babylon by the victories of Cyrus, and many of the temporal deliverances of this nation, are also described under the notion of גאלה—the redemption, which a kinsman has accomplished for his oppressed relative. "The high God was their Redeemer."

The allusion indeed is figurative, if you respect the Jewish nation alone—"Israel after the flesh." But we are taught to consider all these transactions as appointed types and allegories, to illus-

[t] 1 Pet. ii. 24.
[u] 1 John, i. 7.
[w] Heb. ix. 13.
[x] Exod. vi. 6.

trate the various parts of that salvation, which the incarnate Saviour, *the woman's seed*, and therefore, strictly speaking, our *kinsman* and גאל, should accomplish for his church—"the true Israel of God."

In this capacity, then, he not only brings the price of our ransom, but he appears as "the Captain of our Salvation," that he may redeem his people out of the hand of their enemies. And, agreeably with this notion, St. Paul in one place translates גאל, Ὁ ῥυόμενος, *the Deliverer, the Rescuer*[y].

Now we are informed, by the word of God, that a powerful enemy has led captive the fallen sons of Adam. He that seduced our first parents is designated as "the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."—"He is the God of this world," and the impenitent are "led captive by him at his will." With this 'prince of darkness,' and with his 'principalities and powers,' the combat must be maintained, in order to our escape from spiritual bondage. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive [or rather, the captive of the terrible[z]] delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that con-

[y] Rom. xi. 26. [z] Bishop Lowth.

tendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy *Redeemer*, the mighty one of Jacob[a]."

In this passage we notice, that a combination of the wicked is described as, on the part of Satan, ready to oppose the deliverance of the redeemed of the Lord. And the whole history of Christ's church militant here on earth, may serve to illustrate this point.

And there is yet, besides, another enemy, who, according to the scriptural representation, is arrayed against us, namely, Sin—sin, considered as a powerful principle in human nature, which, unless combated by a stronger arm than that of man, would still prevail to bind, as often as released, and drag back again into captivity the ransomed prisoners of the Lord.

But here also we experience 'the mighty hand' and 'out-stretched arm' of our great Redeemer. "He will subdue our iniquities[b]."—"Sin shall not have dominion over you[c]."—"The Lord knows how to succour them that are tempted."—There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For

[a] Isai. xlix. 3 last. [b] Micah, vii. 19. [c] Rom. vi. 14.

this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

The Christian, as is beautifully represented in our baptismal service, is enlisted under the banner of the cross, to fight against sin, the world, and the devil. And the great Captain of our Salvation, it will be found, has opened a way for his ransomed to pass in safety; we follow him to victory and a crown. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a mighty salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of them that hate us." —"That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life."

Does Satan then oppose? Contend he may, prevail he cannot! "The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Does the world distress? "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."—"Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

Is the Christian, through the law of sin, that works in his members, bound and dragged captive; and for very wretchedness does he cry out

for his deliverer? He shall with Paul "thank God through Jesus Christ his Lord[d]."—"Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous *redemption*: and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities[e]."

Lastly, we are to consider the Redeemer in his peculiar character as the *Avenger* of the blood of a murdered kinsman. And in this view the sacred Scriptures frequently lead us to consider the redemption, which our Almighty Saviour accomplishes for his people.

It is true indeed that the enemies of the children of God cannot prevail to kill their souls; to separate them from the love of Christ; or to pluck them out of his heavenly Father's hands: but against their bodies, and in all their temporal concerns and interests in this present life, their enemies, the Lord so permitting, may prevail; and their ruin, in the eyes of men, be complete. "They shall fall by the sword," as we read in the word of prophecy, "and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days—even to the time of the end[f]."

But by whatever hand these violences shall have been offered, vengeance is sure: for *their Redeemer is strong!* He heard the voice of the blood of the righteous Abel, which the earth

[d] Rom. vii. [e] Ps. cxxx. 7, 8. [f] Dan. xi. 33.

had drunk from the murderer's hand. And it appears, notwithstanding the Christians' prayers for their enemies, (for they desire not the evil day,) yet, in the ears of the Lord of Hosts, their injuries cry aloud for vengeance. For it is said, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily[g]."

Nay, even the disembodied spirits of God's persecuted people are represented as making the same demand on their Judge and Avenger. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord God, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth[h]?" And, accordingly, that great and final catastrophe, which we expect at the return of Christ into this world, "when he shall punish the hosts of the high ones, which are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth, is called the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion[i]."

The prophecy contained in the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, is most remarkable, and affords a striking representation of the Saviour, in

[g] Luke, xviii. 7, 8. [h] Rev. vi. 9, 10. [i] Isai. xxxiv. 8.

the character of the *Redeemer*, or *Avenger of blood*. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This, that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone (and of the people there was none with me): for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiments. For the day of *vengeance* is in my heart, and the year of my *redeemed* is come[k]."

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[k] The transaction and dialogue in this passage seems to have been a visionary representation, which the Prophet saw. From Edom and Bozrah, the residence of the most troublesome enemies of the Jewish people in that day, and which therefore are used as typical of the abode of the adversaries of the church, wherever that abode may be, when the prophecy shall receive its fulfilment—the Prophet sees one advancing in great state and majesty, like a conqueror returning in triumph. (עתה reclinato capite incedens ut victor triumphans.) In answer to the Prophet's inquiry, the character in the vision announces himself, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save"—I that am faithful to my promise, and am able to perform what I have undertaken. The vision in the nineteenth of Revelations exhibits the same character, and I conceive foretels the same event. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called *Faithful*

We find also in some parts of Scripture that the Lord is even represented as sanctifying him in the enemies of his people when he avenges their cause, as though, after the notion entertained of the redeemers of old, something of pollution or dishonour might seem to attach to his great name, till this vengeance had been executed[1]. Ah! how extensive may be the meaning of that prayer, which our divine Master has put into our mouths, "Hallowed be thy name!"

Again, not only when the people of God fall

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and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war †."

The glaring colours of the victor's garments had at first struck the Prophet's attention (חמוץ acutus, acris colore, i. e. rubicundus, puniceus ‡). But on his nearer approach they assumed the appearance of the clothes of one that had been treading the wine-fat. And so in the parallel passage in the Revelation, he is said to "be clothed in a garment dipped in blood." The Prophet asks the meaning of this appearance. He is answered, that he has trod the wine-press; treading the wine-press being an emblem of a great slaughter executed upon the enemy. "He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Rev. xix. 15.) The stains which the Prophet sees are explained, moreover, to be the *juice* —the 'life's blood' of his enemies. And the Redeemer states the occasion, "And I have polluted (אגאלתי) all my garments, for the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeemed (גאולי) was come."

[1] Ezek. xxxviii. 16. 32.

† Ver. 11. ‡ Bochart in Simon.

victims to the rage of persecutors, is the honour of their Redeemer appealed to, but even when they meet with death in the common course of nature. Death itself is considered as an enemy that has violated the rights of the Redeemer's family, and has 'intermeddled to his destruction.' "From the hand of death will I redeem them. O Death, I will be thy plagues; O Hades, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes [m]."—"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death [n]."

It seems to have been in this view of redemption that the afflicted Job comforted himself, in what he conceived dying circumstances, while he contemplated the wretched and disgusting state of his diseased body. "Smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown;" —"his flesh clothed with worms, and clods of dust; his skin broken, and become loathsome;" yet could he say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth [o]: and though, after my skin,

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[m] Hos. xiii. 14. [n] 1 Cor. xv.

[o] Or, "he shall stand upon, or arise over, the dust."—Dust being put for the state of the dead as it respects the body. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—"Now shall I sleep in the dust." (Job, vii. 21.) "Many that sleep in the dust shall awake." (Dan. xii. 2.) "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake

worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another, though my reins be consumed within me." And St. Paul, agreeably with this notion, calls the resurrection of the body, or its deliverance from mortality, the *redemption* of the body.

What a comfortable and encouraging reflection is this to the believer in Christ, contemplating, as each sooner or later must, the gradual victory of death over his perishable frame: and that too, perhaps, by some painful and loathsome disease. —Daily he perceives its progress: all palliatives fail: he is pronounced incurable: or the disorder admits of no remedy. The helpless victim must submit. But One lives above, who will fully avenge his cause on this last enemy, and make him more than conqueror. I know that my Redeemer liveth!

Even in the conflict he shall not see death, or meet the eye of the victor over his mortal part. Angels shall convey his soul to the resting-place of the spirits of the just—"He is not found, for God has translated him." O Death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory? His soul shall abide with Christ in mansions fitted for

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and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isai. xxvi. 19.)

its residence, in great though still unfinished happiness, till the Almighty Redeemer shall stand over the dust, and then shall that "which was sown in corruption be raised in incorruption; that which was sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory; that which was sown in weakness, raised in power; that which was sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body."

And may the Giver of all grace grant, that, both in viewing our own dissolution, and in performing the last office of earthly friendship towards our departed friends, we may be able to join, in faith, the prayer of our church, "beseeching God that it may please him of his gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of his holy name, may have our perfect consummation of bliss, both in body and soul, in his eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

To conclude—In view of all these, so great and needful, benefits to be expected from the Lord Jesus Christ, in the character of our Redeemer, how important the inquiry, Who may claim kindred with the Son of God? The answer is not difficult—"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the *sons of God*, even to them that *believe* on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will

of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God[p]." And faith in God is ever stated to be the means by which man receives the benefits of Christ's redemption. He is "set forth to be a propitiation *through faith*." And this is declared to be "the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."—"If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, we are assured that we shall be saved. For he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification[q]."

Again, we read, "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, saying, I will declare thy name unto my *brethren*, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children, which God has given me. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same[r]."—"He took on him the seed of Abraham[s]."—"And," saith another scrip-

[p] John, i. 12.
[q] Rom. iv. 24, 25.
[r] Heb. ii. 10, &c.
[s] Gal. iii. 29.

ture, "if ye believe in Christ, then are *ye* Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Let it be remembered then, that in one family alone, in the family of Abraham, can kindred be claimed with the Great Redeemer: and that the admission into this family, as we have seen is *by faith alone.*

But let not the nature of true faith be mistaken—"The faith, which overcometh the world, consists not in the involuntary assent of the mind to historical evidence, nor in its assent, perhaps still more involuntary, to the conclusions of argument from facts proved and admitted. All this knowledge and all this understanding the devils possess, yet have not faith; and believing without faith they tremble. Faith is not merely a speculative, but a practical acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ—an effort or motion of the mind towards God, when the sinner, convinced of sin, accepts with thankfulness the proffered terms of pardon; and, in humble confidence, applying individually to self the benefit of the general atonement, in the elevated language of a venerable father of the church, drinks of the stream which flows from the Redeemer's wounded side. The effect is, that, in a little, he is filled with that perfect love of God which casteth out fear—he cleaves

to God with the entire affection of the soul: and, from this active lively faith, overcoming the world, subduing carnal self, all these good works do necessarily spring, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them[t]."

[t] Bishop Horsley's Sermons, vol. i. p. 192.

FINIS.

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ERRATA.

66, in note [c], *for* היבלי, *read* היבלי.
74, in line 11, *after* "joy" *for* ; *supply* .
6, in note [c], *for* גלשו, *read* גלשו.
—— line 4 from the bottom, *after* "native state" *sup-*
—— a comma.
—— 180 [d], *for* דנול, *read* דגול.
in [i] *for* מנדלות, *read* מגדלות.
—— 181, in [a] but two of the Preface, *for* "the rehears-
—— 222, line "rehearsing the."
—— 237, line 21, *for* אימח, *read* אימה.
Jehovah," *read* "Jah."
neighbours," *read* "neighbour."