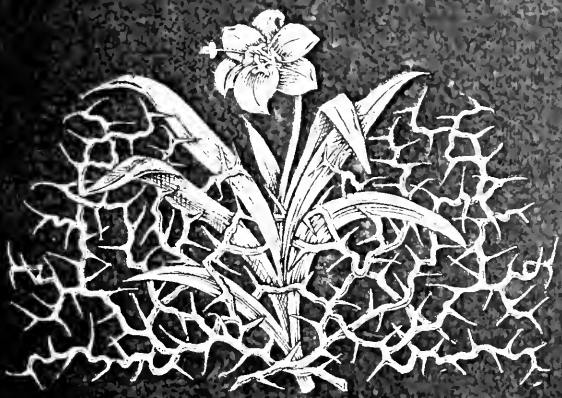

THE

LILY AMONG THORNS

A STUDY OF THE BIBLICAL DRAMA

ENTITLED

THE SONG OF SONGS

BY

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1890

The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Company.

To

KATHARINE LYRA

MAIDEN BELOVED

WIFE CHERISHED

MOTHER HONORED

This Study

OF A FAIR PAGE IN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S BOOK,

COMPLETED IN JUNE, THE MONTH OF

VISION, RING, AND ALTAR

IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED

PREFACE.

THE fruits of a century of critical study of Hebrew are now within reach of all. Three generations of reverent students of text, rather than of tradition, have revealed the Bible as literature. The remarkable agreement in theory and result reached, and the total wealth of old truths re-discovered, are equally causes of gratitude. The analogy in the natural world has been the collateral progress in geology and the location of earth's unused treasures in old and new lands. As the miner is first to profit by the studies of the geologist, so the first to utilize the researches of orientalists should be ministers who are pastors and teachers of the Word of God.

No book of the Bible has been so inaccessible to the ordinary reader, none so walled about, matted over, and hidden by tradition, as the Song of Songs. This Thornrose castle of the Hebrew world has stood for centuries like some battlemented tower mantled with rank growths of ivy and all wild vines. Its external form has prompted to innumerable conjectures as to what was within.

The great Hebraists of our century, like the prince in Teutonic story, have not contented themselves with beholding the outside. Penetrating

within, they have been charmed with a beauty before unsuspected. Instead of the garish prismatics shed by allegories, they have enjoyed in white light a loveliness that is ancient, intrinsic, and real. They read in the Song of Songs a stainlessly chaste love-poem, the epic of a woman's purity, a satire on polygamy, lofty ethical teachings, and a spiritual doctrine taught in dramatic form. They find the complement to the other writings of the Jehovah-religion, which needs no artificial and far-fetched system of interpretation; for good doctrine needs no allegory.

In the company of such explorers of Israel's history and Bible truth as Herder, Eichhorn, Umbreit, Ewald, Ginsburg, Godet, Cheyne, Farrar, Smith, Briggs, and Daland, and indeed the majority of modern scholars, no pastor of a Christian church need be ashamed to stand. Yet, until the appearance of the Revised Version of 1884, which decapitated the chapters in the English version of their impertinent headings, and showed the poetic and dramatic structure of the Song of Songs, the preacher who discarded allegory seemed audacious, if not heretical. The version of 1884 removes danger and direful novelty, and helps grandly the student, expositor, and ordinary reader.

The study of this book having been very helpful to my own soul, I herein endeavor to impart freely the blessing enjoyed. I have repressed most of the homiletical matter used in the two courses of sermons, preached in Schenectady (1884) and Bos-

ton (1889), and have been content to furnish what is, in the main, a literary study of this, probably, the most perfect poem in any language. The thronging illustrations which have come to me from biblical, far-oriental, and other literature have been but sparingly used, in order that the work might be as modest in size as it is slender in scholarship.

It is no work of learning or research which is here submitted to cold type, but only the studies of one who enjoys the Bible as literature as well as revelation. The key to this particular treasure-chamber of Holy Scripture has been furnished me by the great Hebraists. An earnest study of Delitzsch completed my emancipation from the allegorical theory. Fascinated by the riches before me, I cast away the commentaries, and gave the spare hours of my days and nights to the original text and the ancient versions. These, to the sympathetic student, outweigh in value the mountains of commentary built upon them.

It remains to speak gratefully of all those teachers, friends, and associates who have helped me to enjoy and appreciate the riches of the Old Testament. First in honor, I name my instructors at New Brunswick, N. J.: the venerable ex-President of Rutgers College, Rev. William H. Campbell, D. D., LL. D., from whom I learned the rudiments of critical biblical study; and the Rev. John De Witt, D. D., professor of Hebrew at New Brunswick, N. J., whose "Praise Songs of Israel" is, in

my view, the best rendering into the English language of the Psalms. To my former parishioner, the late Tayler Lewis, LL. D., whose writings are ever stimulating and helpful; to Professor Charles A. Briggs, D. D., of Union Theological Seminary, whose lectures on Hebrew Literature so enriched my mind and heart; to Rev. William C. Daland, a fellow-alumnus of Union Seminary, whose valuable monograph on the Song of Songs (Leonardsville, N. Y., 1888) is so full of fine scholarship and rich suggestion; to Rev. S. M. Jackson, editor of the "Concise Dictionary of Religious Knowledge," who kept me informed as to the latest bibliography of the subject; and to Messrs. M. F. Dickinson, Jr., Charles H. Allen, and S. T. Snow, of Boston, for special interest in the publication of this little book, I return my sincere and hearty thanks. In the two congregations I have had the honor to serve have been many men and women who have been heartily appreciative of every endeavor of their pastor to unfold to them the riches of the Bible; their kind words I gratefully remember.

Above all, thanks to the Heavenly Father for the health and strength enjoyed during the delightful study of the fair page of inspiration, of which this little book is an unworthy exposition.

In His Name, it is sent forth.

W. E. G.

Saturday Evening,
November 2, 1889.

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THE LILY AMONG THORNS.

PART I.

HISTORY AND CRITICISM.

CHAPTER I.

THEORY AND INTERPRETATION.

"No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better." In the study of the masterpieces of art, in painting, poetry, and architecture, the old work of master hands seems to the purged eye of the student more august and lovely than the more recent productions which imitate or cover up the old. The works of the golden age are better than the weaker or more garish fabrics of debased taste. Even when the earlier poem, picture, statue, or façade seems simple, nay plain, it may have to the eye of the critic a richer beauty than the more florid work of later days when taste was less severe, or originality had run out. When,

under a cheap oil painting of a local artist of untrained powers, one discovers on the scraped canvas a head of the virgin by Raphael or Correggio, or back of the diluted lines of a plagiarist one recalls the simpler, grander verse of Milton or Herrick, or from a white-washed renovation there is revealed a superb carving, who does not prefer the original to its copy?

If underneath some monkish or popish legend written on parchment there be brought to resurrection a Codex of St. Matthew or a forgotten fragment of the New Testament, who would not have rather the simple Scripture than all the lying lives of the saints, or the priests' rubbish about winking virgins or dried blood turning to liquid again? In art, in architecture, in religion, give us the original, the strong, the best, the true.

If you wish a photograph to flatter your vanity, to conceal your age, to compete with actresses and professional beauties, then bid the artist soften the lines, erase all the wrinkles, touch up and tone down the negative, until the printed picture shall be a fancy portrait of nobody in particular, and of yourself only in a shadowy sense. But do you want truth, character, life, manliness, a face on which history and experience are graven? Then let the

photograph be but slightly touched. As Oliver Cromwell did, put the wart in, and let the rugged lines remain. Fleeting taste or temporary fashion changes the face, the figure, the dress. So let it be in dry goods, groceries, drugs, and show-case pictures; but from truth, especially truth in the Word of God, keep off the improver's touches from the negative. Away with dye and wigs and crimps from the hair, paint from the cheek, patches from the face, pads and shams from the limbs, and let us see God's daughter, Truth, as she is, beautiful in her simplicity, and "when unadorned, adorned the most." The perfectly beautiful needs no adorning.

In such a spirit, let us study that portion of our Heavenly Father's book which treats of human love, "Solomon's Song," so-called, or, as its own title is, "The Song of Songs." We believe in the ancient, and not the modern interpretation of it, and shall study it as an untouched picture, as an ancient work. People have made out of it a stumbling-block, have been scandalized even at its being in the Holy Bible. Some read it as bare prose, as though it were a newspaper column. Others take it in fragments, without beginning, development, or end, and all as literally as if it were a grocer's bill or a landlord's receipt. Others

again make it, even to every word and detail, an allegory of Christ and the church; and, following the chapter headings of the unrevised version, read into it a thousand ideas and conceits foreign to the mind of the writer; while some kindle the flames of lust with fire sent down from heaven!

Christian people look askance at this book, because as the commentator, Matthew Henry, intimates, with more or less truth, it is so unlike the other books in the Old or New Testament; the name of God is not found in it; it is never quoted by Christ or the apostles; we do not find in it any expressions of natural religion or pious devotion; nor is there in it any vision, miracle, or mark of immediate inspiration; and, finally, it is a flower from which those with carnal minds and corrupt affections are likely to extract poison.

Some of the statements which we have condensed are true, some not. The Song of Songs is not, indeed, spoken of nor quoted in the New Testament, but it is full of religion, exalted sentiment, chaste and pure ideas. The poem is suffused with ethical teaching of the best kind, enforcing an example for us to follow. To crown all, the name of God is in it, and linked to the master passion which is the burden of the song. We propose to extract

honey and not poison from this Shemitic flower. This book should be expounded by Christian ministers in order to vindicate its pure character, and in expository discourse to unfold "the whole counsel of God" as comprised in the Bible, which enshrines the Word of God to man, and which is not to be neglected in any part.

When the science of biblical criticism was in its infancy, and the large mass of unchallenged tradition inherited from the rabbis still burdened the Christian church, such statements as those of Matthew Henry could be written and accepted; and this, notwithstanding such assertions bring as much odium upon the Bible as the sneers of infidels and the destructive criticisms of Renan, who, with all his learning, is the chief vulgarizer of holy things.

As matter of fact, The Song of Songs is the completion, the crowning work of inspired Hebrew wisdom. We find in the centre of the English Old Testament, the part usually called the Poetical, which is the third of the four great divisions of Law, History, Poetry, and Prophecy, a collection of five books which may be called the Code of Wisdom. These five books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, do not treat of events,

laws, chronicles, and regulations, of concrete history or of prophecy, but of the conduct of life. Their purpose is didactic and stimulating to all who would "set righteousness in the earth." They are characterized by the word *chokma*, meaning wisdom. They have the form of dialogue, drama, lyrics, apothegms, soliloquy and cantata, or drama. They are nearest to our idea of pure literature, the literature of power, rather than the literature of knowledge. With this group of poetical books we naturally associate Ruth and Lamentations, for these also treat of the right way to live, as well as to believe and worship.

The authors of the book of Job would teach us how "to suffer and be strong;" the Psalmists how to pray and praise; the Proverbists, inculcating wisdom and discipline, how, under all circumstances, to do the square thing, according to the plumb line of the eternities; the Preacher how to enjoy aright the good things of God; while the poet of the Canticle shows us how to love.

Surely this divine art is a most vital matter. Since God is love, we are not to love apart from Him, nor allow our affections to twine hopelessly around what will separate us from Him. We are even in our earthly loves to remain unshakably loyal to our God. Surely

in our Heavenly Father's Book may we not, on some pages, learn the supreme art of true and pure love?

It is our belief that we may thus learn from one who, amid all that is most tempting to a woman, remains at once immutably faithful to Jehovah and to the man to whom she plighted her troth in humble life. Our model and exemplar is this heroine in the Song of Songs. As Job was tried in the things most tempting to the mind of man and learned to suffer nobly, as Joseph — "the pure moon of Canaan," as the Persians call him — was tempted as to the flesh, and resisting gladly endured unjust imprisonment, so the Shulamite, "faithful found among the faithless," came out unscathed from those allurements which offered most to a young girl. In one sense, Joseph, Job, and the Shulamite were types of Him who loved to contrast the lily and Solomon, and who in the desert foiled the tempter who assaulted the flesh, the intellect, and the soul of the Son of Man in vain.

We read in this book the handwriting of God affixing his signature of reprobation upon the sins of Solomon, and upon all human lust. We behold in the very heart of the Bible a pure shrine of affection on which God has set his own seal and name.

People are not to blame if they read the book wrongly, when it has never been explained to them. Once understood properly, all objections against it fall to the ground. If interpreted according to the popular idea, that the Canticle was written by Solomon, and that in it he represents himself as a lover and bridegroom, then the book is an indorsement of polygamy, or at least does not rebuke it. Whereas we hold that the Canticle is an implicit condemnation of the polygamous old king, and a pæan in praise of virtue and the love of one man to one woman.

We believe of this book what is said of all the Bible: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

Perhaps we may find that this exquisite love-poem furnishes us to one particular good work such as no other book in the Bible does. The right understanding of it makes the Old Testament complete. The book of Proverbs gives us in precept the image of "a perfect woman nobly planned," the Song of Songs gives her in example. This is the Bible method, to unite history and philosophy.

The theory of interpretation upon which we proceed, and which we hold is the ancient one, is that the Canticle is a cantata or series of songs making a dramatic unity, celebrating the triumph of virtue over temptation, and illustrating the contrast between virtuous and sensual love, praising the former and stigmatizing the latter. With the almost overwhelming majority of modern critical scholars, we think that Solomon is not the author of it, but that it was composed after his death, probably by an Ephraimite or northern poet who describes, in character sketches, the ladies of the royal harem in Jerusalem, and a beautiful maiden from the North, a simple, rustic girl from the vineyards, a Shulamite. The poem contrasts the pure simplicity of Galilean country life with the corrupt splendor of the court of Solomon.

The king tries to win the maiden's love, and to place her in his harem, with the other court ladies or, as they are called, "daughters of Jerusalem."

The chief speakers in this cantata are Solomon, the Shulamite, her "beloved" (*dod*) who is a shepherd, and the court ladies. The Shulamite is betrothed to a young mountaineer of her country, and remains faithful to him while away from her home. Notwithstanding

all the blandishments of King Solomon, the glittering allurements of palace, city, and court life, and of wealth, fame, and dazzling glory, even the offer of queenship, she remains unflinchingly loyal to her beloved. Twenty-five times is he addressed or referred to in the poem.

The court ladies second Solomon's efforts, either by banter or jeers; but this country lass, this wild flower of Sharon, this lily among thorns, ever remembers her lover. She falls into reminiscence, longing, and home-sickness, and though polite and obedient to royal behests, clings to her betrothed faithfully, remaining chaste, pure, undazzled and unbought, crying out in every temptation, "my beloved is mine, and I am his," and in every victory, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love (*ahabah*), until it please." That love must rise spontaneously, and be true, is the supreme lesson of this divinely inspired drama.

Finally, at the end of the long trial, having won the victory, she cries out in exultant song, "Love (*ahabah*) is as strong as death, its intensest passion unyielding as Sheol, the coals thereof are as outflashing fire, a lightning of the Eternal. Many waters cannot

quench love (*ahabah*) nor the floods drown it, and if a man [Solomon] were to give all the substance of his house for my love, it would utterly be contemned."

With this radiant apex of victory to virtue, and a crown to constancy, the nature of the eternal romance of true love is set forth, its seat and birthplace in the bosom of God, who ordains one man to love one woman in holy wedlock, and abhors lust, polygamy, and all unfaithfulness.

This interpretation, founded not on uncertain tradition, and on far-fetched allegory which the Bible gives no hint of, is based on the reading and scrutiny of the language of the book itself, the background of history as given in the Bible, and the study of the great Hebraists of this, the greatest century of Shemitic learning.

As the ancient painting of the master-artist found on the wall under the whitewash, or the true scripture text beneath a palimpsest, or a genuine antique fragment rather than a tinkered classic statue, or an untouched photograph instead of a smoothed-off negative from which all individuality has been eliminated, are preferred to their copies, so we prefer the simple narrative of this ancient poem, without the allegories discovered

in it in later times. We believe the literal interpretation, simpler, truer, more biblical and more helpful for this life of ours. There is not a more chastely moral book in the whole Bible than this Song of Songs, nor one whose tone and example are more befitting our day and country, nor one that sweeps with more bracing atmosphere, or searches with more purifying gales the plague spots and malaria in our own social life. The purest maiden may read it without danger to mind or heart, for it is as pure as guileless maidenhood itself. To the heavenly simplicity of its teachings, and to its detailed pictures, its music, and scenery and poetry, let us hie in company, thankful to God for so beautiful and inspired a poem. We believe it speaks to us with the sanction of inspiration.

Some may not accept the interpretation herein set forth by modern scholars because they deem it too commonplace for Holy Scripture. Others will prefer the mediæval view because it is somewhat old, albeit there is not a scintilla of Bible proof, or even evidence in its behalf. Others will judge that we have degraded Solomon, and spoken too lightly of one who in certain points was a type of Christ, an inspired writer, who according to late Jewish tradition was the author of certain books

of the Bible, and who was a wise, dignified, and learned judge, law-giver, and king. To save his reputation, many will prefer to read into Canticles the fanciful notions of the Talmudists and writers of the Apocrypha. Others prefer to shun or prohibit the book as something dangerous for young people, and at the best a scandalous and suspicious book, that is found among the Holy Scriptures, very much as Saul was discovered among the prophets, or Satan among the sons of God. Some orthodox Christians, who hold the theory of interpretation not taught in the Bible, but thought necessary and God-honoring, would, if they could, keep "Solomon's Song" under lock and key, or surround it with the barbed wire of prohibition until adult age be reached. This was the course advised by the rabbis, who advised young men not to read it until thirty years of age. Yet even the good people who deprecate its perusal by the young must remember that the rabbis forbade it to immature readers, not because of any supposable harm to their morals, but rather lest they should not understand it correctly; *i. e.*, according to their particular and temporary orthodoxy.

It is remarkable, also, that the Turks at Constantinople, whose custom-house is under

the shadow of the sultan's harem, refused to admit certain books imported by the American Tract Society. Why? Because these books from Christian America — Christian except in Utah — contained criticisms upon Solomon, whose polygamous example the Mohammedans as well as our Mormons follow to this day. This the Turks did, notwithstanding there is no trace of justification in the Old Testament of the Mohammedan treatment of woman. It might be well for Christians, too anxious to save Solomon's reputation, not to follow the example of the Turks.

We appeal from Solomon the sensualist to Solomon the pure; from the king with his harem of a thousand women to the young prince at Shechem praying for divine wisdom, or as the leader of Israel in rapt communion with God at the dedication of the temple; from the gray-headed sinner who forgot Jehovah to the wise man who in consecrated and inspired manhood coined proverbs, and possibly penned other small portions of Holy Writ. It is not the Solomon of early life and middle age, but only the blackslider and the recreant voluptuary that we hold up to deserved execration.

The action of Solomon in introducing profligacy and idolatry in Israel was as the open-

ing of the floodgates of iniquity. From his time, or immediately after his death, dates the general introduction of the *bama* or mounds on which the worship of Astarte was celebrated. Henceforth the "high-places," or Asherah, so often spoken of in the historical books, became strongholds for the propagation of a vile idolatry joined to sensualism. Hitherto idol-worship had been accidental and occasional; from Solomon's time until the Babylonian captivity it became rampant and hostile. It meant war to the death against the religion of Jehovah. The prophets, sooner than the people, discerned this truth, and with fiery zeal for God strove to make the fact patent to all. With more and more seductiveness of manner, idolatry spread through the masses, until in Elijah's time Israel was sunk low indeed.

For the state of things which we read of in times not far distant from Solomon, and for the crowds of "strange women," with the consequent looseness of public morals, as revealed in the book of Proverbs and in the prophetic writings, Solomon, more than any other one man in Hebrew history, is distinctly responsible.

That the justness of the view and interpretation of this book of the Bible as held by

the great modern Hebraists may be made apparent, let us look at Solomon through the perspective of history. We shall glance at the development of the nation as sketched in the writings of the Hebrew historians, and from them learn what mark the third and last sovereign of the united kingdom made. By a study of the life and times of the grand monarch, and of the characters, the artistic form, and literary features of this great "lay of the Hebrew troubadour," we may all the more appreciate its exquisite beauty. Let us then give attention to a few introductory chapters.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE AND TIMES OF KING SOLOMON.

A THOUSAND years are but as yesterday in the sight of God. A millennium and a moment are alike to Him. He makes a covenant with man, and though it takes ten centuries to fulfill it, yet God is not slack nor forgetful concerning his promises. For while He keeps man waiting He educates him and advances the race.

He called Abraham out of the Chaldees, bidding him to leave home and set his face westward. The father of the faithful never owned the land promised him, but lived in tents, an heir, not a possessor. Faith instead of fee-simple was his reward. Yet when he died he bequeathed, not an estate of broad acres, with the empty name of a nobody and an example of selfishness, but a deathless name and a pattern of faith, which even to-day are beacon lights of progress and aspiration. Abraham is the model of character to three civilizations.

Neither Isaac nor Jacob ever possessed the

promised land, and with four hundred years of captivity in Egypt, it seemed as though Jehovah had forgotten his covenant.

Even after Moses' deliverance, and Joshua's conquest, the divine measure of promise was not fulfilled, for all around Israel were powerful enemies. It was not until nearly a thousand years had flown, and David's victories had been won, that the word of the Lord to Abraham seemed to be accomplished in the reign of his (David's) son Solomon ; then the sceptre of the heirs of Abraham extended from Phœnicia to Egypt, and from Palmyra to the Mediterranean.

During all these centuries the Almighty was educating his elect people, training the family into a tribe, the tribe into a people, and the people into a nation, with a land and a purpose.

No longer, from David's time on, was God's covenant with one old man, nor with a family or clan, nor with a body of slaves, nor a rabble of freedmen, nor even with groups of petty principalities, or turbulent clan-like republics; but the flower of his fulfilled promise was given to a united, intelligent commonwealth, a union of hearts and homes, with one language, one blood, one experience, and one hope. Slowly, painfully, but at last gloriously, the seed sown in Abraham ripened in Solomon.

It was under this third king that the Hebrew monarchy rose to the zenith of national splendor. Wealth and power in all departments of human achievement were greater than at any epoch in Hebrew history before.

Art, science, literature, inventions, commerce, and luxury flourished. Jerusalem, once merely the Philistine fortress of Jebus, containing a collection of mud huts or wooden dwellings, was made a splendid capital in brick and marble, full of palaces and public edifices, amid which the temple glistened in lordly majesty.

Cities were built in favored places, and towns along the caravan routes over the desert. Seaports were established, from which white-winged ships flew to foreign coasts, westward especially to Italy and Spain, and eastward to India and to the Golden Chersonese. The peculiar phrase, "the ends of the earth," was coined in the Solomonic era.

The ships of the desert and the navy on the deep brought back the wonders of the tropics and the treasures of "the ends of the earth" to enliven the monotony of Palestinian life. Ivory for the palaces and throne, apes and peacocks for the garden, with all kinds of oriental stuffs, perfumes, and spices, were imported, — their names standing in Tamil and Chinese on the

Hebrew page of the Bible. A striking addition to the fauna of the country, having manifold and far-reaching influence, was the introduction of the horse from Egypt. Great works of engineering and fortification were planned, the rocks were tunneled, and aqueducts built above and below ground.

Some of the stones with the Phœnician mason's marks in red paint, as fresh as if laid on yesterday, and tablets erected by Solomon's contractors and engineers, or carved on the rock by his workmen, have been dug up of late. Just as one of the first uses of lightning harnessed to the telegraph wire was to catch thieves, so the tablets of this age or later have served, among other uses, to stamp the bogus Deuteronomy manuscripts of the antiquarian peddler Shapira and his ilk as forgeries.

Very few relics of Hebrew antiquity before the time of David, except sepulchres and wells, have come down intact to us; but the actual work and material of Solomon's reservoirs, the beveled stones of the temple-foundation, fragments of piers and arches in Jerusalem, and the ruins of Baalbec, still remain as mute witnesses of his glory.

It is first also in Solomon's time that we see clearly the beautiful things of earth joined to the service of religion, and worship en-

shrined in fitting architecture. The pillars of Jachin and Boaz, probably named after young sons of Solomon, possibly imitating the pillars of Hercules, with their strength of bronze and their beauty of carved lily work, typify the union of grace and simplicity, and teach us that it becomes us to be winsome in our ways as well as strict in our character, that it is right to unite the manners of a gentleman to the sturdiness of a Puritan, and that it is a good thing to be civilized as well as to be saved.

The development of political ability, defensive science, and national prosperity also kept pace with progress along other lines. Government was simplified by dividing functions and centralizing power. The military art was improved. Cavalry was added to the other arms of the service. Twelve thousand horses and riders furnished new sights to the Israelites; for in David's time, and before, the national dignitaries rode on mules.

Now the streets of Jerusalem were noisy with the ceaseless clatter of hoofs and the roll of three-horsed chariots. A procession of the royal life-guards, composed of the flower of David's veterans, as it moved through the country accompanying the state-carriage, was everywhere a sight for the people, and drew

out crowds to witness the superb spectacle. As when the Prince of Wales entered Beirut in Syria, a few years ago, the municipal officers burnt heaps of costly incense to make clouds of perfume, so Solomon's train moved from his country-seat at En-gedi up to Jerusalem, the capital, amid an atmosphere murky but delicious with myrrh and frankincense. Riding in his palanquin, he was surrounded by his mounted life-guards with their drawn swords flashing, hilts at the thighs, blades at ear and shoulder. Gorgeous beyond description was his traveling litter or palanquin.

Who were these body-guards of the Hebrew emperor? They are over and over again spoken of as "David's mighty men" or heroes. In the original records they are called Gibborim. A glance at their history may be interesting.

King David, a man of war, had organized a disciplined army, which in time of peace had melted away again, the soldiers returning to the pursuits of peace. The nucleus of the standing army, however, that remained was a body of foreign mercenaries, like the Swiss guard of the kings of France, or the Christian janizaries of the Turkish sultan. These faithful veterans had stood by him in that awful day of the rebellion of Absalom. When the

king was driven out of Jerusalem, this body-guard, composed largely of Cherethites, or Cretans, Pelethites, and other foreigners, under captains Joab and Benaiah, practically crushed the insurrection and kept the government in place.

These veterans of many wars are frequently referred to in Kings, Chronicles, and the Song of Songs. Some of the oldest of them may have been David's comrades, when he himself was an outlaw living among the Philistines, since the name Peleth or Pelethite is probably a contraction for Philistine. Some were from the island of Crete in the Mediterranean. It would be no more remarkable in the Hebrew emperor to keep Philistines in his pay than for the Pope and Roman Catholic kings of France to be served by the Swiss guards, who were often republicans in politics and Protestant in faith.

In addition to these household troops or the imperial guard, and to the militia, serving as garrison relays, there were the city watchmen, who may be called the metropolitan police of Jerusalem. These night patrols, who were expected always to "keep the city," were evidently a body of vigilant and faithful men, who not only protected good citizens against thieves, but were objects of awe to rustics and visitors.

In a word, the organization of the Hebrew Empire was military, with a nucleus of foreign mercenaries, who were professional soldiers of fortune. These were only too ready to perform the king's behests, and unless Samuel prophesied falsely, and all history is a mistake, the Gibborim, despite their usefulness, were a menace to the liberties of Israel.

As for the subjects of King Solomon, we find that they were far from being a homogeneous people. The free-born Israelites, descendants of the conquerors, who came in at the conquest under Joshua, stood first in civil rank and privileges after the imperial family. Next below these were the native Canaanites, more or less loyal to the government of Israel. They constituted a numerous and important body of tributary vassals who needed to be wisely dealt with.

The strangers from Egypt and surrounding countries, but most especially from Phœnicia, whose people spoke nearly the same language as Hebrew, were merchants, artists, decorators, and other skilled mechanics employed on the public works, sailors and caravan-men. They formed a special class under the king's protection, while they were temporarily sojourning at the ports and cities, attracted by trade and new enterprises requiring

technical knowledge. They formed in Jerusalem a little community by themselves known as Maktesh, or the Phœnician quarter, which may have been in the deep ravine between Zion and Moriah (Zeph. i. 11).

Beneath these three classes of the people were numbers of slaves on whom fell the burden of constant and unrequited toil. Whether prisoners captured in war, or those born in servitude, or sold for poverty or debt, the slave's lot was but little if any easier under Hebrew than under Roman or American oppression.

In addition to this civic ambition, Solomon was smitten with the fever of architecture, which is ever one of the most expensive of a king's ambitions, as the people who must pay the bills soon discover. This passion for building was in addition to that for the ships which, built and manned by Phœnician sailors, he sent to the ends of the seas, eastward to the Asian peninsulas, and westward to Tarshish in Spain. For the spoil they brought, he erected fitting edifices. He had botanic gardens and menageries, full of rare animals, plants, and the substances for decoration, so numerously mentioned in the Song of Songs.

In order to build and furnish his palaces, harems, and public buildings, the king made

requisitions of forced labor from Israel, and sent the gangs to cut down forests, to float the timber by sea from Phœnicia to Joppa, and to make overland transport of the logs to Jerusalem. He blasted and cut stone in quarries, and dug conduits and watercourses.

Solomon had the reputation of building the first temple to Jehovah, and of organizing elaborate services and sacrifices. Yet the temple of Solomon, as any one can see who studies the dimensions, was a comparatively small edifice. There are many buildings in Europe and America much larger than the marble tent which he pitched to the glory of Jehovah in Jerusalem. Rightly did Justinian cry out when St. Sophia was finished, "I have surpassed thee, O Solomon." The Jerusalem temple was, in the main, a noble specimen of Phœnician art. While seven years were occupied in completing the temple, the king was fifteen years in building his own house. What he did for the Lord was only a fraction as compared with what he did for himself. Nearly all the masonry, and decorative art-work, down to this epoch, was done by Phœnician artists while Solomon lived. When Captain Warren, the excavator in the Jerusalem which belongs to Turkey, sunk his shaft beneath the layers and rubbish of twenty-eight centuries to get

at the rock-foundation of Solomon's temple, he found the quarry marks of the Phœnician stone-cutters. The lowest stones of all bear inscriptions of the men whose ancestors are reputed to have given the western world alphabets.

The other famous buildings in the capital city were the House of the Forest of Lebanon — so-called because of its hall of many columns, on which were hung the golden shields, and targets, and battle trophies captured in David's wars. The Hall of Judgment was another renowned structure, wainscoted with cedar wood, and in popular phrase called the King's Gate or Sublime Porte, the title sometimes bestowed on the sovereign; just as in Egypt, Japan, and Turkey of to-day, Pharaoh, Mikado, or the Sublime Porte in each case means the Grand Gate, that is, the place where judicial decisions were given.

Of the many buildings devoted to the harem, or zenana, the finest was doubtless for the principal or Egyptian wife. In addition to the edifices in the capital city, there were in different parts of the country summer palaces, villas, hunting lodges, gardens, fish-ponds, towers, cavalry quarters, stables, and chariot-houses. There were also caravansaries on the main road, trading stations, fortresses, and vineyards, all under the direct imperial supervision.

It must, however, never be forgotten that all this was extravagance, and unjustifiable extravagance. It was the same old story of a hard-working father who toils during his lifetime to heap up riches, not knowing who shall gather them, succeeded by a spendthrift son who enjoys and squanders. These were the flush times of expansion, after long and successful wars, when things were, so to speak, on a paper-money basis. Speculation was rife, and the inevitable shrinkage had to come. Though some of Solomon's schemes were successful enterprises yielding revenue, most of them were matters of daily expense, and the burden of sustaining these things fell on the people, who were taxed and bled beyond the limit of human patience. So, in accordance with all history, or divine Providence — as we will — as soon as the iron hand of Solomon was removed by death, the people petitioned Rehoboam to ease the crushing burden of taxes in money and levies of forced labor.

The new king took the advice of the youth about his court instead of the warnings of the old men. Then the people were goaded into rebellion, and ten tribes went into secession, set up a northern confederacy, and David's kingdom was split in twain. The results were gradual alienation in both politics and religion,

and in language the swamping of Hebrew by the Aramaic.

There was no bloodshed except in one notable instance. Just as after the American civil war all were forgiven, except the keeper of the Andersonville prison, who was hanged for his personal cruelties, so no man in Israel had to die, except one. The name of this especial culprit was Adoniram, the head superintendent of the forced labor. He alone was murdered, thus paying for his cruelties by his life.

In addition to the historical books of Israel, the poem of "Solomon's Song," so called, opens wide windows of light upon the days of Hebrew imperialism, and shows how the luxury and sensualism of Solomon and his favorites in the palaces of the capital meant poverty and distress among the people. For the few who enjoyed, there were unpaid labor and cruelty for the many oppressed.

David's successor, as the Bible represents him, was somewhat different from the Solomon of unproved and baseless tradition. He is the typical "wise man" of Jewish tradition and oriental exaggeration whence our nursery and Sunday-school literature has liberally borrowed. He is believed by many to have been the author of a considerable portion of the

Holy Scriptures. The evidence for this impression is summed up in the three titles of the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, these titles or portions of them being from authors other than Solomon, or added long afterwards. The voice of modern scholarship is almost unanimously against late tradition, as indeed the text of the Bible itself seems to be. The common phrase, "the unbroken testimony of all antiquity," means the inherited and usually unexamined traditions of Jews who lived long after the epoch of Solomon.

The biblical basis of the popular notion of Solomon's literary career lies in the single verse of 1 Kings iv. 32, which says not one word about writing or literary composition, "he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."

There is no hint here or elsewhere in the Scriptures that these songs were of a sacred, much less of an inspired nature, or that they were committed to writing. He spoke proverbs or wise sayings, which in number exceed several times over the entire collection of the authors who are represented in the book of Proverbs. None of the Psalms, though those numbered lxxii. and cxxvii. bear his name in the titles added by editors in later

times, is certainly from Solomon's pen or lips; nor is it probable that he had anything to do with the Canticle. He encouraged learning, and gathered men of culture and erudition about his court; and under him began the age of Hebrew philosophy and the wisdom-literature, which later blossomed in those deathless classics of Israel which have survived the wrecks of time. Yet it is more than probable that one who spent his life as Solomon did, and stained his soul with so many habitual sins, had very little to do with the making of our Heavenly Father's book. The Bible pictures the third king of the Hebrews not as a psalmist, scribe, poet, or prophet, but as an ambitious man, a builder, a trafficker, and above all an imitator of Pharaoh and the kings and courts of the nations around him. He was fond of display and magnificence; he was brilliant, witty, wise, learned; but not in his mature middle life and premature old age eminent as a spiritual man, or one who, like David with all his sins, was "a man after God's own heart."

It is almost certain that Solomon did not write either Ecclesiastes or the Song of Songs. His reputation as an author rests, as we have shown, chiefly upon superscriptions added after the Babylonian captivity to certain books

or parts of books in the canon, upon apocryphal writings, and upon belated tradition. The Bible text seems to be silent upon the subject on which legend and popular notion are so voluminous. Among the Hebrews he stood as the representative of gnomic wisdom, and had a high reputation as a judge, but his profligacy, tyranny, and idolatry impressed the prophets and inspired writers more than his wisdom, literary power, or supposed inspiration. Neither Jesus nor apostle, prophet, poet, or reformer quotes word or writing which he attributes to Solomon. Except in the books of Kings, which reveal his history; the post-exilic Chronicles, which show what he did for the priesthood; or the book of Proverbs, which gives some portion of his wisdom, he is never mentioned in the text of the Old or New Testament apart from the temple, or except as a monarch with a mighty reputation for splendor, wisdom, or wickedness. In the antithesis which Jesus makes between this personage and the lily, Solomon stands in the shadow; and the same may be said of the sketch which Stephen draws of the life of this great builder, "but Solomon built Him a house." Throughout the Bible Solomon is implicitly held up as a warning, and in the one place in the Hebrew writings, apart from Chronicles, in

which during later centuries his character is alluded to, his reputation is black enough. Hear Nehemiah, the reformer who cleansed the nation so that the folly wrought by semi-heathen kings has never been nationally repeated since. (Neh. xiii. 26.)

"Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin."

The "book of the Acts of Solomon," referred to in 1 Kings xi. 41, has not survived, and belongs with that score or scores of lost books of Hebrew literature to which the Bible refers. The so-called "Psalter of Solomon" saw the light probably a millennium after the first temple had been built. The books of Kings, which give the fullest accounts of the man and his character, were composed long after his death, and the Chronicles not until after the Babylonian captivity.

In a word, despite tradition and rumor, which always speaks most and loudest just where the divine word is most silent, Solomon's reputation as a holy man, an example, is in the Bible next to nothing.

It is well in purely literary questions con-

cerning the Bible to take the advice of Paul, and not give heed to Jewish fables, but to reach conclusions founded on the evidence of the sacred writings themselves. In thus basing our judgments upon what the Scriptures teach, and in forming our opinions upon the text itself rather than upon legend, we do but follow the example of our Lord Jesus, who persistently challenges the traditions of the scribes, elders, and Pharisees.

Solomon, as a grown man and as a king, is rather a character to be held up as an awful example than as a model. Taken in all, he was probably one of the worst sinners described in the Old Testament. With its usual truth and fearlessness, the Scriptures expose his real character, and by the later prophets and by Jesus he is ignored or referred to only in rebuke. The peculiar sins of Solomon are those against which the special genius of Christianity and the direct teaching of the Christ are most radically opposed.

In our exposition of the Song of Songs we shall see that he is set before us by the author of that book as a tempter; but we shall also see that in an age of despotism, when it was almost impossible for a subject, especially a woman, to resist a king, he was resisted in the name of God and pure love. He was

triumphed over by one of his plain but virtuous subjects, the Shulamite, a country girl, who even in a great city kept her life pure and her instincts true to right.

Her loyalty to Jehovah was greater than her loyalty to Solomon. She was a true king's daughter, but her Sovereign was Jehovah and not Baal, or the patron of Baal, Solomon.

In a word, we shall find that for the thousands of young men and young women of our day, away from their childhood's home, father and mother, friends, old associations, and social forces, in the great cities, as was the maiden of Shunem in Jerusalem, there are few more practical, more modern, more helpful books in the Bible than this Song of Songs.

What interpretation shall we follow? The fatal objection to the allegorical theory is that it tears the book out of all connection with Jewish history and the Old Testament economy; while the view of the great modern masters of Hebrew, which we adopt, keeps it in vital relation to Old Testament times, circumstances, and people. Which is the truest, let even the reader of the English Bible judge for himself.

CHAPTER III.

HISTORIC CHARACTERS IN THE POEM.

In glancing at Hebrew history, we find that when it became the fashion in Israel to have kings and monarchical government, the Jewish nation was a loose confederation of tribes, each independent of the other, having no central city, the people worshiping at a number of local shrines in different parts of the country.

The government was a loose agglomeration of clan-like republics. Not only was the political system very simple, but there were no military resources for defense. Only here and there were the men well armed, or able to resist the Philistines and other warlike tribes surrounding them. The needs of concentration and a more vigorous political life were keenly felt ; but Samuel warned the people not easily or lightly to exchange their republican simplicity for a king and court. He prophesied evils unheard of. Nevertheless the people demanded a monarch.

Saul, the first king, was a failure both as a

man and as a ruler. He administered government as if it were his private estate, distributing the offices and property under him as spoils of a victorious party, like some of the presidents who have disgraced the American republic. Nearly all the men to whom he gave "fields and vineyards, and made captains of thousands and captains of hundreds" (1 Sam. xxii. 7) were his fellow-tribesmen of Benjamin. In character he was weak, vacillating, moody, and cowardly.

David was a man built on a nobler moral scale. As a man and a king he was a magnificent success. He planned for the whole nation, without regard to his particular tribe. He conquered the stronghold of Jebus, and organized his government on the idea of equal favor to all the tribes. He went so far as to have a body-guard composed of foreigners, instead of men of Judah, with the idea of attaching these mercenaries loyally to his own person, and detaching them from tribal or local interests. He gave the whole people a sense of nationality and left to them the traditions of victory. He annihilated his enemies, or turned them into tributary vassals. He also prepared the wealth and material for a temple to Jehovah, and to which the people, leaving the scattered shrines and miscellaneous, and

more or less holy, places, should assemble for national worship. David had his shortcomings, and they were many, and yet the story of his life is perennially fresh, helpful, and interesting. He was a man of great faults and great virtues. He sinned grievously, but he repented nobly. God freely forgave him all his faults except one, his shameful treatment of the captain in his army, who, although a foreigner, was so loyal to him. This Hittite was a splendid example of the chivalry of the Canaanites who served with the Hebrew soldiery.

After Uriah had been disposed of in battle, David suffered life-long miseries at the hands of Joab, the man who knew the secret of his sin. The widow of the dead man who had so easily and disgracefully yielded to the king, and was equally guilty with her consort in crime, became the head of the royal harem. Instead of turning with horror from the man whose hands were red with the blood of her husband, she consented to be his queen, and one of his many wives. For David had set the bad example of having two wives during his wandering life as an adventurer, five when reigning as king at Hebron, and an unknown number at Jerusalem. The state of morals with the kings of Israel at this epoch was

approximating that of Asiatic nations to-day, Turkey for instance, where children are born in a herd, not in a home. Bath-Sheba, whose name means "the daughter of an oath," was the grand-daughter of Ahitophel, a high counselor, first of David and then of Absalom. This man is known to us as a renegade lawyer, who hanged himself when his advice was not taken. His is the only case of suicide in civil life mentioned in the Old Testament as that of Judas is in the New. His name, given in all probability posthumously, means "brother of foolishness." We do not know much about Bath-Sheba, but what we do is to her disadvantage.

Since she came to David in secret and married the murderer of her husband, she serves as warning rather than example. She was a "door" rather than a "wall" to the royal sinner. (Song of Songs viii. 8, 9.) As it is woman's chief glory to resist the sacrifice of her purity, so is it her deepest disgrace to yield too easily to the tempter. Yet such was the prestige of the king as representative of Deity that it is difficult to see how any Israelitish woman of ordinary moral strength could have resisted his addresses or demand. Yet, as we shall see, there was one who could and did, becoming a "palace of silver," her person as unassailable as "towers."

Of Bath-Sheba's five sons born to David, the first died young. Solomon was the second of Bath-Sheba and the tenth of David. The name Solomon in Hebrew is Shelomoh, which the orientals, such as the Turks and other Mohammedans, call Suleiman. Western people, following Josephus and the Jews at the time of Christ, use the spelling and pronunciation of Solomon. The name is equivalent to our Frederick, which means "rich in peace." It was given immediately at the birth of the boy, and very probably by the mother herself. In this name she may have intended to rear a monument of gratitude to Jehovah for peace after long wars, but more probably because she hailed the birth of a beautiful living child, and this child a son, as a sure token of the divine forgiveness of her sin.

It has been well said of our revised English version of the Holy Scriptures that the text represents in the main tradition, while the scholarship is found in the margin. Turning to 2 Samuel xii. 24, we read in the margin "*she* called." In the same version, in the next verse, it is said that "the Lord loved him (the babe), and he (David) sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he (Nathan) called his name Jedidiah, for the Lord's sake."

Jedidiah was a name never used publicly,

but exclusively in the home. It means "beloved," or "darling of Jah" — this name of God being an abbreviation for Jehovah. This word Jah, though found only once in the English Bible, in the 68th Psalm, occurs in hundreds of words in the Hebrew original, being especially common in proper names like those of Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Adonijah, and in superlative expressions, as in the one passage in the Canticle, which the revision expresses as "a very flame of the Lord" (chap. viii. 6). As the margin shows, the name of the Divine Being here is Jah, this *shalebeth-Jah* being the God-kindled fire of love.

This little by-play upon words as illustrated in the naming of David's son, and which opens such a window into his home life, is apt to be lost upon us unless we remember that "Jedid" and "David" both have the same meaning of darling or beloved, and that David's idea was that though he was the darling of his parents and his people, this son of hope born of Bath-Sheba was even more. He was the darling of Jehovah. In the 127th Psalm this word "his beloved" occurs, and the title-makers who supplied the collection with editorial headlines have added "A Song of Ascents: of Solomon."

Inheriting much of his father's intellectual

ability, though a poor soldier and military guardian, employing his talents for the most part in vastly different lines of achievement, Solomon grew up first under the care of his mother and of Nathan the scribe and prophet. David set aside the claims of all his other offspring, and by oath made Bath-Sheba's his successors to the throne. With his father too aged to actively counsel him, his mother became his chief guardian and adviser. Solomon is, in one sense, a type and embodiment of his age. In him we see a miniature of the Hebrew empire, its strength and its weakness, its splendor and its decay.

Pure in spirit, virgin in mind and body, devout, meek, aspiring, humble, was Solomon's youth; firm, wise, pure, God-fearing, was his earlier manhood. As the primitive Chinese named their sovereign, so was Solomon the "self-ruled ruler." Had he in middle life remained simple-minded amid luxury, self-mastered and single-eyed towards God, he might have stayed the inevitable end into luxury and sensualism, and his record have been vastly different. But God's laws change not to suit individuals. After oppression, division, and extravagance comes poverty; after sensuality, disease and premature old age; after idolatry, God's wrath.

In the time of David's old age, when the natural heat and vigor of his body failed, means were taken to prolong his life by tender care. (1 Kings i. 1–4.) According to the medical ideas of the age, and as recommended by the physicians of Hebrew antiquity, and even by Galen, and according to a custom that was common even into the Middle Ages, a young person was sought for to be the king's nurse. The name of the young maiden selected was Abishag, famed as the most lovely girl of her day, a native of Shunam, Shunem, or Shulam ; names, in dialectic variation, of the same place. This village, in the north of the country, was famous in early history as a Philistine camp, and later as the home of the widow visited by Elisha. It lay on the fruitful slope of Mount (Little) Hermon, overlooking the plain of Jezreel, in the old domain of the tribe of Issachar ; Nain, Endor, and Esdraelon being well-known places near by, and Mount Gilboa being but a few miles south. Shunem means "double rest," or "two resting-places." Her childhood was spent amid the same scenes familiar to the youth of our Lord Jesus. Some readers of the Song of Songs see in the incident narrated in chapter vi. 11–13 the explanation of how this fair girl was first met, and at the royal behest was brought from her

northern home in Galilee to the abode of royalty in the south.

From her humble surroundings in the country to the post of responsibility and honor in the palace, the change in Abishag's circumstances was great indeed. She served as David's attendant during the presumably short time of his dotage and weakness, and then at his death seems to have remained in the palace, though for how long we do not know.

It is more than possible, it is quite probable, that Abishag became the object of the addresses of Solomon. Covetous of beauty and ambitious to fill his harem with the fairest faces and loveliest figures which the womanhood, not only of Israel, but of adjoining countries could furnish, his inordinate desire to possess this innocent Jewess, who was also, at the time of his father's death, one of the most important personages in the kingdom, was probably one of the causes of Solomon's murder of his brother Adonijah, as related in 1 Kings ii. 12–26. True it is, also, that the possession of one who had been so near the person of great David as Abishag would have given Adonijah, or any man who Solomon was pleased to believe an aspirant to the throne, a tremendous prestige in the eyes of the people.

In our days and in Western civilization, since Jesus, who founded the mightiest democracy which is yet to become world-wide, taught us to honor a man because he is a man, and a king because he is nothing more, it is hard to understand the popular reverence for the person of a king. A relic of the ancient idea was seen in Japan even as late as 1868, when the nail-parings and combings of the hair, rinsings of the mouth, and other *exuviæ* of the Mikado, were with solemn form and ceremony deposited and preserved, in the one case for the fire at the emperor's death, or poured into a consecrated place near Lake Biwa, the people along the public highway being expected to prostrate themselves before the vessels as they were borne along. Solomon's motive may have been a double one: to obtain for his harem a woman beautiful and lovely in herself, and also by attaching her to his own person to gain the enormous political advantage which he very naturally and even honestly may have suspected his brother Adonijah of coveting. It is probable, also, that the author of the historical book of 1 Kings treats only of the public and political phase of the transactions, while the poetical book of the Canticle deals artistically with the "anecdote" or private and personal phase of the incident as it transpired from those near Solomon to the people.

The king of Israel may have been doubly angered at beholding in Adonijah, even after he had, with most unoriental and almost Christian clemency, pardoned him, an attempt to repeat treason, and for this reason ordered his death.

It is more probable, however, especially since Bath-Sheba saw no such plot, that Solomon was suffering the pangs of jealousy and rejection; because Abishag would not receive his attentions. At any rate, the despot dispatched his chief assassin after the man who had interceded through the queen-mother for the beautiful Shunamite, and Adonijah was murdered in exact accord with that custom of oriental monarchs which still shows traces of survival among Turks and Asiatics. It is quite possible too that the name Abishag, "source of error," or "father of waywardness," that is, "the heedless" or "inconsiderate one," was one bestowed in Jerusalem.

Adonijah was only one of many whom the king removed by the dagger, for this was the custom of the time and country; and it would be absurd to judge a Hebrew king by the standards of Christianity and of our age. The history of Israel on its human side, even in details, is most wonderfully like the history of Japan, of Corea, of India, of Turkey; but it

has a divine side also which gave the redeeming and elevating element so notably lacking in the annals of most Asiatic nations.

The inmates of the great harem which Solomon assembled in Jerusalem just as he collected horses and chariots, gold and silver, to excel and outshine his fellow-rulers among adjoining nations, are the "daughters of Jerusalem" of the Canticle. They were handsomely dressed ladies, favorites of the king, living lives of luxury and idleness. In dark contrast to the Shulamite, who was a devout worshiper of Jehovah, many of them were heathen, and opposed to the strict and holy life of the upright Hebrews, the servants of Jehovah, who were scandalized at Solomon's new-fangled ideas and abominable innovations. It is said that in Solomon's harem there were seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines. There may be exaggeration through copyists' errors in these excessive figures, though other vile imitators of his bad example have excelled the great Hebrew sensualist in the size of their harems. We are not to suppose that Solomon idled most of his time away among the princesses, concubines, odalisques, singing-women, and dancing-girls; or that he was a monster of lust; or that he ever saw or spoke to, much less knew the hun-

dreds of beauties with their female relatives and servants that filled his establishment. His object in having so many ornamental women was the same as having so many horses in a country that was practically useless for cavalry. His purpose was wholly political and spectacular. He married a child of the Pharaohs, and invited the daughters of the chiefs of the vassal tribes to become members of his court or household, and thus formed political alliances with the various countries and people comprehended within his empire.

The great seraglio at Constantinople — the survival of barbarism in Europe — whose chief supporter, the sultan, gets his example, justification, and orthodoxy from Solomon, spends twenty millions of dollars yearly in supporting his herd of women, with their accompanying hordes of servants and eunuchs, of whom there are hundreds whose names are unknown to him. Out of his harem he marries about one hundred girls annually to favorite officers, for this institution is a sort of training school through which pashas of note pass their daughters with the view of securing for them eligible marriages, with dowry and title. So little can the sultan actually know of the harem, which he is supposed to control, that the plots of murder and assassinations which

are so frequently hatched in this oven of iniquity are often unknown to him until accident causes leakage of information which enables him to save his own life. A virtuous sultan may hate the harem system and wish to destroy the institution, but hoary, vested interests are opposed to reform, and the traditional glory of the dynasty forbids it. Like some exceptional Asiatic rulers, Solomon may have been practically a monogamist, though the Scriptures do not encourage us in this charitable surmise; yet the faces of the poor must be ground and the blood of the peasantry must be wrung out of them to support this abominable institution. As are the effects of a royal harem now, so were they then in the days of this Hebrew king, who with all his wisdom wrought such folly in Israel.

We are quite ready to believe that it was a matter of politics and of decorative effect rather, that so grand a zenana was maintained in Jerusalem. Still, it suggests Mormonism rather than Christianity. The prophets were all men of one wife. Monogamy was the law of God and of Israel. Though Abraham and Jacob were sinners, and in this respect bequeathed a bad example, besides suffering the penalties of domestic unhappiness, yet the model marriage and holy example is that of

Isaac and Rebecca — one man to one woman. True, it is the idea of monogamy rather than of a typical happy marriage in every respect, that this ancient example has been chosen for the marriage service of the Book of Common Prayer. What domestic miseries Abraham and Jacob suffered, Solomon experienced on an exaggerated scale.

According to the oriental proverb, "If you keep a tiger you will have nothing but trouble," Solomon had now a family of tigresses to manage. Once installed in the palace and on intimate terms with royalty, the heathen princess, unchanged in heart, wanted near her not only relatives, maids, servants, but her religious associations and facilities. To please his wives, to conciliate the various tribes and nationalities in his heterogeneous empire, Solomon had shrines erected to the gods of many countries. Even in a republic, and under Christianity, what will not a political aspirant do to capture this or that "vote," and what crying injustice will remain unredressed when it has potency of ballots behind it? Solomon for political effect was willing to patronize idols.

The inventory of paganism which flourished under the very shadow of Jehovah's temple, as given by the inspired historian, is a formi-

dable one. What a confusion of tongues and dialects in the zenana! There were ladies from Egypt, from the countries west and south of the Dead Sea, Moab, Ammon and Edom, northerners from Zidon and Phœnicia, women from the once powerful nation of the Hittites, besides rosy rustics and city-bred beauties from all over the empire. What a succession of sensations must have furnished gossip to the imperial city, as it turned from brick to stone and from plain sycamore to Phœnician cedar! The frequent cavalcades of camels and horses bringing new personages with their dowry and presents and the outflowing royal embassies and gift-laden caravans to vassals and princes filled the streets with spectacular brilliancy and gazing crowds. Yet how must the wise have grieved as they saw rising on the hills near the city the painted poles under which the lascivious dances were danced; and the shrines built before which the orgies of Ashtoreth — goddess of beauty and voluptuousness — were celebrated; and, worse than all, the idols before which incense smoked and sacrifices were offered! The spade of the archæologist, which to-day casts out the dead relics of the past, shows that the things which accompanied the gods of these various "ites" once inhabiting Syria were as morally filthy as

the extant relics of Asiatic heathenism seen by travelers within a generation past in Japan, and two generations ago in India.

While Solomon lived, the dreadful influence of his example, while bad enough, could not in one lifetime be followed by many of the city dwellers. Yet the shamefully large number of idolatrous and morally tainted women in the harem was like a mass of water kept back only temporarily by a weak dam. His death, however, was the signal for a moral disaster of which the Conemaugh calamity furnishes the analogy in the natural world. The floodgates of iniquity were opened upon Jerusalem on the breaking up of the great royal harem, after the secession had made impossible, by the curtailment of revenue, the continued maintenance of a vast seraglio. Of the awful effect upon city life, of this flood of iniquity let loose, the book of Proverbs especially gives striking proofs.

That Solomon himself personally deserted utterly the worship of Jehovah for these divinities we do not gather from the record, nor believe. That he was spiritually a traitor to his God in thus lending aid and comfort to Jehovah's enemies, and of indirectly assisting in these enormities, is certain. With this sin God charged him and threatened punishment upon him for it.

Within an historical framework, as in the books of the Kings, the Author of the Bible has set a mirror, into which we in this age of American prosperity and amazing wealth do well to look. Within the poetical framework of the Song of Songs we believe he has set the contrast of chaste, pure love, maintaining itself unspotted against the blandishments of a sensualist. It is highly probable that the Canticle had an historical basis in an episode in Solomon's time, and that out of this an inspired poet was impelled to write a masterpiece expressive of the deepest emotions of the Hebrew heart. In this poem sensuality is scorned and rejected, and pure love glorified and its seat discerned in the bosom of God.

CHAPTER IV.

POETIC BACKGROUND OF THE CANTICLE.

One of the most profound changes in the consciousness of the people of Israel was wrought by the institution of monarchy. Hitherto the nation had been, according to the prevalent faith, under the direct government of God. Her judges, priests, and prophets were ministers of Jehovah who assisted in worship and in the maintenance of the institutions of social order and religion. The innovation of a monarchy and centralized government with religious services pointing to ultimate restriction at Jerusalem, the king claiming to be God's vicegerent, caused a profound change in the feelings of Jehovah's people. At first all probably welcomed the new order, and during the first few years of the sunshine of royal popularity and the glare of worldly prosperity there was little or no protest. When, however, the behavior of the monarch scandalized the people, and the woes foretold by Samuel fell upon them, when the taxes and galling burdens began to press upon neck and purse,

there were great searchings of heart. Monarchy meant decay of good old customs, the spoiling of home, monopoly of land, and general poverty. This clearly seen, there was first reaction and then rebellion, followed by division of the kingdom. Solomon's empire was short-lived, repeating in this respect the general precedent and course of empire in Asia.

Then ensued a period when the memory of the glory of Solomon was still bright, while that of his burdens no longer felt was weak. The perspective of years softened the outlines of remembered events. While the great achievements of the nation under their mighty king took on the glory and color of sunset upon the mountain-peaks, the private sins and public oppressions were lost in the shadows of the valley. Oblivion covered with its purple that which once caused smart. By the people living in the later period of continuing monarchy, Solomon was awarded reverential silence, or his moral obliquity ignored. At least, the sting of bitterness was extracted from the memory. The ruins of history were mantled with the ivy of poetry, and the scars of devastation were covered with the flowery luxuriance of figurative language. While Solomon's immediate successors are never once

mentioned in the poetical books of the Bible, he himself is made the chief personage in the Canticle, and in others is a notable figure.

Hence the great contrast between the bald prose of the books of the Kings and the exuberant poetry of the Canticle. The prophet-scribe who compiled the Kings gives the unvarnished facts, the priest-writer of Chronicle eulogizes Solomon and dwells in the glory of the temple and the royal gifts, with measurements and mathematical figures, though the human interest is vastly less than in Kings. The Ephraimite singer of the Song of Songs invests everything with a poetic glow. In the exuberant tropical language of the Orient, all things fair in heaven and on earth are summoned to picture the environment and to interpret the emotions of the royal admirer and the faithful lovers, while the crowning motive of the piece and culmination of the thought is linked to the name of Jehovah himself.

How did the Song of Songs come to be written? Did poets in the ancient world, inspired or uninspired, strive for original conceptions, and attempt to create plots, scenes, and characters, as is done in modern drama or novel?

If anything seems established by close study of the literature and life of the ancient world,

it is this: that the abstract invention of a character, or a story apart from some basis of fact, by a poet; or, the utterance of a prophecy having no vital connection with the prophet's own life, times, and experience, is in the Hebrew Scriptures unknown. In either case, of poem or prophecy, there must be a starting point of actual occurrence. The anecdote was the seed of poem, psalm, or prophecy. Literally, it may be said, the poetry, fiction, drama, and prophetic "burden" of the Bible is "founded on fact."

By what particular historical occurrence the Song of Songs was suggested, or to what event it is directly related, we do not know with certainty. Using the word "anecdote" in its literal and historic sense, the conjecture is not unreasonable that the composer of the Canticle, like the poet or poets of the book of Job who used the anecdote concerning the "man of Uz," has heard the story of Abishag and Solomon's desire to win her for himself, or at least sees behind his murder of Adonijah the basis of a drama in real life. Thereupon, with this incident as a suggestive starting point, and with exquisite literary art, he constructs the cantata which so clearly sets in contrast pure and innocent love with sensual passion and unholy ambition. Let us look at

the portico of this temple of Hebrew poetry, so full of strength and of beauty. In the superscription of the writing we have the announcement or argument, — "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's." It is the chief song, the noblest of all, because its theme is the noblest passion, love. As God, the King of kings, dwells in the heaven of heavens, in the true holy of holies, and is God of gods, Lord of lords; as Canaan was the "servant of servants;" as life to the writer of Ecclesiastes was vanity of vanities; as love to our Heavenly Father should be in our heart of hearts: so the song whose burden is love is the Song of songs. The Bible itself is the Canticle of God's love to us, for God is love. Even the New Testament, though its language is Greek, contains this Hebrew idiom, for "salvation is of the Jews;" and Paul the Hebrew, though using Greek, calls himself a "Hebrew of the Hebrews."

Of the book now under examination, the title is Shir hash Shirim, or Song of Songs; yet it is quite possible that this Hebrew writing when first published had no title. This was the case with most of the scriptures of the Old Testament, the names of which as now used came into use much later than the time of their composition. In this respect

they were like the great volume ranking next in world-wide popularity to the Bible, and which all Christians love, supposed to have been written by Thomas à Kempis. It is known under several titles, which take their form from words or phrases in the book itself, such as "The Imitation of Christ," or "On the Following of Christ"; though in Japan the Jesuit missionaries translated it under the title "Contempt of the World." The headline over the fifth of the poetical books of the Bible, — "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's," — the only line of prose in the form of the book as we have it, is so evidently a versicle added as a title by a hand later than the author's, that in the Revision of 1884 the old heading of the page in the former English versions has been discarded and the name, The Song of Songs, only, printed as the title to be used by the people. In this matter the revisers have followed the best critical editors of the Hebrew text. The study of philology teaches us to pay closest attention to the smallest words, for often these little "hooks and eyes" of speech tell great stories, and are as true evidences of time and change as the geological imprints once made in clay and now hardened for the ages in stone. The little pronoun "which" in the title, The Song of Songs

which is of, or about Solomon, is different in form to the extent of several letters from the same pronoun (*she*) which is used in every other place in the Canticle. In the head-line, added doubtless long after the poem was written, it is *asher*, a word rarely used in titles, even of the Psalms, and containing three consonants and two vowels; in the body of the book, the pronoun "which" is represented in Hebrew by a word of one consonant letter. Some scholars think the words "which is Solomon's" are part of the text by the author who intended to imitate the style of Solomon, or to project himself into Solomonic times and sphere of thought.

Our word Canticles, more properly Canticle, is from the Latin "Canticum canticorum." Luther called it "Das Hohelied," and a French expositor crowns it as "the Eternal Song."

Our understanding of the poem is much facilitated by constant reference to the historical books, for often these preserve for us the figurative expression which the contemporaries of Solomon used to denote the objects of their admiration or censure. Thus, in regard to the person and appurtenances of the king, we have in chapter iv. 8 of the Song references which might, without the explanation in Kings, be

interpreted literally of zoölogy instead of metaphorically of the king's seat and companions. The Shulamite's lover, in urging her to go with him, mentions the various royal residences, and bids her to escape with him away from them and from Solomon. Besides Lebanon, Amana, Shenir, and Hermon, he speaks of "the lions' den," and "the mountains of the leopards." Are we to think here of wild beasts, live quadrupeds noted for their claws and teeth ; or, of the lion-supported throne of Solomon and the court in which his courtiers dwell ?

In both Kings and Chronicles (1 Kings x. 18–20 ; 2 Chron. ix. 18, 19) we read of the great throne, of ivory overlaid with the finest gold, with six steps leading to it and "two lions standing beside the stays." In other parts of the sacred writings, kings are styled "lions," and the courtiers surrounding a great monarch are called by the names of powerful beasts. In the popular language of a distant province the throne-room with its fourteen lions would be called "the lions' den."

The pet names which the faithful girl gives her lover are all poetical, and in accord with the richness of oriental metaphor. To her, his name is "spikenard," as the king's is to the harem ladies "ointment poured forth" — as a

precious alabaster perfume-bottle broken and poured upon the head of the guest, or crushed in a napkin every piece of which is thenceforward a bearer of sweet odors. By none of the senses, more than the particular one of smell, is the memory more deeply stirred and association recalled. (2 Cor. ii. 1–16.) He whom her soul loveth is a neck-bag, or vial of perfume, a bundle of myrrh which she wears on her bosom between her heart and her garments. As Job, or Job's wife, named one of his daughters Keren-happuch, or toilet-box, so names of things liked by ladies were often applied to their human favorites. As a cluster of rich yellow cypress flowers at her girdle, also, so is her absent beloved. Though warm and ardent, her language and images as well as her thought are immaculately chaste and artlessly innocent.

In the maiden's speech we find an amazing wealth of imagery, and her native tongue is as full of the natural poetry of the Hebrews as the plain of Sharon is full of daisies. Many of the old words of the language are in themselves latent poems, but on her lips a new beauty is born into many of them. As a vineyard consists of cultivated or prepared land, and is a place of beauty as well as of work, so she calls her own person "a vineyard." Neg-

lected indeed it has been, as her sunburned skin shows, and as she acknowledges with apology in the presence of the critical court beauties. The contrast however between the references in the first and the last chapter is striking. Pure and uninvaded, scathless from the fire of trial, she is her own and not the tempter's, and in presence of her husband and her friends in the final scene she exclaims, "My vineyard which is mine is before me," she speaks with the exultation of victory.

Another lively poetic image underlies her reference to her dark complexion. As the "eyes of the sun" are spoken of by Nathan in his speech to David, so the poet makes her say that the sun, which is here feminine, has "gazed" steadily upon her — like a woman whose one piercing black eye looks out from behind her veil. In other parts of the Bible the morning "twinkles," and the moon "looks forth" as the "faithful witness of the sky." So also the word for mid-day is plural, or rather dual; the noons being literally the "double light," when the sun's rays of the morning and of the afternoon blend in an intensity that drives man and beast to seek shade or single light.

To the pure-minded lover, the Shulamite is lovely with virginal modesty and acquired

womanly virtues. She is a "lily among thorns," a "dove in the cleft of the rocks," an "inclosed garden," a "fountain sealed." She is his "sister," his "betrothed." Unlike the members of Solomon's miscellaneous herd, she is "one." In her unassailable purity she is a well of living water, a limpid mountain brook of Lebanon. In her own self-deprecating words she is "black" — the word being the same as that applied to the turbid Nile, — but in his eyes she is clear-skinned and white as the torrent's foam. In her accomplishments and charms she is "a garden of spices," a sweet singer dwelling in the gardens.

As to the one beloved of the Shulamite, who in the Hebrew is invariably addressed in one form of words not used of Solomon, he seems in his life and ways to be more than of earthly mould, of almost angelic habits of innocence, purity, and high communion of soul with things rare, precious, and unearthly. He is an ideal personage in her eyes. His dwelling-places are fields of lilies, gardens of balsam, and mountains of spices. He is beautiful in body, wise in mind, and free as the hinds of the field. He is her leader, teacher, and exemplar. In the ardor of her affection she clothes him with ideal graces which all the splendors of royal blandishments cannot for a moment eclipse. If

in this book there be found a true type of Christ, it is the shepherd-lover, and not the sensual king.

In the beloved's addresses, chaste, pure, and tender, natural images are abundantly reflected. He never visibly appears on the scene until the last crowning event, and in all the others the Shulamite sees him only in trance or vision. As in the spiritual drama of Job, where the one most talked about and honored is God, not man, he appears on the scene only at the very last.

In Solomon's addresses to the woman of his quest, whose innocence and inapproachability baffle him, one easily discovers a marked contrast in thought, imagery, and language from those employed by the shepherd. The royal voluptuary's conceptions are not elevated, his metaphors are sometimes heavy, and most of his images are those borrowed from the artificial life of cities, courts, and stables. His language is less that of the impassioned lover than the ambitious seeker who does not expect to be finally baffled; it is highly rhetorical, and sometimes in exquisite literary form. Only in the final scene of his attentions, however, does he seem to speak in terms which verge upon impropriety. Indeed, except this very brief speech of Solomon to the dancing-girl of

Mahanaim, the writer declares, after earnest study, that he discovers nothing in discord with purity of thought and sound morality in all the Canticle.

To Solomon the new inmate of his palace is like a mare, her cheeks and neck remind him of jewels, her neck recalls the armory-tower, he compares her to the rival cities of Tirzah and Jerusalem. His view of nature is that of a cultivated critic who enjoys the landscape best when it is full of the triumphs of civilization. In chapter vii. the description of the dancer's person by the women is done with a detail that is more pleasing to oriental than to western taste.

The height of exuberance of figurative language is reached in the final scene and last chapter, where the obscurity or, we may say, profundity of the allusions suggests the enigmas so characteristic of Solomon's age, and of which the orientals are yet so fond. Here love is a fire unquenchable by stream or flood, equalling the grave in its irresistible power. Here the little sister of undeveloped figure is warned to choose between being a wall or a door. The alternative prizes of a lintel of cedar or of a turret of silver is set before her. A marriage with a plain man, perhaps old and harsh, stern and severe, or even the sale into

a harem against her will; or, on the other hand, honorable and crowned marriage to her own chosen lover, is here indicated. The chief treasure among the wedding gifts being the horn of silver which ornamented the bride's head, and from which her veil depended, the "palace" or turret of silver would, should she prove discreet, modest, and faithful, be built upon her, and her "horn" be "exalted" with the honor desired by all Hebrew daughters. The vineyard of Solomon at Baal-hamon had doubtless its counterpart in actual land, vines, grapes, or olives, and husbandmen and rent; but throughout the poem the vineyard which she neglected was her own, and "my vineyard which is mine is before me" was her own person — her virgin body, unbought, unsold.

Apart from the human actors in the Canticle and the figurative language applied to them in names of love and fear, there is a rich symbolism pertaining to places and things. The mountains of Lebanon, rich as they were in balsam trees and cedars, were the real types of those "mountains of spices" which were probably never seen on sea or land but grew in ideal regions. The mountains of Bether, or separation, refer probably to the everlasting hills wrinkled with valleys or gorged with ravines, making division and distance between

lover and loved. "Mountains of myrrh" and "hills of frankincense" were not only the ranges that strike the view in northern Israel, but typified probably also the beauties of the human form, or gardens found in lovers' bowers. We find in Solomon's last speech palm-trees and boughs, clusters of "grapes" and apples that grow only in poetry, and on the fairest work of God in that human form which, in the poetry of Genesis, he made of a rib instead of the dust of the ground.

Of places we easily recognize those of historic name and reality, but are there not others to be discovered on no map, and existent only in the geography of imagination? Archæologists and excavators in the Hebrew texts have sought in vain to locate Baal-Hamon, or the Baal of Multitude. Possibly such a locality did really exist in one of the "fat valleys of Ephraim," and its name if not a mis-reading for Baal-Hermon may perhaps be found corrupted into the "Balamon" of the apocryphal book of Judith, chapter viii. 3. It seems more likely, however, that the name is a coinage of the brain of the poet, and to go after it might be like seeking in England John Bunyan's Vanity Fair and other places of immortal note. So with "the lions' dens" and "the mountains of leopards," as we have suggested.

In the symbolism of flowers, and recondite allusions to the sentiment associated with trees, fruits, perfumes, and other delectable objects, in metaphor and trope, the poet is lavish. The sun looks on the maiden to tan brown her face, the morning peeps forth, the gazelles are creatures to take solemn oath by, love is a living creature with a will not to be lightly awakened, the state car of Solomon is paved with love. The Shulamite's plants and orchard of pomegranates, with all the costly spices, are emblems of mental and moral graces and traits of temperament. She is his garden, the joys of her love are his honeycomb and honey, his wine and milk, making a feast of joy. Yet she is "not too bright or good for human nature's daily food." The apple-tree, which is among the trees of the wood what the beloved is to his loving betrothed among the young men, is the symbol of love and affection. Its beauty, usefulness, fragrance, its delicious fruit and delightful shadow, the memories that cluster around it as a playground and even as a birthplace in the East, where life, even in its beginning, as well as toil and joy, is in the open air, make it a favorite with the poets. Probably at the era of Solomon this Persian tree was first introduced into Palestine; and, becoming a part of the life of the people, it formed a strik-

ing object in the landscape and a useful symbol to the poets. This fruit of fruits is also placed poetically in the eyeball, and hung on the forbidden tree in Eden. Possibly, however, the apple-tree of the Hebrews is more correctly an apricot, or possibly a quince.

Contrast between urban and rural life, to the advantage of the latter, is one of the notable points in the poem. In the country the maid of Shunem has all her joys ; in the city, her woes, sorrows, accidents, and peculiar troubles. Evidently it is the purpose of the poet to paint the delights of out-door life amid the beauties of nature, compelling contrast to the dangers and temptations of the city. In no book of the Bible is the lesson that God made the country while man made the town so clearly illustrated. In no other are the diverse modes of life put in juxtaposition, the one to be feared, and the other to be desired. Like the teacher of Nazareth, who perhaps never spent a night in Jerusalem except that one of sorrow before his crucifixion, and who avoided the city for the country, the Shulamite ever looks longingly upon the fields and hills.

Cities are the graves of health and strength, the destroyers of nerve and vigor, and the waste of energy needs constant replenishing

from the country, where life is more natural. The demands which civilization makes upon the physical frame could never be supplied from the cities, and except for the country the loss could not be remedied.

In one respect, at least, the era of the new empire in Israel was noticeably like the century in which we live. It was the age of cities. Life began to be concentrated within streets and walls. The demand for labor and talent which the newly formed systems of manufactures, public works, and commerce required drew large numbers of the young men and women away from field and vineyard, olive garden and village, to the cities, and especially to the capital, Jerusalem. That this was not an unmixed good, but in many respects a positive evil, the subsequent history of the nation shows.

The Song of Songs, however, is a bright picture of a true servant of God reared amid rural and even rustic scenes, who preserves her character and religion amid the luxury and glamour of the great metropolis. In this respect the poem is one of timely interest and present application to the tens of thousands of youths who in our land have left their childhood's rural homes to seek excitement, fame, or fortune in the teeming cities. May the ex-

ample of the incorruptible maiden of Shunem be to them a beacon of light and inspiration, while her temper ever remains a warning against that "hardening of the heart which brings irreverence for the dreams of youth."

What happened to the Shulamite comes to pass in the history of almost every young man and young woman. Especially in a country of endless possibilities like our own is this true. She was placed between opposite attractions that represented the true and the false ideals of life. Should she choose glory or duty? Should she live with conscience, religion, simplicity of life, purity, and be faithful to her word and first love? Or, for ambition's sake, for an "establishment" in Jerusalem sell herself? Happy they who by decision and unswerving loyalty to the ideals of duty keep conscience clear and enjoy peace of mind!

CHAPTER V.

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE SONG OF SONGS.

THE Song of Songs is the only book in the library of the sacred writings which consists wholly of poetry and conversation. All the other poetical books, even the Book of Job which is a drama of the spirit, contain prose diction in the form of introduction, subject-matter, explanation, or epilogue, in which the author himself speaks. In the Song of Songs, however, the author is entirely silent as to information given, or utterances directly made from himself. There are no voices but those of the *dramatis personæ*, the characters themselves.

No other book of the Bible in the older English versions stood so much in need of the reviser's touch as that of the Canticle. In the Revised Version, the five thousand words are arranged with some reference to their order as poetry; and as dialogue, soliloquy, chorus, or conversation. It may now be read intelligently by the general reader. Nor does it now seem presumptuous audacity even to

talk of its consummate form as a work of literary art.

What is the form of this masterpiece of Hebrew poetry? Is it a pastoral, epic, lyric, cantata, or drama? Or, is there any one word which, with honest reference to our scanty knowledge of its origin, purpose, and use in ancient times, will accurately describe it? This is a question of great interest to scholars, who have expended much learning upon this point; and research and controversy concerning the corollary question whether the drama existed among the Hebrews. In every Asiatic race, from Japan to Phœnicia, we find dramatic expression in some form; but in none of the Semitic races did this reach the point of development represented by the theatre.

Some assert that there is such an innate estrangement in the Hebrew genius from everything of the nature of plastic art, that even dramatic writings would be impossible among them. Both the actor on the stage and the composer of the drama must, according to the measure of his success, divest himself of his own personality and enter into that of others. He must have a sort of double consciousness. He must move himself with passions which are not his own, and identify himself with the soul of others. It is asserted

that the Hebrews were not able to do this, and hence divine inspiration, which moved the penmen of the Holy Scriptures to utter their God-breathed wisdom in almost every other form of literary expression, found no instrument in the drama. Even the very thought of the pure drama, or of dramatic writing in the Bible, shocks the minds of those educated to believe that plastic art and inspiration are incompatible, like the union of Christ and Belial.

What foundation of truth or fact underlies such notions? Does not a critical, that is, a thoroughly honest and unbiased, searching of the Scriptures, according to the command of Christ, modify such presuppositions? Is it not true that the Hebrews were especially noted for their love of symbols, and that "symbolism went the length of mimicry," that the prophets often did enter into the feelings and the very personality of others in remote times and places? Was not this, strictly speaking, dramatic action? From a purely literary point of view, is not Isaiah's creation of the Servant of Jehovah one of the boldest strokes of dramatic genius? Was it without point that Jesus called attention to the mimic stage-play, the private theatricals of the children in the market-place (Matthew xi. 17), and that

he branded the Pharisees, the consummate mask-wearers of his day, as "stage-actors," that is, hypocrites?

It is true, as a study of Hebrew literature shows, that the Scriptures emanating from Judah or Southern Israel were more intensely spiritual in their tone, and borrowed less their images from nature, while in the speech and writings of the prophets and poets of Ephraim or Northern Israel there was, if not more of dramatic movement, action, life, fire, trope, metaphor, and picture word, a closer acquaintance and sympathy with nature. The sacred land of Jehovah, containing "the fat valleys of Ephraim" and the perennially rich plain of Jezreel, was more bountifully dowered with Nature's gifts in the north than in the south. The Hebrew in northern Israel lived not next to the desert, as did his southern brethren, but in a more fertile region and nearer to Phœnicia, the land of art and the refinements of civilization. Further, the natural scenery of the North was more bold, variegated, and impressible than in the South, where sand and bare rocks and untimbered hills prevailed. It was in Ephraim that lyric poetry was most cultivated and whence arose the mightiest singers and poets. It was Naphthali that "gave goodly words." It was in the North

that the drama had a place, though it never developed into the theatre.

In studying further the dramatic structure of this Bible drama of pure love, we do not find that the speakers are named as in the Book of Job, which is a drama of the soul's trials. In the Canticle, except the title, there are no marks at beginning or ending, such as are added by original writers or later editors and title-makers of the Psalms, so we must look to internal marks. A Swiss cottage shows us its plan even from the outside, because the main timbers are visible. In a more elaborate edifice, however, we must enter and from within study the architect's idea. In a modern drama help is given to the reader by divisions and sections, by the initial letters of speakers, and versicles usually printed in italics. All these are lacking in the Canticle. As printed in a disjointed, butcher-like way in the unrevised versions, with swaddling-bands of impertinent chapter-headings and verse-divisions, it is nearly as hard to recognize the masterly poetic form of the original as to discover the pretty lamb of the meadow in the dressed carcass on the iron hooks of the market stall.

On the contrary, the original poem in the Hebrew gives by unerring marks and details

of anatomy nearly as much assistance to the reader as the printed helps in a modern book. The Revised Version presents a much better expression of this part of the Word of God than the old form which is marred by the mixing together of commentators' notes, dogmatic interpretations, and traditions of Scribes and Pharisees, with Holy Scripture. These notes and comments contained in the chapter-headings are intended to force upon the reader the interpretation accepted first by the Synagogue, and then by the Church from the Synagogue. In a way that scandalizes an honest reader of God's Word, they thrust a scheme of purely human invention upon the common people, who thus unwittingly wear the spectacles provided for them and read into the Scriptures what the rabbis and doctors intended they should. In other words, the publishers of King James's version of the Bible have effectually, for the vast majority of readers, braved the warning in Revelation xxii. 18, and added "to the words of the prophecy of this book." In removing, for most people, the possibility of reading it in a natural way, they have also taken away from "the words of the prophecy of this book." How men of the reformed or Protestant faith have so long submitted to this dishonoring of the Holy Word is hard to understand.

The Revisers have returned to right principles in setting forth a new English version of the Word of God as contained in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. They have swept utterly away many of the old titles and subscriptions, the chapter headings, the arbitrary verse divisions, and have restored to something approaching its ancient form this matchless poem and Bible book of love. In the Revision of 1884, we read as the title, in the page-headings, not "The Song of Solomon," nor "Solomon's Song," but "The Song of Songs."

Further, they have attempted to show its poetic structure, with the dialogues and refrain. One who endeavors to unlock the meaning of this, the most neglected book of Holy Scripture, has now his greatest ally in the English Bible. The poetry, the dramatic element, and the exquisite literary beauty of this Hebrew drama are now fairly expressed in a volume in the hands of the people, and therefore accessible to all.

Nor is this arrangement of the text a mere matter of opinion, taste, or guess-work. It is determined by the grammar of the Hebrew language, a critical study of which furnishes the scholar with clews in abundance. It is quite easy to distinguish in any paragraph

whether it is the Shulamite or either of her suitors that is speaking. The feminine form of verb, adjective, and noun in each case reveals the maiden as the speaker. Her Galilean dialect is no more to be mistaken than was Peter's in the high-priest's hall in Jerusalem. The addresses of the ladies of the harem are easily recognized. They call her, "fairest of women"; and when spoken to they are "daughters of Jerusalem," as in the six places, chapters i. 5; ii. 7; iii. 5, 10; v. 8; viii. 4.

To distinguish infallibly the male speakers is at present probably impossible, but to do so with a fair degree of certainty is not extremely difficult. We point out a few indications here, reserving a fuller treatment for the chapter on "Literary Features of the Poem."

The king, when addressing the maiden, alludes to his position, as in i. 9, 11; vi. 4, or makes use of language referring to his animals, trappings, furniture, possessions, and things of artificial life; his metaphors are rather elaborate, not to say strained; the coloring of his diction is that of a city-bred man in high life. He calls the one to whom he is paying his attentions, "my love" — as the Revision translates this special form of address, the old version having "my friend." The word in the Hebrew (*rayah*) is different from the forms of

address which the shepherd-lover uses to his betrothed, though among his many terms of endearment, this of "my love," or "my dear," is also employed. This variety of address assists us, though not infallibly, to distinguish the male speakers. In the final colloquy, the king's language strains the limits of propriety never even approached by the rural lover.

On the contrary, the shepherd speaks a less rhetorical, polished, and artificial language, which reflects the images of rural and outdoor life. His talk is of flocks, sheep, flowers, natural perfumes and foods, and of objects within the range of his vision, or of popular knowledge. His words have not the shadow of impropriety in them, though full of intense passion and an abandon of emotion that seems at the very nadir of the modern lover whose chief aim, if we may trust the average novel, is to hold himself in constraint before the woman he secretly worships.

The Shulamite's talk of her beloved refers to an environment different from that of an inhabitant of kings' houses, though when portraying him to the palace ladies she describes his person in terms of the luxury then seen around speaker and hearers. She invariably calls him by one supreme pet name which she never bestows upon her royal suitor. The lover, whether

absent or present, is the "beloved." This word (*dod*) is found like the recurring strain of melody in a great symphony. The revisers have carefully discriminated one phase of this feature, adding in the margin to Solomon's form of address "my love" (chap. i. 9), "*my friend*" (and so throughout), though they have neglected to add the equally important fact that the accepted lover's title "my beloved" is also "so throughout," and is never used by, or applied to, the royal suitor. In the plural, this word (*dod*) signifies caresses, or other signs of affection, except where in one place it refers probably to friends or spectators. Indeed it may be said that on the right discrimination and understanding of the different Hebrew words expressed in English by the one word "love," rests the appreciation and comprehension of this apparently enigmatical book. We know what staple for popular misunderstanding, as well as for homiletic expatiation, the poverty of our language affords, when in the English version of the New Testament, three distinct Greek words are rendered by that one factotum of four letters — "love." Unfortunately, we are put to nearly as great a strait in trying to make an inadequate vagueness in English do duty for clear distinctions in Hebrew which serve excellently for dramatic

as well as ideographic signs. In the refrain, chapters ii. 7, iii. 5, v. 8, viii. 4, and in the climax, chap. viii. 6, 7, the word for love (*ahabah*) refers to the sentiment and not to a person; though in chap. iii. 10, and vii. 6, this same word is used in a way that partakes both of the abstract and the concrete, in connection with the Shulamite. The word *rayah*, which we may translate my "dear," my "friend," my "love" (chap. i. 9, ii. 10), is used alike by Solomon and the shepherd-lover, though the latter calls her also by the more pronounced names of bride, and sister, beside other endearing epithets. The one name however by which the Shulamite, the main character of the poem, addresses or speaks of her "beloved" is *dod*, and this special designation she bestows upon no one else. The reader of the English Bible may be assisted in his study of the poem by noticing how, when, where, and by whom the various Hebrew words for "love" are used:—

Ahabah, chapters ii. 4, 5, 7; iii. 5, 10; v. 8; vii. 6; viii. 4, 6, 7, 7.

Aheb, i. 3, 4, 7, 16; iii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Rayah, i. 9, 15; ii. 2, 10, 13; iv. 1, 7; v. 2; vi. 4.

Dod, ii. 3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; iv. 16; v. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 9, 10, 16; vi. 1, 2, 3; vii. 9, 10, 11, 13; viii. 5, 14.

The two words *ahabah* and *aheb* are from the same root signifying, as noun and verb, the general sentiment of Affection, and are used in some of the most tender and beautiful passages in the Old Testament, as for example by Jacob, Genesis xxix. 20, David, 2 Samuel i. 26, and Isaiah lxiii. 9. *Rayah* means dear one, or (female) friend. In chapters i. 2, 4; iv. 10; vii. 12, the word *dod* signifies the acts of love; in the other instances noted above it refers to a person.

The step-brothers of the heroine are referred to in three places, and their words given in two of these, chap. ii. 15, and viii. 8, 9.

Of the citizens of Jerusalem who speak in chapter iii. 6–11, there are probably three or four who make question and answer, each having reference to what most attracts his attention. The poet may have here meant also to introduce a chorus.

The "daughters of Jerusalem" are the palace ladies belonging to the royal harem. They speak frequently in chorus or solo, not only in the opening scene, and in description of the dancer in chapter vii. In the last part of the poem the friends of the shepherd form a chorus, as in chapter viii. 5.

It may be that we have also two snatches or fragments of popular songs such as often

echoed in the vineyards of Israel twenty-five centuries ago. The words primarily uttered by the step-brothers, as a command or warning, were probably also a ditty sung in fact in actual life, and in representation also when this composition was sung at wedding festivals or recited in public.

The pretty fragment in chapter vi. 13, which begins chapter vii. in the Hebrew, with its four repetitions of the word "return," is as musical in its way as the echo-chorus in the Bugle-song of Tennyson. The repeated Hebrew word *shubé*, ending in a long, open vowel, is one that is found in some of the most melodious passages in the Bible, the music of which so charms the ear. It is the same as that which Ruth used in her immortal refusal to forsake Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee," etc. It is one of the most effective words to the ear either in Hebrew or English. It is often used in the poetical books, but nowhere else in such striking repetitions as in this passage. If this cantata was ever enacted in public with musical accompaniment, the effect of this echo-chorus must have been very sweet to the ear. In the poem the words may have been uttered by Solomon, but more probably by the court ladies.

Most striking of the features which reveal the dramatic structure of this consummate work of Hebrew poetical art, is the formula of adjuration, "I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love till it please."

The recurrence of this formula four different times at the end of decisive scenes divides the composition into six parts; or, shall we say, acts? As a division-mark it reminds us of the Selah of the Psalms, indicating a pause of considerable length. Its words are always addressed to the court ladies. Instead of being a "slumber-song" or lullaby, it is more than a "charge" not to awaken a beloved one who wishes to sleep; it is an impassioned, solemn appeal to those who would wantonly, even frivolously, stir up the God-born emotion. The word used by the Shulamite, or put into her mouth by the poet, is the same which in other parts of the Bible is rendered to "swear by an oath," to "confirm by an oath," to "bind with an oath," being so rendered about one hundred and fifty times in most of the English versions of the Bible.

The translators of 1611, however, allowed their notions of interpretation to warp the plain meaning of the text, and so, curiously

enough, the "Solomon's Song" of the old version is the one book in the Bible in which the Hebrew *shcba* (as in Beer-sheba the well of the oath, Bath-sheba daughter of an oath, etc.) was translated "charge." The Revisers of 1884, honestly conforming to the text, have rightly rendered this strong word "adjure."

Whether it was right for a Hebrew, a worshiper of Jehovah, to swear by the roes and gazelles of the fields instead of by some name of the Deity, we do not here discuss. When long afterwards in Egypt the Canticle was translated into their own Greek speech by the Alexandrian Jews, they evidently found offense in this appeal to wild creatures, and translated "By the powers and virtues of the field," etc. Certainly the Bible gives many forms and fashions of oaths, with much variety both of language and gesture. Perhaps with uplifted hand and flashing eyes, the Shulamite called upon the creatures most free, most untrammeled, most timorous, as well as most familiar to her childhood's life, to be witnesses; even as Abraham in taking oath with Abimelech at Beer-sheba, the well of the oath, set forth seven female lambs as witnesses (Genesis xxi. 27–30). The country girl of the North was probably accustomed thus to swear by creatures that had impressed her imagination,

even as her neighbors swore by their head, beard, tent-pole, or by other objects often in themselves trivial or commonplace, as well as by the temple, by the blood, or by Heaven.

There are in the Song many plays on words, alliterations, and brilliant repartees which take their cue from the last speaker. It is as hard to transfer these from Hebrew poetry over into English prose as to keep the perfume in a pressed flower. There are also some obscurities that have not yet yielded their secret to investigation.

The various scenes in which the heroine finds herself are laid either in Jerusalem, both within and without the palace, in the streets and open squares of the city, and on or near the walls; or, in Northern Israel, in the vineyards, fields, gardens, mountain slopes, and childhood's scenes under the trees. To the accepted lover, "my beloved" of the poem, who is the shepherd, the maiden often speaks, or talks, as if he were in her presence. Apparently he is in Jerusalem, and at the palace, as well as in Hermon and the land of Issachar in the far North.

Since by far the greater portion of the poem consists of addresses or references to "the beloved" or of his words to the Shulamite, the question naturally arises, How does the author

intend to represent the movements of "the beloved"? Does he mean us to understand that the shepherd appears on the scene in objective reality, bodily in the flesh, in presence of, alongside of, or embracing the maiden? Does he come to Jerusalem, walk in the gardens, or under the windows of the palace? Is he a visible speaker on the stage? Does he with actual and audible voice bid her fly with him? Is the scene meant to be shifted in objective reality from Jerusalem to Hermon, from city to country, from palace to cottage?

Or, does the poet down to chapter vii. 10 represent the home-sick and love-sick girl in one place, the royal palace or Jerusalem, all the time; and are the various scenes of the meetings of the lovers subjective only in vision, trance, or ecstasy?

However it may have been exhibited, when, or if, the cantata was publicly sung or enacted, we think that all the scenes containing an apparent dialogue between the lovers, except in the final union in chapter viii., are ideal. The purpose of the poet is manifestly to represent the shepherd-lover as invisible until the final scene of triumph, when he leads this lily, no longer among thorns, to the gardens of happy home and marriage. From the opening of the first scene, until the beginning of the final

ones in chapter viii., the actual movement of the drama is in or near the royal quarters, whether in pavilion in Galilee, or palace at Jerusalem. The lover is seen and heard, remembered as in the dream, or thought of as present in the spirit, but all this is only in the mind of the Shulamite, who is severed in the flesh from him.

In other words, this biblical drama is enacted mainly in the soul of the maiden. The chief centre of the reader's thought and attention is the woman's heart, and all else is but subordinate and illustrative. The order of importance of the characters is, first, the Shulamite; second, the shepherd-lover; and third, Solomon; but the dramatic and psychological importance of the two men is of small importance. The real motion and arena are in the feelings of the woman. As on the Chinese stage, on account of the gorgeous colors and drapery of the actors, no scenery is needed, so in this Hebrew drama the changing mood and intense feelings of the heroine make everything else only subordinately necessary. The minor characters, indispensable as machinery, might, as in the drama of Japan, wear masks or blacken their faces to prevent recognition, yet would the soul of the Shulamite be visible in all its moods.

We have called this unique book in the library of inspiration a drama, and its various parts, acts and scenes, not because it has the logical progress and harmonies of the Greek tragedies, for these the Song of Songs has not. It is lacking in those striking sequences of movement, as well as of thought, which we associate with the plays of Euripides or Shakespeare. The change of scene to scene is abrupt, without close connection one with the other, though there is a plot, development, and climax.

What is even more noticeable is the almost utter absence of effect of the addresses of the speaker upon the person addressed. In this drama of feeling, and not of logic and reason, each actor seems utterly uninfluenced by the arguments or inducements of the other, while all the time the moods of these people who feel intensely are expressed with the exactness of a photograph, with the rapidity of rays of light, and with a variety of words which in their shadings defy the translator, even as the whole book mocks and disdains the commentator.

In other words, in this drama we find as the result of dialogue little modification of ideas, but much of feeling. Whereas in Western love-making there is, among men at least, a dread lest the suitor should give way to his real emotions, we find here the real lover aban-

doning himself in a torrent of emotion; while in the woman's heart the storm is unceasing until peace is won, when the genuine woman asserts her delight in the kind of coquetry that gilds man's life and gives it charm.

Hebrew dramatic writing in so far as we know it, like other poetry of this hot-blooded people, is intensely subjective, and before the stress or glow of feeling in the heroine's bosom all else bends and pales. This idea of the poet is especially illustrated in the fact that in constructing his work he makes at least four of the scenes, and parts of others, ideal; that is, in reminiscence or dream. The two dreams are notable features, and occur immediately after the heroine's feelings have been especially excited. We conclude that it is the object of the sacred dramatist to keep in shadow and distance the lover, so that the trials of the "lily among thorns" may be shown to be all the more real and severe. The internal dramatic unity of the poem is most perfectly maintained in the character of this tried and proved Shulamite, to whom the king and the peasant-lover are dramatically subordinate.

Further, the love which is pure, holy, and God-born, is of purpose set forth as far as possible without trace of coarseness, fleshliness, or impurity. As stainless as a marble statue is

this inspired drama of love. The virgin heroine is absolutely chaste and guileless. The only possible approach to indelicacy in the whole poem is found immediately after the description, by the court ladies, of the dancer of Mahanaim ; and this brief passage is put into the mouth of the royal voluptuary, who is indignantly and boldly interrupted by the virgin heroine.

At this point, chapter vii. 9, second line, Delitzsch and most Hebraists, even though differing in their interpretations, agree as to the fact that the Shulamite interrupts the king. "The dramatic structure of the Song becomes here more strongly manifest than elsewhere before." The reader of the English Bible may ask, "How do you know this?" We answer, that the Shulamite has one invariable designation for her lover ; which is "my beloved" (*dod*), which she never applies to the royal suitor, and which is never used by Solomon. It is her language and hers only. Further, as Delitzsch says, "The text as it stands before us requires an interchange of the speakers, and nothing prevents the supposition of such an interchange."

The various ideal scenes in which the lovers talk or walk together are in general clearly indicated by rhetorical guide-marks as manifest

as the shifting of actual scenery of board and canvas on a stage, or the rise and fall of a curtain. The chief demarkation point is the refrain of adjuration, — "I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love till it please." This marked feature in the drama occurring four times, divides the movement into five separate acts.

The various scenes, which number fourteen in all, are separated from each other by minor refrains, such as "My beloved is mine, and I am his," which occurs three times; as likewise the three references to the mountains, by which three of the scenes are closed. The reveries, dreams, or night-visions of the Shulamite are indicated by the words which begin a new scene, "By night on my bed, I sought;" "I sleep, but my heart waketh." The two spectacular scenes in which a procession appears, and choruses of spectators take part as the heroine enters Jerusalem in the royal litter, or returns home with her beloved, are introduced by the question "Who is this?" Indeed, considering that the Song of Songs consists entirely of continuous dialogue without any external marks or prose versicles to guide the reader, as in Job, the artistic form is all the more remarkable and its consummate art all the more demonstrable.

In our view of the poem, the scene of the first two acts is in the women's quarters of the royal tents in northern Palestine; that of the third and fourth acts is in Jerusalem, and the palace; while in the fifth act, the scene again recurs to the mountain home of the shepherd and the Shulamite. The divisions of the drama, referred to the chapters and verses of the English Bible, which with a few exceptions are similar to those appended to the Hebrew text, are as follows:

	Chapter and Verse.
ACT I.	
Scene I.	I. 2–8.
Scene II.	I. 9–II. 7.
ACT II.	
Scene I.	II. 8–17.
Scene II.	III. 1–5.
ACT III.	
Scene I.	III. 6–11.
Scene II.	IV. 1–7.
Scene III.	IV. 8–V. 1.
Scene IV.	V. 2–8.
ACT IV.	
Scene I.	V. 9–VI. 3.
Scene II.	VI. 4–9.
Scene III.	VI. 10–VII. 7.
Scene IV.	VII. 8–VIII. 4.
ACT V.	
Scene I.	VIII. 5–7.
Scene II.	VIII. 8–14.

CHAPTER VI.

HISTORY OF THE BOOK ITSELF.

THE fate of the finest of Hebrew poems, the history of the book itself, both as to its outward form and inward purpose, forms a most extraordinary chapter in the annals of literature. We shall here attempt to show how it came to pass that so simple and beautiful a piece of poetry was in the process of time turned into an allegory, and later into a mysterious symbol full of the most advanced dogmatic theology; and shall then, glancing at its remarkable literary history, try to explain the process by which a matchless poem was pulverized into common prose.

Let us first explain what an allegory is, giving several examples; then detail the process by which Canticles lost its historic and literal character, and gained the reputation of having a purely mystic nature and purpose, which did not originally belong to it, and of which the Bible, apart from uncertain analogies, gives no hint whatever.

An allegory is the description of one thing

under the image of another. In an allegory we use the concrete to enforce the abstract, represent one thing in pictures or narrative in order to consider something else. An allegory is a metaphor long drawn out, or a chain of metaphors constantly involving a transfer of meaning. The current of thought must constantly break contact with the words. All literature is full of short allegories, like that of Plato's comparison of the soul to a charioteer drawn by two horses, one white, the other black. Shakespeare's text is rich with these tropical pictures; but the longest as well as the most perfect allegories in the English language are Spencer's "Fairie Queen" and Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." On Spencer's field of the cloth of gold, knights, ladies, lions, lambs, monsters, and demons move briskly; but by these he means to tell us about Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Mammon, Despair, Cruelty, etc. The lions and lambs are only emblems of virtues. So John Bunyan pictures a variety of characters, pilgrims, travelers, and shopmen, and shows the everyday people of middle England two hundred years ago, and what one may see at Coney Island, on Broadway, or at a county fair today. The immortal dreamer's object is to show us moral truths and the temptations,

joys, and trials of a Christian on his journey to Heaven.

An allegory is somewhat different from a parable; for a parable is a narrative of imagined facts or of events not supposed as a whole to have actually happened, while an allegory is usually a continuation of similitudes without the signs of comparisons at hand. Its sense is twofold; thus, "Israel is a cake not turned." Parables do not have metaphors in the telling of them; the seed is seed, the lamp is a lamp, the fish a fish. Allegories are full of metaphors: the grasshopper is some bodily organ, the silver cord is the spinal marrow, the golden bowl is the human skull, etc.

There are many allegories in the Bible. In the eightieth Psalm, Israel is described as a vine brought out of Egypt, planted, tended, rent by the wild boars, trampled down, etc.; which means that the Hebrew nation is in great distress and has many enemies. The description of old age in Ecclesiastes, under the similes belonging to a house, is a superbly beautiful allegory in which windows, doors, pillars, wheels, pitchers, cisterns, etc., refer to the eyes, mouth, heart, limbs, and trunk of the aged human body. Nathan's allegory of the traveler stealing the poor man's pet lamb is another example. So also is the parliament of

the trees and plants in Judges ix., in which the only one that wants to be king is the bramble; as well as the happy family in Isaiah xi., of the lion and the lamb lying down together, and a little child leading them.

A first-rate allegory explains itself, and does not need an interpreter because the interpretation is transparent to all. You can see the fly through the amber at once. As, for example, Christ says, "I am the Vine and my Father is the Husbandman." Sometimes, however, a mixed or inferior sort of allegory must be explained. Then the danger is that the interpreter will discover too many coincidences, and make the application of too many details.

There are some people whose minds revel in allegories. They would find types, shadows, meanings, coincidences everywhere. They ransack the whole Old Testament and reduce everything to symbolism. They would degrade pure history into fiction and try to paint God's lilies and gild his gold. Wherever the number three occurs, they discover the doctrine of the Trinity; twelve, the apostles of Christ; in the color red, blood; in this thing the cross, in that the crown. Every scripture passage has to them a mystic sense, a deep hidden signification, and the plainest statement is an emblem of something different.

Such people turn the Bible upside down, and defeat the very purpose of revelation. God's Word is a book for the race, for plain men, and till the end of time the grammar and dictionary will be the best books to get at what the writers said and meant; while common sense, an humble and willing heart, and prayer for the Holy Spirit will be the best aids to understand just what God means. Just now the grammar and dictionary are battering down the walls of Jewish fables which rabbis have raised around the Old Testament.

Although the Scriptures are abused and turned into excess of allegory through unbridled imagination, or more often through the vagaries of fancy, we must not despise parables, emblems, or types, but must discover, employ, and enjoy them as the apostles did, — soberly, carefully, moderately; as, for instance, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, one of the sublimest and most edifying books in the New Testament.

Sometimes Paul draws an allegory from actual facts of history, but he does not turn the history into an allegory; it is to him actual narration of facts, but facts so related as to be typical.

Between Mount Sinai and Jerusalem, between the son of the slave woman and the

children of the free mother, he draws a comparison in Galatians iv. 22–31. This he does to show Christian freedom by grace as against bondage to a ceremonial law; that is, a man is saved by Christ, and not by the blood of goats and bullocks; and his life must be by faith and good works to God and man, not by questions of meats and drinks and holy days.

A good allegory is a good thing, but to turn a whole book of history or poetry founded on historical facts into an allegory is to smother a living thing and make it a mummy. It is adding to the scripture something not there and taking away what is. Paul made use of Hagar and Sarah to point an argument, but he did not thereby make the historical fact any the less true, or the women any less real flesh and blood of decidedly feminine quality. In showing that freedom was better than slavery, he did not declare that the story of Abraham's casting out of Hagar was a fiction or a myth. Even an apostle had no right to do this. It was still a fact, and the history is true. Paul was careful to state what he was doing: said he, "Which things," that is, which solid facts of history, "*contain* an allegory, for there are two covenants." In the Revised Version we see how clear the apostle makes this matter. The historic facts are also allegorical, because

the women represent covenants. He does not say these events are only an allegory, but that they contain one. Now from this example of the inspired apostle let us draw our rule of interpreting the Scriptures of the Old Testament and especially the Song of Songs.

A tendency to discover allegories may be as much a proof of poverty of imagination as of exuberance of fancy, the latter being the servant of sense, the former the servant of reason. Most of the ten thousand fanciful allegories and meanings which people find in the Scriptures may be safely rejected. We are to beware how we consider any Bible history as allegorical, except that which Christ, the apostles, or inspired persons have treated allegorically. Paul in his use of allegory was strikingly temperate, but the moderation of most commentators on Canticles is not manifest.

Ever let us proceed soberly and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. How dare we turn the Song of Songs, a whole book of the Bible, into allegories and emblems, when neither prophet, apostle, nor the Christ gives us a shadow of right to do so? Surely if the Canticle were an allegory, the New Testament writers, especially Paul, or the primitive Christians, would have seized upon it, used it, and told us this article of their faith.

Furthermore, in all allegories there are hints of their meaning and internal marks of their mystical design. Any child can soon see what John Bunyan is teaching in Pilgrim's Progress. In the Canticle there is nothing of this apparatus of interpretation. Of Christ or of the Church, of the Virgin Mary, of the Resurrection, of the history of Christianity, there is in the language no intimation whatever. Further yet, even the Jews of Alexandria, or those who lived in the time of Christ, who were famous for making allegories, read the Canticle as a poem with a story, but never as a vehicle of dogmatics.

Let us now trace the steps which led to the modern view, such as is set forth in the chapter-headings in the unrevised versions, which do not — despite the profession of the Bible Societies — contain "the Holy Scriptures without note or comment," but a mixture. In these profane additions of printers and commentators to the ancient manuscripts, the mediæval view of the Song of Songs is fossilized. Probably the very first trace of the allegorical interpretation which identifies the Church specifically as the bride of the Canticle is found in a passage in a weak apocryphal book called the fourth book of Ezra, or 2 Esdras. Luther declared this writing worse

than Æsop's fables. Even the Church of Rome refuses to receive it as Scripture, and it is not usually bound up with the other books of the Apocrypha. In 2 Esdras, v. 23, we read:

"O Lord who bearest rule, from every wood of the earth, and from all the trees thereof, thou hast chosen one vine; and from all lands of the world thou hast chosen thee one land; and from all the flowers thereof one lily; and from all the depths of the sea thou hast filled thee one river; and from all cities built thou hast hallowed Sion unto thyself; and from all flying things that are created thou hast called thee one dove; and from all cattle that are made thou hast provided thee one sheep; and from all the multitudes of peoples thou hast gotten thee one people; and unto this people, whom thou lovedst, thou gavest a law that is approved by all."

Now from this mention of the lily and the dove, and the one people beloved, and in all comparisons Israel as the chiefest among ten thousand, came the idea of the church of Israel, that is of the Old Testament, as a bride; which in the seventh chapter and twenty-eighth verse of this same apocryphal book is thus spoken of: "For the time shall come, and it shall come to pass, that when these tokens which I have told thee of shall come, the bride

shall appear and the city shine forth, that is now withdrawn, for my son Jesus shall be revealed with those that are with him, and they that remain shall rejoice for 400 years. And it shall come to pass after these years, that my son Christ shall die, and all men that have breath," etc.

Here then, one thousand years after the writing of the Canticle, when many of its local allusions had been forgotten, and the niceties of its language lost, because Hebrew was a dead language to the majority, when nearly every one of the Jews talked Aramaic, Greek, or other foreign tongues, instead of the ancient language of Palestine, and when allegory had reached the point of a craze among learned men, the first germ of the idea of altering the original meaning of the Song of Songs came into being. A hundred years later, when the Jews had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and Jerusalem had been destroyed, when Hebrew was rapidly becoming an absolutely dead language, and the Talmud was being formed, in which endless tradition wove its web like a spider over the Old Testament as over a closed door, then the learned rabbi Akiba completed in the Jewish church the ascendancy of the allegorical over the literal interpretation.

Another hundred years later, Origen, the

learned divine of Alexandria who first introduced into the Christian church the allegorizing method, wrote a commentary in ten volumes on the Canticle. In this famous book he made the Shulamite to mean the Church of Christ, and Solomon to mean Jesus, and other persons in the poem to stand for friends or enemies of the Church. His tremendous authority settled the question and made the orthodoxy of the time. To doubt his opinions was to become a heretic. Grand old fighter of the heathen, and noble witness to the faith as he was, he filled the Bible with cobwebs. In the Middle Ages this system of interpretation became almost universal. Bernard of Clairvaux preached over fourscore sermons on the first two chapters of the book, and nearly all commentators until the eighteenth century was well past, followed along this track.

Now the long-handled dust-brushes of research and new brooms of fresh study — not of the fathers or of the Jewish rabbis, but of the Bible itself — are sweeping away these purely human imaginations. We are more and more seeing as the Israelites of two thousand and more years ago saw, and reading as they read. We do not now go to the Jews to learn Hebrew or find out what the Old Testament means. We go to the original Scriptures them-

selves. Believing that the Lord is in his holy temple, we expect all the earth to keep silence before Him. We listen to the lively oracles while the voices of scribe and commentator are stilled. The Jews, since the Talmud was formed, have not been nor are they now fed on the pure milk of the Word. They are nursed on rabbinical notions. The veil over their eyes is this Talmud. Probably not more than one out of a thousand can or does read the Old Testament in a fair, and unprejudiced manner. They wear the spectacles put on their eyes by the Talmudical writers, without even suspecting it. But let us as Christians beware lest we too err in like manner, by being led away by the fathers, or the commentators, or the makers of chapter-headings or church lectionaries.

Origen was a man of extremes. Because he at first took the Bible *too* literally, and on the strength of Christ's words about the offending member actually mutilated himself, he afterwards went to the other extreme and took nothing literally. He borrowed the intellectual vices of heathen teachers, and applied to the Holy Scriptures a method of interpretation radically false. He found three or four senses in every text. Said he: "The Scriptures are of little use to those who understand

them as they are written." Hence he ever sought for the hidden and mysterious meanings, and many people still follow him, reveling in the delights of turning one simple piece of glass into a kaleidoscope, and the Bible into a secret society's lodge-room and chamber of mystery. Let us rather follow Christ and Paul, be very sparing of the use of allegory, and travel on the humble but safe road of Bible facts.

We need not go any further and trace out the full history of this unbiblical interpretation of the book before us, nor show how Origen's successors enlarged upon his views, and how subsequent interpreters found nearly everything, even down to the last absurdities of sectarian rhapsody, in the Canticle. This one book has stood for many centuries among the other Scriptures like the heroine of it — cast out of her own place, having no vineyard of her own, keeping the vineyards of her mother's sons, but her own not kept. Being the first of the five Megilloth or rolls, it is read annually once at the feast of the Passover, but is otherwise neglected by the Jewish people. The Church of England has cast it out of her tables of Scripture lessons, though retaining portions of the apocryphal books, such as Tobit, Baruch, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus;

and, emboldened by her example, editors of the Bible in private translation reject this book and insert instead texts from Babylonian Tablets. Alchemists, fortune-tellers, and politicians have let loose their vagrant fancies upon it, until this divine picture of love has lain buried under the rubbish and whitewash of ages of nonsense. Nor is this assertion any the less true because devout souls have in every age found in this writing the parable of the soul's affections and their vocabulary of adoration. Suffice it to say that, on the other hand, since Theodoret of Syria, who died A. D. 457, there have always been Christian scholars who have denied anything either impure in the thought or language of the book, or that it needed an occult scheme of philosophy to explain it, or that it was an allegory relating to Christ and the Church.

Now, thanks to the labors of many students in many countries, yet all coming to substantial agreement, the ancient understanding of it has been regained. Many ministers of the gospel believe, even if they hesitate to preach, the original ancient view, while in a few of our own theological seminaries the simple natural interpretation is taught and demonstrated. It is shown that the title "Song of Solomon" is a literary anachronism and does

not belong to the book, but has been added by tradition; while its own contents prove that Solomon did not write it; and finally that the first and oldest translation of the book from Hebrew into Greek, made three centuries before Christ, lends no color to the popular idea of an allegory. The same may be declared of the pre-Christian works of Hebrew literature entitled the book of Ecclesiasticus, The Wisdom of Solomon, and the writings of Josephus.

To sum up what has been said concerning the internal purpose: (1) There is not a word or a scrap of evidence in the Old or New Testament that gives basis to the notion that the Song of Songs refers in detailed allegory to Christ and the Church, or that bears out this fanciful interpretation. This turning of the poem into an allegory began long after the time of Christ, and was introduced into the Christian Church by Origen, but the Bible gives no countenance to it.

(2) We are to remember that all the headings of chapters and pages, as well as the divisions of the texts of the Bible into chapters and verses, are the work of printers, editors, and uninspired men, and have no divine or rational authority. This method of surreptitious note and comment, amounting virtually to a system of interpretation, is no part of

Holy Scripture, and it improperly influences many people in their conception of the meaning of God's Word.

(3) We are to bear in mind that the words printed in italics are not found in the original language, but are put in simply to make sense or complete sentences, so as to read more easily in English. Very often these words obscure rather than make clear the intent of a passage, and Bible students will often find that a verse becomes stronger, clearer, and better in every way by omitting the italics. Often they unwarrantably convert a lively metaphor or a little allegory into a prosy simile or comparison.

Further, there is not one book in the English version of the Bible, called "King James's," except possibly Job, that needed more revision and retranslation than the Song of Songs, and for the closer approach to its dramatic structure, made by the revisers of 1884, we should be grateful.

Concerning the external history of the poem, the mutations in its literary form, our words need not be many. The ordinary reader of the English Bible notices that in the version of 1884, not only the Song of Songs, but the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, and even parts of Deuteronomy and

Judges, are printed in a fashion that reveals, to some extent, the poetic structure of the original. Easily distinguishable to the eye from the mass of prose, even the song of Lamech stands out like a crystal of garnet in its bed of rock.

Much as has already been done towards improving the outward guise, as well as developing the real meaning and inward spirit of the sacred writings, more yet remains to be accomplished. The researches of scholars into the literary history of Israel, into the nature of the Hebrew language, and their prolonged critical examination of the texts, have revealed beauties of structure and artistic forms never dreamed of since this vehicle of revelation became a dead language. Even yet, with all the wealth of scholarship lavished upon the subject, the record of the psalmists, prophets, and poets of the Old Testament still remains like the negative of a photograph which has been imperfectly developed. A version, a translation, is like a copy printed from the original, in which clearness of impression, tone, light, and shade, and all the details that go to form a perfect picture, are according to the skill and resources of the operator. Other exquisite poems, now unrecognizable as such in the common prose of the Old Testament,

are yet to stand out clearly in a perfected version.

The student of the English Bible may ask how it came to pass that the poetry of the Hebrews was turned into prose. How happened it that the mass even of Jewish worshipers in modern times, though hearing the sacred rolls read in the synagogue so often, never suspected the beauty of the real form within the words they listened to or chanted? Like the men of two centuries ago who looked upon a fossil as only a freak of nature, or an Oriental shepherd who to-day feeds his flock ignorantly among Corinthian capitals or cuneiform inscriptions, there was no suspicion of the original purpose and the actual truth. Utterly lost as to its intrinsic charms, the Song of Songs, as read alike in the synagogue in mediæval and modern times, and in the English Bible, was like the mounds of earth which in Egypt and Chaldea cover grand ruins.

The story of decay, ruin, sleep, and resurrection of the exquisite poem of the Canticle is somewhat like that of an ancient city, except that the lapses happened under guardians and not under enemies. Composed probably in the age of classic Hebrew in northern Israel, its delicate allusions and local color were forgotten in later centuries. When, too, Hebrew

ceased to be spoken and became a dead language, lost to poets and original writers, and only a corpse to be embalmed or dissected by scribes and dogmatists, its poetry was forgotten. The ear and eye of proof-text hunter and disputant of words became dull to literary beauties and harmonies, and the cast of mind common to the Jews was that of the Chinese scholars to-day, between whom and the post-biblical Hebrews there are surprising points of likeness.

Yet these men of Talmud-making times were, after all, only famous according as they lifted up axes upon thick trees, and reduced the living forest of Hebrew inspired literature to a mass of dead timber. They did indeed preserve this timber most carefully by an elaborately artificial system. The traditional pronunciation of the words of the Scriptures was embalmed in a remarkable system of dots, dashes, and other diacritical marks representing vowels, and which to the eye appear not vastly different from the telegraphic alphabet. These tiny marks written outside the letter, or inside of its "bosom" without touching its outline, represent the vowels, double the consonants, and otherwise preserve or affect the sense of the writing. Yet after the best is said that can be said about this Massoretic

or traditional system, it represents tradition, and the tradition only of a time later than the period when the Hebrew was a living language. Providentially, it may be, this highly artificial system, the growth of centuries, preserved from absolute extinction the Hebrew records.

As if, however, the change from a living to a dead language were not enough, the artistic beauty of Hebrew poetry was still further destroyed by the new and peculiar use of the Scriptures in the synagogue. Now came the blows of hammers on the carved work. Any one who attends upon the modern worship of the Jews knows how large a part of the service consists of chanting by the congregation, or reading of the rolls by the preacher, who is a "reader of the law." When the utterances and writings of the holy men of Israel were no longer stern law, eloquent prophecy, or exquisite poetry, when inspiration had ceased, when temple and sacrifices were no more, and mere erudition or tradition-making occupied the Hebrew wise men, then the whole body of Scripture was reduced to a mass of "edifying" reading, or material for synagogue chants. The living word of God was thus turned into a formal liturgy, the exponent of fossilized Jewish orthodoxy.

To fit this artificial method of using the inspired Word, an elaborate system of marks, tones, and accents was gradually developed and set upon the Scripture text; at first honestly, on it but not of it. As cunningly as a spider weaves its web over a flower-bed was this wonderful system which facilitated cantillation woven over the ancient texts. *In time, these reading marks became Holy Scripture to the people.* The old Bible of Jesus and Paul and John was transformed to the popular mind into a dead unity of orthodox and edifying reading matter. Its marvelous diversity of literary form was forgotten in dull uniformity. Jews and Christians alike came to believe in the divine inspiration even of this double system of points and accents, which as with axes and hammers had broken down the carved work of the once splendid temple of living literature. For centuries the marvelous beauties of form, and the spirit and meaning of their ancestral poetry, were forgotten even by the Jews themselves. Practically unknown to Christian scholars until the Reformation period, the Hebrew remained unstudied, and the Church inherited unsuspectingly the vast mass of Jewish tradition. Even when the language of the Old Testament was studied in the universities of Europe and America, it was in the spirit of the

scribes and lawyers, against whom Jesus constantly sent the shafts of his criticism.

Hence, though there was vast erudition, and mighty stores in the memory, and much stuffing of texts into dogmatic cartridges, there was little real understanding of the Bible as literature. It has been only during the past century that the critical and comparative methods, so commended of our Lord Jesus, have been adopted by scholars. The fruit of the toil of the great Hebraists is now before us, and into their labors we may wisely enter. In the Revised Version of 1884, a very cautious and ultra-conservative use of the materials accumulated has been made use of in the text, though a more generous and courageous utilization of them is found in the margin. For even this result, compromise though it be, we ministers and Bible readers may be thankful. The day may yet come when this one of the deathless literatures of the world may be restored to us. To the recovery of the Old Testament as matchless literature, as a temple of glory and delights into which even the ordinary English reader may enter to behold a miracle of purity, beauty, and divine love, the Revision of 1884 has grandly contributed. Whether it shall be accepted in its present form or not, it will serve, nay it has already served, to overthrow the

idols that have too long held their place in the Christian church, like the Baalim beside Jehovah's altar. The revisers have not only helped to show us that he who builded the house hath more honor than the house, but that He that built all things is God.

PART II.

THE TEXT IN THE REVISED VERSION.

THE REVISED VERSION OF A. D. 1884.*

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1 # THE SONG OF SONGS.

(WHICH IS SOLOMON'S.)

ACT I. SCENE I.

(*In the women's quarters of the royal tents. Court Ladies and the Shulamite.*)

COURT LADY.

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:
For thy love is better than wine.

CHORUS.

3 Thine ointments have a goodly fragrance;
Thy name is *as* ointment poured forth;
Therefore do the [1] virgins love thee.

SOLO.

4 Draw me;

* Unaltered as to words, except in chapter iv. 5–7.

[1] Or, *maidens*.

CHORUS.

we will run after thee:

SOLO.

The king hath brought me into his chambers:

CHORUS.

We will be glad and rejoice in thee,
We will make mention of thy love more than of wine:
[1] Rightly do they love thee.

SHULAMITE.

5 I am black,

CHORUS.

but comely,

SHULAMITE.

O ye daughters of Jerusalem.
As the tents of Kedar,

CHORUS.

as the curtains of Solomon.

SHULAMITE.

6 Look not upon me, because I am swarthy,
Because the sun hath [2] scorched me.
My mother's sons were incensed against me,
They made me keeper of the vineyards;
But mine own vineyard have I not kept.

[1] Or, *In uprightness.* [2] Or, *looked upon.*

7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,
Where thou feedest *thy flock*, where thou
makest *it* to rest at noon:
For why should I be as one that [1] is veiled
Beside the flocks of thy companions?

CHORUS.

8 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,
And feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

SCENE II.

(*Royal tent. Solomon and the Shulamite.*)

SOLOMON.

9 I have compared thee, O [2] my love,
[3] To a steed in Pharaoh's chariots.
10 Thy cheeks are comely with plaits *of hair*,
Thy neck with strings of jewels.
11 We will make thee plaits of gold
With studs of silver.

SHULAMITE.

12 While the king sat at his table,
My spikenard sent forth its fragrance.
13 My beloved is unto me *as* a [4] bundle of myrrh,
That lieth betwixt my breasts.

[1] Most ancient versions have, *wandereth*.
[2] Or, *my friend* (and so throughout).
[3] Or, *To the steeds*. Or, *To my steed*.
[4] Or, *bag*.

14 My beloved is unto me *as* a cluster of [1] henna-
flowers
In the vineyards of En-gedi.

SOLOMON.

15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art
fair;
[2] Thine eyes are *as* doves.

SHULAMITE.

16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant:
Also our couch is green.

SOLOMON.

17 The beams of our [3] house are [4] cedars,
And our rafters are [5] firs.

2

SHULAMITE.

1 I am a [6] rose of [7] Sharon,
A lily of the valleys.

SOLOMON.

2 As a lily among thorns,
So is my love among the daughters.

SHULAMITE.

3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my beloved among the sons.

1 Heb. *copher.*
2 Or, *Thou hast doves' eyes.*
3 Or, *houses.*
4 Or, *of cedar . . . of fir.*
5 Or, *cypresses.*
6 Heb. *habazzeleth*, the autumn crocus.
7 Or, *the plain.*

[1] I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.
4 He brought me to the [2] banqueting house,
And his banner over me was love.
5 Stay ye me with [3] raisins, comfort me with apples:
For I am sick of love.
6 [4] His left hand *is* under my head,
And his right hand doth embrace me.

7 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the [5] roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
Until it please.

ACT II. SCENE I.

(*The Shulamite's reminiscence of her lover's visit.*)

SHULAMITE.

8 The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh,
Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.
9 My beloved is like a [6] roe or a young hart:
Behold, he standeth behind our wall,
He looketh in at the windows,

1 Heb. *I delighted and sat down etc.*
2 Heb. *house of wine.*
3 Heb. *cakes of raisins.*
4 Or, Let *his left hand* be *etc.*
5 Or, *gazelles.*
6 Or, *gazelle.*

He [1] sheweth himself through the lattice.
10 My beloved spake, and said unto me,

THE LOVER.

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
11 For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the [2] singing *of birds* is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
13 The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom,
They give forth their fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the steep place,
Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice;
For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

SONG.

15 "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards;
For our vineyards are in blossom."

SHULAMITE.

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his:
He feedeth *his flock* among the lilies.

[1] Or, *glanceth through.* [2] Or, *pruning* of vines.

17 [1] Until the day [2] be cool, and the shadows flee
away,
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a [3] roe or a
young hart
Upon the [4] mountains of [5] Bether.

SCENE II.

(*In a dream, the Shulamite seeks and finds her lover.*)

3

1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my
soul loveth:
I sought him, but I found him not.
2 *I said*, "I will rise now, and go about the city,
In the streets and in the broad ways,
I will seek him whom my soul loveth:"
I sought him, but I found him not.
3 The watchmen that go about the city found me:
To whom I said, "Saw ye him whom my soul
loveth?"
4 It was but a little that I passed from them,
When I found him whom my soul loveth:
I held him, and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him into my mother's
house,
And into the chamber of her that conceived me.

[1] Or, *When the day is cool.*
[2] Or, *break.* Heb. *breathe.*
[3] Or, *gazelle.*
[4] Or, *mountains of separation.*
[5] Perhaps, the spice *malobathron.*

5 [1]I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
Until it please.

ACT III. SCENE I.

(*A royal procession in the streets of Jerusalem. Citizens talking.*)

CHORUS OF PEOPLE.

6 Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all powders of the merchant?

CITIZEN.

7 Behold, it is the litter of Solomon;
Threescore mighty men are about it,
Of the mighty men of Israel.

CITIZEN.

8 They all handle the sword, *and* are expert in war:
Every man hath his sword upon his thigh,
Because of fear in the night.

CITIZEN.

9 King Solomon made himself a [2]palanquin
Of the wood of Lebanon.
10 He made the pillars thereof of silver,

[1] See ch. ii. 7. [2] Or, *car of state.*

The bottom thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple,
The midst thereof being [1] paved with love,
From the daughters of Jerusalem.

CHORUS OF PEOPLE.

11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon,
With the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him in the day of his espousals,
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

SCENE II.

(*Solomon's visit to the Shulamite in the palace in Jerusalem.*)

4

SOLOMON.

1 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair;
[2] Thine eyes are *as* doves behind thy [3] veil:
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That [4] lie along the side of mount Gilead.
2 Thy teeth are like a flock *of ewes* that are *newly* shorn,
Which are come up from the washing;
[5] Whereof every one hath twins,
And none is bereaved among them.

1 Or, *inlaid.* 2 Or, *Thou hast doves' eyes.*
3 Or, *locks.* 4 Or, *appear on mount Gilead.*
5 Or, *Which are all of them in pairs.*

3 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet,
And thy [1] mouth is comely:
Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate
Behind thy [2] veil.

4 Thy neck is like the tower of David builded [3] for an armoury,
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,
All the shields of the mighty men.

5 Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a [4] roe.

7 Thou art all fair, my love;
And there is no spot in thee.

SHULAMITE.

My beloved is mine, and I am his, *
Who feedeth *his flock* among the lilies.

6 [5] Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
And to the hill of frankincense.

[1] Or, *speech.* [2] Or, *locks.* [3] Or, *with turrets.*
[4] Or, *gazelle.* [5] See ch. ii. 17.

* For the re-arrangement of the text in verses 5–7, see pages 204–207.

SCENE III.

(*The Shulamite and her lover, in ideal interview.*)

THE LOVER.

8 "Come with me from Lebanon, *my* bride,
With me from Lebanon:
[1] Look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Senir and Hermon,
From the lions' dens,
From the mountains of the leopards.

9 Thou hast [2] ravished my heart, my sister, *my* bride;
Thou hast [2] ravished my heart with [3] one of thine eyes,
With one chain of thy neck.
10 How fair is thy love, my sister, *my* bride!
How much better is thy love than wine!
And the smell of thine ointments than all manner of spices!
11 Thy lips, O *my* bride, [4] drop *as* the honeycomb:
Honey and milk are under thy tongue;
And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.
12 A garden [5] shut up is my sister, *my* bride;
A [6] spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

[1] Or, *Go.* [2] Or, *given me courage.*
[3] Or, *one* look *from thine eyes.*
[4] Or, *drop honey.* [5] Heb. *barred.*
[6] Or, according to many ancient authorities, *garden.*

13 Thy shoots are [1] an orchard of pomegranates,
with precious fruits;
Henna with spikenard plants,
14 Spikenard and saffron,
Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.
15 *Thou art* a fountain of gardens,
A well of living waters,
And flowing streams from Lebanon."

SHULAMITE.

16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;
Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden,
And eat his precious fruits.

5

THE LOVER.

1 "I am come into my garden, my sister, *my* bride:
I have gathered my myrrh with my [2] spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;
I have drunk my wine with my milk.
[*Aside.*] Eat, O friends;
Drink, yea, drink abundantly, [3] O beloved."

[1] Or, *a paradise.* [2] Or, *balsam.* [3] Or, *of love.*

SCENE IV.

(*First Dream of the Shulamite.*)

SHULAMITE.

2 [1] I was asleep, but my heart waked :
It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh,
saying,

THE LOVER.

"Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my
[2] undefiled :
For my head is filled with dew,
My locks with the drops of the night."

SHULAMITE.

3 I have put off my coat ; how shall I put it on ?
I have washed my feet ; how shall I defile them ?

4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole *of the door*,
And my [3] heart was moved [4] for him.
5 I rose up to open to my beloved ;
And my hands dropped with myrrh,
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,
Upon the handles of the bolt.
6 I opened to my beloved ;
But my beloved had [5] withdrawn himself, *and* was gone.
My soul [6] had failed me when he spake :

[1] Or, *I sleep, but my heart waketh.*
[2] Heb. *perfect.*
[3] Heb. *bowels.*
[4] According to many MSS., *within me.*
[5] Or, *turned away.*
[6] Heb. *went forth.*

I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.
7 The watchmen that go about the city found me,
They smote me, they wounded me;
The keepers of the walls took away my [1] mantle from me.

TO THE LADIES.

8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved,
[2] That ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

(*Dialogue about the Beloved.*)

CHORUS OF LADIES.

9 What is thy beloved more than *another* beloved,
O thou fairest among women?
What is thy beloved more than *another* beloved,
That thou dost so adjure us?

SHULAMITE.

10 My beloved is white and ruddy,
[3] The chiefest among ten thousand.
11 His head is *as* the most fine gold,
His locks are [4] bushy, *and* black as a raven.
12 His eyes are like doves beside the water brooks;
Washed with milk, *and* [5] fitly set.

[1] Or, *veil.*
[2] Heb. *What will ye tell him? That, etc.*
[3] Heb. *Marked out by a banner.*
[4] Or, *curling.* [5] Or, *sitting by full streams.*

13 His cheeks are as a bed of [1] spices, *as* [2] banks of
sweet herbs:
His lips are *as* lilies, dropping liquid myrrh.
14 His hands are *as* [3] rings of gold set with [4] beryl:
His body is *as* [5] ivory work [6] overlaid *with* sap-
phires.
15 His legs are *as* pillars of marble, set upon sock-
ets of fine gold:
His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the
cedars.
16 His [7] mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether
lovely.

This is my beloved, and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

6

CHORUS OF LADIES.

1 Whither is thy beloved gone,
O thou fairest among women?
Whither hath thy beloved turned him,
That we may seek him with thee?

SHULAMITE.

2 My beloved is gone down to his garden, to
the beds of [1] spices,
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

[1] Or, *balsam*.
[2] Or, *towers of perfumes*.
[3] Or, *cylinders*.
[4] Or, *topaz*.
[5] Or, *bright ivory*.
[6] Or, *encrusted*.
[7] Or, *speech*. Heb. *palate*.

3 [1] I am my beloved's, and my beloved **is mine:**
He feedeth *his flock* among the lilies.

SCENE II.

(*Solomon's third wooing. His praises of the Shulamite.*)

SOLOMON.

4 Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem,
Terrible as [2] an army with **banners.**
5 Turn away thine eyes from me,
For they [3] have overcome me.
[4] Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That lie along the side of Gilead.
6 [5] Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes,
Which are come up from the washing;
Whereof every one hath twins,
And none is bereaved among them.
7 [6] Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate
Behind thy veil.
8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines,
And [7] virgins without number.
9 My dove, my [8] undefiled, is *but* one;
She is the only one of her mother;

[1] See chap. ii. 16.
[2] Heb. *bannered* hosts.
[3] Or, *make me afraid.*
[4] See chap. iv. 1.
[5] See chap. iv. 2.
[6] See chap. iv. 3.
[7] Or, *maidens.*
[8] Heb. *perfect.*

She is the [1]choice one of her that bare her.
The daughters saw her, and called her blessed;
Yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

SCENE III.

(*The Shulamite narrates an incident in her life, and dances before the ladies of the court.*)

CHORUS OF LADIES.

10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon,
[2]Clear as the sun,
[3]Terrible as an army with banners?

SHULAMITE.

11 I went down into the garden of nuts,
To see the green plants of the valley,
To see whether the vine budded,
And the pomegranates were in flower.
12 Or ever I was aware, my [4]soul [5]set me
Among the chariots of my [6]princely people.

CHORUS.

13 Return, return, O Shulamite;
Return, return, that we may look upon thee.

[1] Or, *Pure.*
[2] Or, *pure.*
[3] See ver. 4.
[4] Or, *desire.*
[5] Or, *made me* like *the chariots of Ammi-nadib.*
[6] Or, *willing.*

SHULAMITE.

Why will ye look upon the Shulamite?

CHORUS.

As upon the dance [1] of Mahanaim.

7

(*The ladies, admiring the dancer.*)

1 How beautiful are thy [2] feet in sandals, O
prince's daughter!
[3] The joints of thy thighs are like jewels,
The work of the hands of a cunning workman.
2 Thy navel is *like* a round goblet,
Wherein no mingled wine is wanting:
Thy belly is *like* an heap of wheat
Set about with lilies.
3 [4] Thy two breasts are like two fawns
That are twins of a roe.
4 Thy neck is like the tower of ivory;
Thine eyes *as* the pools in Heshbon, by the
gate of Bath-rabbim;
Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon
Which looketh toward Damascus.
5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,
And the hair of thine head [5] like purple;
The king is held captive in the tresses
thereof.

[1] Or, *of two companies.* [2] Or, *steps.*
[3] Or, *Thy rounded thighs.* [4] See ch. iv. 5.
[5] Some ancient versions have, *like the purple of a king, bound, etc.*

6 How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights!
7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree,
And thy breasts to clusters *of grapes.*

SOLOMON.

8 I said, "I will climb up into the palm tree,
I will take hold of the branches thereof:
Let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine,
And the smell of thy [1] breath like apples;
9 And thy [2] mouth like the best wine" —

SHULAMITE (*interrupting*).

That goeth down [3] smoothly for my beloved,
[4] Gliding through the lips of those that are asleep.

(*Her final decision.*)

10 I am my beloved's,
And his desire is toward me.

SHULAMITE (*to her expected lover*).

11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;
Let us lodge in the villages.
12 Let us get up early to the vineyards;
Let us see whether the vine hath budded, *and* [5] its blossom be open,

[1] Heb. *nose.* [2] Heb. *palate.* [3] Heb. *aright.*
[4] Or, *Causing the lips of those that are asleep to move* or *speak.*
[5] Or, *the tender grape appear.*

And the pomegranates be in flower:
There will I give thee my love.
13 The [1] mandrakes give forth fragrance,
And [2] at our doors are all manner of precious fruits, new and old,
Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

8

1 Oh that thou wert as my brother,
That sucked the breasts of my mother!
When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee;
Yea, and none would despise me.
2 I would lead thee, *and* bring thee into my mother's house,
[3] Who would instruct me;
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine,
Of the [4] juice of my pomegranate.
3 [5] His left hand *should be* under my head,
And his right hand should embrace me.

(*To the ladies.*)

4 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
[6] That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
Until it please.

[1] See Gen. xxx. 14.
[2] Or, *over.*
[3] Or, *That thou mightest.*
[4] Or, *sweet wine.*
[5] See ch. ii. 6, 7.
[6] Heb. *Why should ye stir up? or why, etc.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

(*The Shepherd-lover and the Shulamite approaching their mountain home.*)

CHORUS OF COUNTRY PEOPLE.

5 Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?

SHULAMITE.

Under the apple tree I awakened thee
There thy mother was in travail with thee,
There was she in travail [1] that brought thee forth.

(*The bride's prayer.*)

6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:
For love is strong as death;
Jealousy is [2] cruel as [3] the grave:
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
[4] A very flame of [5] the LORD.
7 Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it:
If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
[6] He would utterly be contemned.

[1] Or, *and.*
[2] Heb. *hard.*
[3] Heb. *Sheol.*
[4] Or, *A most vehement flame.*
[5] Heb. *Jah.*
[6] Or, *It.*

ACT V. SCENE II.

(*The Bride and her brothers. Parable of the two vineyards.*)

FIRST BROTHER.

8 We have a little sister,
And she hath no breasts:
What shall we do for our sister
In the day when she shall be spoken for?

SECOND BROTHER.

9 If she be a wall,
We will build upon her [1] a turret of silver:

THIRD BROTHER.

And if she be a door,
We will inclose her with boards of cedar.

SHULAMITE.

10 I [2] am a wall, and my breasts like the towers
thereof:
Then was I in his eyes as one that found
peace.

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;
He let out the vineyard unto keepers;
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring
a thousand *pieces* of silver.
12 My vineyard, which is mine, is before me:
Thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand,

[1] Or, *battlements.* [2] Or, *was.*

And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

LOVER AND BRIDEGROOM.

13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions hearken [1] for thy voice:
Cause me to hear it.

SHULAMITE.

14 [2] Make haste, my beloved,
And be thou like to a [3] roe or to a young hart
Upon the mountains of spices.

[1] Or, *to.* [2] Heb. *Flee.* [3] Or, *gazelle.*

PART III.

STUDIES AND COMMENTS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

THE VINEYARD-GIRL IN THE KING'S HAREM.

CHAPTER I. 1–8.

THE curtain rises upon a scene of Oriental splendor. It is springtime in the land of Issachar. Solomon and the royal household are on a pleasure tour in the northern part of his dominions. In one of the "fat valleys" between the mountains of Tabor and Gilboa, near the hill of Little Hermon, the royal tents are pitched. Horses and chariots, state-palanquins, gorgeous trappings, and brilliantly uniformed body-guards, snow-white pavilions and luxuriant camp equipage, compel comparison with the loveliness of the natural foreground and the grandeur of the distant scenery.

Vineyards, wheat-fields, and olive gardens full of life, labor, song, and color, with vine-clad cottages and flocks of sheep under shade

in sight of shepherds fill the foreground. It is the time of the washing and shearing of fleece, and busy have been the owners of the rams and ewes at the Jordan and its affluents. Rising out of the water, and frisking up the mountain sides of Gilead across the river, their snowy coats glisten in the distance, contrasting with the sleek black hair of the goats that lie or gambol along the mountain side. Everywhere from the dove-cotes is heard the cooing of the happy pet-birds, blending with the soft voices of the turtle and the shy rock-pigeon. The dark-green leaves and scarlet blossoms of the pomegranate adorn the gardens, and the air is laden with the fragrance of gums, grasses, and all manner of nature's perfumes. Afar off gleams the snow-crown of "the white mountain," Lebanon; westward is Carmel and the plain of Esdraelon; while southward are the ever-fertile valleys of Ephraim, and to the west lie the Jordan valley and the hills of Manasseh.

Dazzling to the eyes of the rustics must have been this court splendor brought into their neighborhood. Familiar with the black goat's-hair cloth tents of the Kedar Ishmaelites who wandered restlessly from place to place, they had as yet seen no such upholstery and pomp as that of Solomon's. Those who

looked within these temporary palaces of luxury, or even caught glimpses of the interiors filled with ivory and jewels, India perfumes, and strange pets, went home to tell wonderful stories to eager listeners. The height of interest was reached when it was bruited about at well-curb and evening rest that a maiden of Shunem had been invited — when invitation meant command, and disobedience peril — to join the king's harem. What a dazzling vista opened to the imagination of the country maids and vineyard toilers, as they thought of one of their number established amid such magnificence, with no hard work to soil the hands or exposure to brown the face, with servants and finest clothing and perfume and music and dancing all the day long. All that could fascinate youth, when the senses are most keen, and fancy is most warm, and day-dreams are most bright, lay in the royal invitation. In a few days the tents would be broken up, the cavalcade move to Jerusalem, and then the young girl would behold the splendors of the capital, where silver and gold were as common as stones, and cedarwood as plentiful as fig-mulberry in the lowlands. Who would not envy the good fortune of their neighbor? But, let us glance within.

It is upon the royal harem that the poet

bids us look. Out of his mighty host of women who live to amuse the king, he has selected as part of his traveling household sixty ladies of noble rank, eighty of the grade called *pilegesh* or secondary wives, with perhaps hundreds of fair young girls who are attendants, musicians, and dancers, together with the ordinary women servants. Only one idea, one ambition, have these ladies of the court: it is to please Solomon, to enjoy his favor, his condescension, and to receive tokens of his regard in gifts or the honor of his presence. Hear them!

Lady. O for a kiss from the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine.

In enthusiastic agreement, the other ladies join in the praise of the king.

Chorus. Sweet is the fragrance of thy perfumes, but thy name itself is as ointment poured out; because of this, the maidens love thee.

Has the maid of Shunem listened to these praises, or does she here enter, and is it her voice which speaks?

Solo. The king has brought me into his apartments.

Chorus. We will be glad and rejoice with thee, we will celebrate thy caresses more than wine; rightly do they love thee.

Or does the chorus respond to a wish — since the words might be rendered, "O that the king would bring me" — expressed by one longing for royal favor?

Readers may differ in reproducing the first part of the opening scene to eye and ear, but at verse fifth the Shulamite speaks, as the poet does, with no uncertain sound. It is no pallid beauty of the harem, but a child of out-door life who says, probably in answer to their inquiring glances, and possibly having just entered:

"I am dark" — "but comely," interrupt the ladies.

"O ye daughters of Jerusalem," continues the Shulamite, "as the tents of Kedar" — "as the curtains of Solomon," they rejoin flatteringly.

In her own eyes she is sunburnt and swarthy, and like the dark goat's-hair cloth of the shepherd's tents of the tribe of Kedar; but they praise her rustic beauty as comparable with the royal upholstery.

"Look not in disdain upon me, because I am tanned, because the sun has looked hard at me. My mother's sons were severe with me, they made me keeper of their vineyards, but my own vineyard I have neglected to keep."

Here the heroine of the poem gives us a

little bit of autobiography. In terms of true Oriental self-depreciation, in which every one, especially a girl, is trained from infancy to speak, she has described her neglected personal appearance, which seems to herself in such marked contrast with that of the handsomely attired and soft-complexioned women around her. In the full dress of a state occasion, or in society where the chief work of life is to wear fine clothes, even a man feels keenly the pain of not having on the appropriate garments. How much more a woman, to whom the love of beautiful raiment is innate, and in whose sex the tyranny of costume is relentless. For one like the girl from the country, who is chosen for Solomon's pleasure, as with Esther for Ahasuerus, preparation was doubtless made as to a fitting wardrobe, but yet the sun-browned face could not at once take on the more delicate and pallid hue of those who lived in ease within doors.

Rightly or wrongly, some one is to blame for this, and the maiden from the vineyards lets us into another secret of her home life, as she becomes communicative with the other women. Her step-brothers — so we take them to be, for she calls them her "mother's," not her father's, sons — have not been generous with her. Not only has the sun been scorch-

ing in its effect upon her face, but the heat of their anger has been severe against her. By a pretty play on words, the poet places her between two fires. So, with a young girl's exaggeration, and with prismatics of wit which are better appreciated in the Hebrew than in the English, the author introduces the step-brothers as the second group of the minor characters in the cantata, the ladies of the harem being the first. Three times or more in the piece are the step-brothers heard from. These burly fellows, hard-headed countrymen as they seem in their matter-of-fact humor and practical view of things, are really the guardians of their "little sister" (viii. 8), and make not only her behavior, but her matrimonial prospects, their concern (viii. 8–9).

According to the ancient law of Israel, to use the words of Ewald, "The special and most natural protectors of a free maiden were, besides her parents, her brothers, especially the eldest of them, who often showed themselves far more jealous and active in the matter than the father while he was yet alive. This caused the betrothal and marriage of a daughter only too often to be a pecuniary transaction between these protectors and their future husbands."

This we see illustrated especially in Genesis.

Here in the Song, it seems, the brothers, dazzled by the honor, and perhaps pleased with the worldly or financial advantages, have consented to have their step-sister become an inmate of the royal household.

This allusion to herself and her domestic history is only a parenthesis, for her thoughts are still with her lover, and she thus addresses the absent one. Is it in silent thought, or is she overheard murmuring to herself?

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock, where thou makest it rest at noon: for why should I be as a wanderer beside the flocks of thy companions?"

In this, the first of several descriptions of the one beloved of the heroine of the poem, we read the pet name used by her of the shepherd, but never of Solomon. He is pictured here and always as one in the pasture, or on the mountains, never as a dweller in a city, a king, a monarch, or one busy with the work of government or surrounded with luxury. She longs to know where her lover is, under what shadow of a great rock, or beneath what wide-spreading tree, he has been driven by the "double light" and intense heat of noon; but, to go roaming among the shepherds who were strangers to her, and perhaps free in their remarks about a love-sick girl, to find his particular flock,

would expose her modest feelings to a severe trial.

In all this, the Shulamite talks in a real country dialect, in Galilean speech that "bewrays" her Northern origin, as surely as Peter's pronunciation revealed his personality to the quick-eared servant girl in Herod's palace centuries afterward.

The city-bred ladies, overhearing her talking to herself, make answer to the rustic maiden. Is not this a touch of sarcasm or jealousy, possibly of contempt for her lover's occupation? The chief lady of Solomon's household was the daughter of Pharaoh; and very possibly the Egyptian, to whom "shepherds were an abomination," set the fashion at Solomon's court, and the chief lady shaped the views of the harem. They answer:

"If you do not really know in secret, you prettiest of women in the world, you had better go out among the hoof-tracks left by the flock, and feed your kids among the shepherds' tents."

In other words, these pampered beauties deem her a foolish virgin indeed to keep thinking of a plain country lad, when King Solomon offers her a place in his royal, albeit rather miscellaneous, affections. In their reference to kids instead of lambs in the shepherd's flock, there may be an allusion to the worship

of the Phœnician goddess Astarte, or Ashtaroth, as the Hebrews called her. In the rites of this moon-goddess a kid was the emblem of love. The pure virgin of Shunem was a devout servant of Jehovah, while many of the women in Solomon's harem were idolaters to this Phœnician Venus. For that very reason they were as unable to understand or sympathize with the strict principles of the chaste Shulamite, as is the heathen woman of to-day in polygamy to enter into the mind of the Christian maiden. To one familiar with the literature, customs, speech, and ideas of the women who live where idolatry prevails, and the rulers and chief men of the country keep harems, the amazing purity and modesty of maidens reared in Christian homes is like a revelation from Heaven. The witness of the stone-lore of Tyre and Sidon shows that not only did Phœnician women bear such names as "Devoted to Baal," but that many of them were consecrated to impurity by vows and religious rites in the temples of Astarte.

Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed in spirit like this fair lily of the northern fields. Left alone by the women, a greater trial now awaits her.

ACT I. SCENE II.

THE LILY AMONG THORNS.

CHAPTER I. 8–II. 7.

A NEW character appears upon the scene and speaks for the first time in verse ninth. It is his Imperial Majesty, Solomon himself, suzerain of the vassal nations, lord of all Israel, commander of the armies, who "fills the places with dead bodies," whose enemies bite the dust in death at his word. Who can resist him who has sent even princes to their grave under the assassin's knife? It is fearful even to think of crossing his will.

The Hebrew emperor is a judge of beauty. Having a host of fair faces daily before him, he is not easily led captive by raven tresses, a rosy cheek, or a sparkling eye. Despite her own dispraise, the Shulamite must indeed have graces all her own to attract this jaded man.

"How men propose" is a subject of perennial interest to women, and all literature has been searched to find pictures of the wooing scene. The Bible opens to our view more than one picture of ardent swain seeking the

heart and hand of willing maiden in pure and honorable love.

Solomon makes love in a business way, much as a purchaser would contract for a perch of building stone, or a cargo of provisions. Sensuality knows no eloquence, but purity and sincerity make the silver tongue. Critical and unimpassioned, yet complimentary and polite, the royal voluptuary, using a term the meaning of which hovers between "companion" and "loved one," thus addresses the rustic damsel:

"I have compared thee, my friend, to steeds caparisoned for Pharaoh's chariot. Thy cheeks are comely in their fringes of coins, thy neck in its necklace of beads. We will make thee head-bands of gold and a necklace of knobs of silver."

Think not the king a jockey because he compares his lady friend to one of his mares, and possibly draws the imagery of his promises from the head-frame and gay tassels of his noble black steed. In our Western eyes it is not in good taste to compare maiden, sweetheart, or wife to a horse. The Roman poets, however, did it, and the Arabs do it yet, the comparison being accepted as delightful flattery. Remember, too, that horses, once associated only with Egyptian slavery and long forbidden in Israel, were at this time new and

wonderful things in the cities of Israel. It may have been a poet of Solomon's time who described in matchless apostrophe the war-horse in the book of Job. Even now, the love of the fleet animal sometimes turns a man's thoughts away from his wife and family. It is not certain but that some men love their pet trotters and pacers more than their children, and the excitement of the races more than the simple joys of home.

To the Galilean maiden, adorned it may be with rich braided hair within a simple head-dress, bordered perhaps with rows of bronze or silver coins, and her neck decorated with uncostly jewelry made by Phœnician bronze-smiths, the great king promises golden circlets, row upon row of gold coin, and necklace damascened with points of silver like the horse-bridles of his cavalry. It is no princess or earthly king's daughter to whom Solomon thus condescends. It is one unused to rich gifts.

Is the rustic maiden won by the promises of jewelry and finery, such as young women are usually anxious to own? Such presents might easily influence her favorably. Is she inclined to yield?

Not yet. The "ointment poured forth," as the court ladies named the king, is not yet her accepted perfume. The savor sweet to her soul

is wafted from pastures, not from divans. She intimates that while the king sat at his table, or rested on his couch, that is, when he was absent, she was most happy. As it is, she thinks of her beloved, who is to her as precious nard.

Maidens of to-day, as in all the ages since love was born in Eden, call their absent lovers sweet pet names, using the terms of endearment borrowed from things most familiar and also most precious. The Shulamite's names for her shepherd-lover are, "my nard," my "bag of myrrh," my "bunch of cypress flowers." Hear her:

"Even while the king sat at his table, my spikenard yielded its sweet odor. A vial of myrrh resting in my bosom is my beloved to me. As a cluster of cypress-blossoms from the gardens of En-gedi is my beloved to me."

Note here how differently the words in verse thirteenth sound as we re-read them naturally. In the proper rendering of the Hebrew, the unrevised and offensive phrase "he shall lie all night," etc., disappears, and with it the last suggestion of anything inconsistent with propriety. Grammar and parallelism show that the reference of place is to the myrrh and not to the lover. The young girl is simply comparing her betrothed, her spikenard, myrrh, and cypress flower, to what is sentimentally

equal to our buttonhole, belt, or corsage bouquet, which she wears for ornament, instead of the jewelry promised by Solomon. The maidens of Israel, as we learn from the Hebrew of Isaiah, called the pretty vials of perfume, made of snow-white onyx or alabaster, which they wore suspended round their necks between their heart and their garments, "soul-dwellings," or "the houses of the soul," the perfume inclosed being the soul of their favorite friend or lover. While virgin modesty bows her head under the royal flatteries, the sweet odor on her own bosom ascends gratefully to the sense of smell, reminding her of him whom she always calls "the beloved," now far away.

Thus, under a critical study of this lovely Bible picture of true love, all suspicion of anything that could shock propriety vanishes. The purest-minded virgin may safely read the Song of Songs, in which is no trace of immoral thought. "Marked with Oriental abandon, yet unlike all other pastorals, Latin, Greek, or Eastern, it has not the vestige of a putrid stain." No expurgations, omissions, or apology are needed for this book. It stands forth amid erotic literature as chaste as unsunned snow, a miracle of purest thought and diction as compared with the love poems of Asia.

The conversation continues, Solomon talking to this new addition to the list of "virgins without number" in his train; but though her words seem directed to the king, her heart is with her "beloved," and her thoughts are upon the life amid nature which she so loves. Not only is her speech in the Galilean rustic dialect, while the king's is in the polished language of Judea, but while her talk is of things home-made and out-doors, his is of works of art and of skilled workmen.

Solomon. Lo, thou art lovely, my dear. Lo, thine eyes are as doves.

Shulamite. Lo, thou art lovely, my beloved, yea, pleasant; our arbor is green.

Solomon. The roof-beams of our house are of cedar, the wainscoting of cypress.

Shulamite. I am only a wild flower of the plain, a lily of the valley.

Thus she refuses to be identified with the hot-house blooms, delicate and frail, that thrive in courts, love the warm breath of flattery, and hang on princes' favors.

The place called Sharon, usually written as a proper name, is throughout the Bible *the sharon*, or the great plain or broad field which contains the largest space of level land in Palestine. Instead of the "rose," — our queen of flowers, brought long after Solomon's time

from Persia, — a simple wild flower is what the Shulamite calls herself. She is only a daisy of the meadow, only the lily that modestly hides in the glen. It was probably this idea and her own words, very probably this very passage, which Jesus had in mind, when in the region of her home he said, "Consider the lilies of the field." As he commends simple purity rather than gaudy display, so here the poet sets in antithesis the stainless girl and the luxurious and sin-dyed king.

The quick and happy repartee now put by the poet in the mouth of her admirer shows the character as well as the beauty of the heroine. She is of a different temper from the other women who throng the royal harem, — the worshipers of Astarte, the odalisques, the dancing-girls, the heathen beauties, and the frivolous playthings, — women in form, but silly children in nature. Here is one pure, strong, real, sincere woman, true even amid unwonted allurements to vows made and faith plighted.

"As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters," answers Solomon.

A holy character flourishing amid uncongenial circumstances, the seed of the kingdom unchoked of the brambles, pure religion maintained amid persecution, has in all the ages of

the Christian Church been a favorite symbol. "The Church under the Cross" in the Netherlands, and of the Waldenses, early chose this as their emblem. The thorns of oppression, of flattery, of false religion, could no more contaminate or kill the pure faith of the churches of Holland or Italy, than could uncongenial influences wither this flower of Israel.

The maiden in return sings the praises of her "beloved," comparing him to the sweet-breathed apple-tree, which in the springtime is all glorious with beauty, and in autumn all golden with fruit. In the natural poetry of the Hebrews, the apple-tree takes its name from a word meaning to breathe, — the fragrant breath of the tree, the perfume of the fruit being especially esteemed. It is triply valuable for shade, blossom, and refreshment.

"As the apple-tree among the wild trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. Delightedly I sit under his shade, and his fruit is delicious to my taste. O that he would bring me into the vineyard, his very shadow over me being love."

In memory of past hours of joy, and in hope of future meeting, the love-lorn girl cries out for the fruits of the grape-vine and of the apple-tree, which, in figurative language, stand for the joys of the communion of innocent love,

the kiss and caress, enjoyed in vineyard and orchard.

"O comfort me with (such) raisin-cakes. Refresh me with (such) apples, for I am faint with love."

Thus, in heart-sickness of pining and loneliness, the heroine gives way to her feelings in desiring to be with her lover:

"Let his left hand be under my head, and his right arm support me."

How true the poet here is to the actual facts of the young girl's life. These being the words of a maiden absolutely without guile, they can bear but one meaning of innocent longing for the companionship of one beloved. Yet if heard or overheard by less guileless ears, whether inmate of harem, or auditor of the cantata, whether seen by spectator in Palestine or reader of the English Bible, other meanings more or less turbid might be discerned. To the pure all things are pure, and if there be one thing pure under the blue sky it is a young virgin; but the Bible and this poem are read by others besides the daughters reared in Hebrew and Christian homes.

Did the lip of proud princess curl, or the eye of odalisque in Solomon's zenana shoot out the darts of suspicion at the Shulamite?

Was it woman's unbelief of woman, the mocking, incredulous sneer on lip or eye, that drew out the stern adjuration of the Hebrew maiden? Or is it the pæan of triumphant fidelity which fills the exultant and defiant strain that thrice echoes through this drama? Compared with the gentleness of her other speeches, this oath seems like a peal of thunder.

"I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the hinds of the fields that ye rouse not my love till it please."

This is no soothing ditty which the poet makes issue from her mouth. The rustic maid swears by the creatures most free and least influenced by artificial life that her affections are not to be either incited or excited except by her own inclination. "Till it please," is the word; for love must be born of God, not roused by gifts or bribe. In the same word with which Jehovah names his people when purified and restored, — Hephzibah, my delight is in her, — we find this same strong word *hephsi*, meaning delight, inclination applied to love. This fire of God is not to be wantonly excited, but is to delight in its object. This may not be good or palatable doctrine to those managers of the marriage

market who consider all poor, or rising but impecunious, young men as "detrimentals." Too many women and match-makers have "the world set in their heart," and parents, who have survived and forgotten all sentiment, regard anything like real love between young people not on the same social and financial level as hurtful nonsense.

We can easily imagine the advice given to the poor maiden of Shunem about choosing between "a lion and a mouse," in the form of Israel's king and one of Galilee's ten thousand shepherds. It is quite certain that the natural interpretation of the Song of Songs will never be popular with those who have come to years or condition of heart when sentiment is so often dead, and who believe in marriages of property and convenience rather than of true affection. Yet the lesson of this part of God's Word comes with equal force to the young man who is seeking to win a maiden's heart. It is best not to awaken love till it please. The would-be husband risks an awful peril in rousing a young girl to too hasty decision. How many men wish to marry in a hurry! Delaying for years on account of business' or ambition's sake the choice of a partner and the gentle art of winning a helpmeet, many a foolish man makes himself all ready, after months

it may be of self-preparation, and then expects a maiden to give answer with promptness, even though his proposal may have come at her like a battering-ram. Is it not best not to hurry a woman until she is sure of herself? Is it not a wrong to rob her of the season of romance, the time for courtship? Does not God in nature teach us the lesson of bud and blossom before ripe fruit, of blade and ear before the ripe corn in the ear? Even to the coquette, this adjuration may give food for solemn thought. The awful record of unhappy marriages and divorces would be marvelously shortened, if these words were deeply pondered by young and old.

ACT II. SCENE I.

THE DOVE IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCKS.

CHAPTER II. 8–17.

IN Act II. the heroine's environment changes from the surroundings of royalty to the vine-clad cottage among her native hills. Here are pictured gardens and fig-trees, hill-pastures and mountains, and the characteristic vicinage of a north Palestinian home. The rainy season of winter is over, and all nature wears the festal garments of springtime. We listen now to the narrative, by the Shulamite to the court ladies, of a sweet experience of her life before she was brought to the royal quarters. As usual, her talk is in the Galilean dialect.

She hears a voice beloved and a footstep familiar.

"Hark! my beloved! Ha! here he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My love is like a gazelle or a fawn. There! he stands behind our garden wall, his eyes twinkle through the window, his face blooms at the lattice."

As a vine of honeysuckle or morning glory

winding its perfumed way over the trellis will come in through the meshes to open bright petals on the inner side, so the maid at home sees her lover's face blooming through the lattice, flushed with the joy of seeing her whose face is ever on his heart. Hear his poetic invitation, his serenade song, in genuine lover's language, for as she tells this reminiscence of her life to the court ladies she continues :

"Called my beloved and sang to me :

"'Up, my love, my fair one, and come forth ; for see, the winter is gone, the rain is over, is past, the flowers appear in the fields, the time for singing (while we prune the vines) has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land. The fig-tree sends forth the aroma of its figs, and the tender buds of the grape-vine yield fragrance. Up, my love, my beauty, and come away.'"

So invites the young mountaineer, who is here and always in the poem the "beloved," in words whose images are very different from those that saluted the maiden's ear and imagination when Solomon flattered her in the palace. The royal suitor's compliments were borrowed from horses and chariots, harness, jewels, ceiling-beams, and dados, — all the artificial luxury of gorgeous pavilions or city houses. The homespun lover invites to out-

door delights, to simple and innocent enjoyment of nature. Not horses, but birds; not imported cosmetics and apothecary's perfumery, but nature's fragrance in vine and blossom; not the harp and zither, but the sweet note of the turtle-dove, shall she have and hear. Nothing can be in greater contrast than the love-sonnets of the royal suitor and the glowing strains of the plebeian lover, in this exquisite cantata. The formal advances of the one and the spontaneous grace of the other are apparent.

How does the maiden answer her Galilean shepherd lover?

Perhaps she is coy. She lingers.

Just here let us pause to analyze the feelings in her bosom as she stands on the threshold of her home, eager, yet self-restrained, while the war of the roses make a battlefield of her cheeks, as red and white struggle for victory.

Is it modesty, bashfulness, diffidence, or shyness that puts feet and heart at odds, that makes her waver between "go" and "stay"? Let us analyze these four words. Modesty is a full, first-class virtue, and arises from a low estimate of ourselves, and often is but a candle to show one's real merit. Bashfulness is an agitation of the spirits in coming into the presence of others. Diffidence springs from too

much distrust of self. Shyness comes from excessive self-consciousness, and a painful impression that every one is really looking at us. It is really a kind of vanity.

So say the oracles of lexicography.

Now, modesty in deportment is becoming to all, maid or married, child or adult, man or woman; but bashfulness usually results in blunders; diffidence makes a man a burden to himself, especially in society; while shyness creates a reserve which is often mistaken for haughtiness, so that persons least inclined to severity are not infrequently taxed with pride and an unsociable and even unfriendly spirit.

Shall not we, like this fair Hebrew, ever cultivate modesty; leave bashfulness for nervous people and ill-bred children; educate ourselves out of diffidence; and give over shyness to vain and light-headed folks, and especially to hermits and narrow individuals who think all the world is gazing at them and is interested in their least concerns?

Modesty is the jewel of the Shulamite maiden. She waits at her lover's call. Her coyness induces him to begin again his invitation. He calls her by no pet name of city bauble, of hot-house flower, or of India spice. She is a dove, not of the ordinary tamed sort

in dove-cote or pigeon-tower, but one hiding modestly away.

"O my dove, in the clefts of the rocks, in the recesses of the cliffs, let me see thy form, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and lovely is thy figure."

Does she yield sweetly, and do the lovers then saunter forth hand in hand for holiday and delight? Or do the step-brothers here interrupt and postpone the meeting, and send her to her work with rough words? Have they given her orders to catch the little foxes and exterminate the pests of the vineyard? Is this the explanation of her mother's sons' being angry with her? If so, may we not suppose that she turns their commands into a song, and goes forth singing the words with glee? Possibly we have here, however, the song of the rustic lover himself, and this supposition has support in the idea that the word "spake" (*anah*) of verse tenth means also to sing. It is more than probable that, whatever view we take, we have here a snatch of the popular balladry, such as might often have been heard on the hills of Issachar twenty-five centuries ago.

"Catch us the foxes,
The little foxes, spoiling the vineyards,
For our vineyards are in bloom."

So, the Israelitish lads and lassies lightened their toil. It is springtime, and the long-nosed cubs are coming out of their holes. At this season they are especially apt to injure the vineyards by undermining the walls, cutting the roots of the vines, and gnawing the stems and young shoots. The little foxes are even more dangerous than the old ones. A vine-dresser would gladly let the young brush-tails have a few bunches of grapes when ripe, but he objects seriously to having his roots and sprouts nibbled to pieces. All foxes are fond of the luscious clusters, as we well know, and Reynard has furnished us with the well-known proverb of "sour grapes," — evidently known even in Solomon's time, — which is the symbol of impotent jealousy, or unattainable desire curdled even to envy. Big foxes allow at least the grapes to grow, be they sweet or sour, but little foxes spoil the growth of either. For other beasts there may be some law and mercy, but of the vineyard-destroyers, be they Hebrew *shual* (1 Sam. xiii. 17), fox, or jackal, the law then as now is told us by Walter Scott:

> "Who ever recked where, how or when
> The prowling fox was trapped or slain?"

Whether we are to understand the poet as intimating that the severe and magisterial step-brothers interrupted and separated the

lovers by their command to their younger sister to be about her work of guarding the vineyard against the foxes, or not, it makes little difference in her feelings to her beloved except to intensify them. Love makes second springtime in her heart. She assures the daughters of Jerusalem of her unswerving affection to the absent one.

"My beloved is mine and I am his, who feedeth his flock among the lilies."

In their life in the home highlands, the one toils in her vineyard, the other feeds his sheep in the meadows; but once the allotted work done, then comes the cool of the day, and this is the time for the lovers' meeting, from twilight until the hour of separation. The prospect of this reunion cheers and lightens the labors of both during the heat and burden until the day cools, that is, until evening approaches, the sunset breeze blows, and the moving shadows have lengthened and fled along the ground until in dusk they disappear. Then, in the poetry of the Hebrew idiom, "the day breathes itself away."

"When the day cools, and the shadows flee away, return, haste, O my beloved, and be thou like a gazelle over the separating mountains."

The sentences of this pretty refrain, full

of the poetry of the sunset breeze, the last breath of day, the racing shadows, the leaping hind, and the old mountains wrinkled with gorge and ravine, vibrate true poetry. More than once it recurs in the poem, and if this cantata were ever sung in the open air we can easily imagine the effect of this sweet song of love's invitation.

It is noticeable how the Shulamite describes the man of her choice: never as a king, or courtier, or a dweller in cities, but always as a fleet-footed mountaineer, or shepherd who pastures his flock amid the flowery meadows, or in the dales where the lilies bloom. The sentence descriptive of his occupation is added with emphasis. "My beloved to me and I to him, — he who feedeth [his flock] among the lilies," is the picture which, briefly and vividly, she draws of her beloved, who is not Solomon.

ACT II. SCENE II.

IN DREAM-LAND.

CHAPTER III. 1–5.

THE next scene in the cantata, beginning chapter iii., takes us back to the city. It is a dream, and here, as always in the Bible, the description of the dream-scenery, dissolving views, and persons is felicitously true to life. We may not always dream of what we think most about, but our sleep-closed eyes will see only what is upon the landscape of our experience.

Men whose talk is of oxen will dream of oxen, shepherds have visions of their flocks, engineers of cars and railways, tennis players of tennis, students of books and recitations; while the clergymen have their one typical dream, with variations, of being in church with something lacking or out of order, of facing an audience without due preparation, of failing to find hymn, text, or robe, or to do properly what in actual life they do with propriety a hundred times a year. The country girl in her sleep

will imagine herself lost in the streets of a great city. Many things absurd and fantastic will start before our sleeping consciousness, but all the elements will come out of our experience — what we feel or know, think or read about. We dream only about that which has met our waking eye or thoughts, although we cannot always trace the links of connection. The combinations of the kaleidoscope of dreams are strange, but the parts are familiar. The images on the brain are rearranged into new forms without judgment or the regulating faculty. Whereas the root-sense of our English word "dream" is that of sound or music, and the Greek idea that of noise or tumult, the Hebrew word photographs the thought of a man tied or bound, his senses congealed or closed, so that surprise or wonder cannot enter to take part with the other faculties of the mind.

Chapter iii. begins a dream which the Shulamite thus narrates:

"Lying upon my bed in the darkness of night, I was looking for him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I said to myself:

"'I shall arise now, and go about the city in the streets and squares. I shall seek him whom my soul loveth.'

"I sought him but I found him not.

"Then the night watchmen who patrol the city

met me. I asked them, 'Him whom my soul loveth, have you seen him?' but I had hardly more than passed by them when I found him whom my soul loveth. I grasped him and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, yes, even into my mother's room in presence of the author of my being."

Note here one of the characteristics of a dream. The dreamer's home, remember, is in northern Palestine, at Shunem in Galilee. Jerusalem, with its avenues and plazas, about which the court ladies have told her, and about which her fancy has been busy, lies in the far South. She dreams that she is seeking her lover, and imagines herself doing an impossible thing — walking about "the city," Jerusalem, at night, when the streets are full of revelers, requiring police to patrol the thoroughfares to look out for fire, thieves, drunkards, and the disorderly characters so numerously mentioned in the book of Proverbs.

Innocently she supposes every one is acquainted with her lover and knows him, though he most probably has never been heard of beyond his native pastures.

How true is this to human nature, to people absorbed in one idea, especially to simple folk without much knowledge of the world. Many young folks of the present day are apt

to suppose the whole world is moved at the report of their engagement, or marriage, or business concerns. The centre of the universe, to most people, is the pronoun I. The little child with a new pair of shoes, who walks into church thinking that every man, woman, and child from pulpit to front door is gazing on that particular purchase, is a type of the self-conscious and self-important lad or lassie wrapped up in one idea.

The Shulamite evidently believed her lover was a public man of vast importance. She knew him well, therefore every one else surely must, for she asks the watchmen, without mentioning name, date, or place, "Have you seen him, my lover, the one I love?"

But the watchmen most probably gave her a policeman's stare instead of a drawing-room answer.

Then suddenly she sees him whom she loves and grasps him by the hand, leading him — by one of those curious possibilities of dreams, by which space and distance are annihilated — out of the thoroughfare of the capital to her mother's house, or from Jerusalem to Shunem — a hundred miles in a second

This act of taking her lover into her mother's presence to show to her parent her conquest, and to introduce him to her family, shows the

childlike, artless, and dutiful disposition of the girl. It is a proof of the absolute guilelessness of maidenhood.

In this respect, even in her dream, the Shulamite is an example to modern youths and maidens. It would certainly save many broken hearts and ruined lives if daughters now would make confidants of their mothers, and in presence of those who love them best enjoy the innocent pleasures that spring from the association with young men. How many foolish people come to the parson's to get married, and, after the ceremony is over, plead that it be kept quiet, — "Don't advertise it, for the world!" Better the innocence of the Shulamite than the smart secrecy of the clandestine marriage.

Finally, whether waking or sleeping, whether at rustic labor at home, or enjoying the luxury of king's palaces, whether in the hamlet of Shunem, in the royal tent on its way to the capital, or in the city of Jerusalem, but especially exultant in the presence, real, remembered, or expected, of her true and accepted lover, the heroine of the poem concludes this, as she does every experience, with the solemn adjuration which thrice recurs. It is in fresh memory of her mother's home with her lover beside her that she now cries out:

"I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor excite love till it please."

Note here that some of the expressions in Canticles, as we have rendered them, differ in sense from those in the English version of 1611; and, as we give them, they are less objectionable to the moral sense of the Christian, than in the old unrevised version of the English Bible. Now it is true that different translators render certain passages differently, and the reason is plain. The expression in English will be according to the theory of the poem and the thought of the translator or reader. Bring to Canticles a frivolous or prurient mind, and one can find much that gratifies a depraved taste. Read it with a chaste, nay even with a fairly unbiased mind, and there is nothing impure or improperly suggestive.

King James's translators acted on the theory that Solomon wrote the poem and refers to the Shulamite as his bride; hence the sentences not in harmony with good taste, though they may have suited the taste of the age in the England of three centuries ago. The translators seem to have been more familiar with the Vulgate and Septuagint than with the original text, besides needlessly marring many tender Hebrew passages, especially in

Isaiah, with a truly Saxon coarseness. Renan, who sees in Christ only a Galilean peasant, in Ecclesiastes a dyspeptic cynic, and in all the Old Testament nothing divine, will of course discover in *Le Cantique* only the coarse flirtations of a dancing-girl and dialogues fitted for beer saloons. But honest-minded scholars, and especially those who reject the allegorical theory, find what we believe, that there is nothing objectionable or offensive to refined taste in the entire language of the cantata, except possibly a passage in chapter vii. which the poet rightly puts into the mouth of the voluptuary Solomon. According to the natural theory of the poem, there is no need for improper language or words of double meaning. In sentences fitting, glowing, passionate, poetic yet pure, modest yet strong; in noble suggestion of naive simplicity, with hearty delight in nature, and with artless filial affection, the Galilean maiden speaks, her chastity of thought ever prevailing over the ardor of her images.

We pity those whose eyes cannot enjoy the study of an undraped statue or a picture in which Art touches chastely her noblest subjects; and if we pity those whose culture is so lacking, in whom is absent the sense of appreciation of the divine masterpieces of beauty in the human body, how much more should we

pity those who cannot enjoy with holy pleasure the study of the Song of Songs.

The inspired poet does not here sing of the spiritual love of Christ and the Church, for the simple reason that in his view the pure love of man and woman in itself is divine, even kindled by Jehovah himself.

ACT III. SCENE I.

THE ROYAL PROCESSION.

CHAPTER III. 6–11.

INTO the Jerusalem of Jehovah's temple, palaces of marble ornamented with ivory, grand buildings in new and strange designs of architecture which compel contrast with the wooden dwellings of David's time, the royal procession now enters amid the gleaming of steel and the waving of banners. The tents of the king's household, which had been pitched in the region of the Shulamite's home, have been folded up, and the journey to the capital taken down the Jordan valley to the low lands of Jericho, whence began the ascent through "the wilderness," that is, the country remote from towns or cities.

On approaching the city of the great king, clouds of incense envelop the cortège, from fragrant gums and spices burned according to Oriental customs, still prevalent, during the movements of royalty or dignitaries of highest rank. The perfumes of Arabia and India are

wafted on the breeze, and as the glitter of the king's car of state and of the flashing blades of the cavalry escort is caught sight of from the battlements of Jerusalem, we hear the cry of the crowds of spectators lining the walls and eminences. Each of the various speakers points out what especially rivets his attention.

First citizen, or chorus of spectators: "Who is this coming up out of the wilderness as in pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders imported by the merchants?"

Second citizen: "Look, it is the palanquin of Solomon. Threescore mighty men are round about it of the veterans of Israel."

The admiration of the people for the Gibborim, or veterans, many of them, it may be, scarred in numerous battles, is very great, albeit most of them were foreigners. They formed the life-guard of the king, and carried out his orders, however terrible or despotic. Such a military convoy was needed, for even Solomon, who had sent so many others to death, could not travel through his own dominions, in which were many tribes and nationalities, with entire safety. Besides, with all his public works, extravagant architecture, and costly navy, dazzling luxuriance in the city and lavish expenditure on pleasure-seats, he

never gave the country either a good police system, or first-class administration of public roads. The robber by day on the road to Jericho still waylaid, and the nocturnal marauder still prowled, so that the keen blades of the Gibborim guards were very apt to be useful as well as ornamental. Of the valor and ability of this superb corps, there was no popular doubt.

Third citizen: "They all handle the sword and are expert in war. Every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night."

With the introduction of horses and chariots into Israel, not only the war vehicles and facilities for ordinary transportation were greatly improved upon, as compared with the old days of the mule and litter, but in traveling equipage also wonders of comfort and luxury were wrought. The *mittah* here spoken of was a palanquin or reclining bed, or more properly a portable room or chamber, borne on the backs of draught animals, and as luxuriant in its way as the palace or boudoir car of to-day. In his own "private car," Solomon was accustomed to travel from Beersheba, where the limits of fertile land met the southern desert, to Dan, where the mountains of Lebanon made the northern frontier. In cars or palanquins similarly transported, but probably far less costly

in construction and gorgeous in decoration, the veiled ladies of the harem traveled. In one of these wheelless carriages of the royal train we may imagine the Shulamite traveling far from her home to the great city, possibly even with the honors of a queen.

All eyes, however, are directed to the royal palanquin, ordinarily set apart for the king's use only, yet to-day holding a new occupant. The fame of the beautiful Shulamite, the latest object of the favor of Solomon, has preceded both to the capital city; and now, though the cedar and fragrant woods, the gold and silver ornaments, the railings of precious metal and cushions of Tyrian purple, the embroidered rugs and inlaid floor, are admired, yet the target of all eyes is the lily of the northern valleys.

Fourth citizen: "King Solomon had made for himself a traveling-room of the wood of Lebanon. The pillars of it are of silver, the back-rest of gold, the seat of purple, the interior beautified by the one called 'love' above the daughters of Jerusalem."

The voice of a fifth spectator, or of a chorus, bids the women of the old city, Zion, to come out of their houses and look forth from the terraces, roofs, and gardens, as the train sweeps through the city gates and up into the avenues

of the new city built upon Moriah and the hills.

"Come forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of his gladness of heart."

In Hebrew idea the city was the mother, and the inhabitants the sons and daughters. The "daughters of Zion," who here appear in public, are the honorable women living in the old city of David, the city proper of homes and dwellings, and not in the new and garish part of the capital where the "daughters of Jerusalem," or inmates of the harem, dwelt. Between the two hills of Zion and Moriah there was a valley or ravine, called later the Tyropœon, one hundred feet deep, which Solomon had crossed by a massive viaduct built on piers and arches. The bridge, from the solid masonry on the southwest angle of the temple to the first of the series of piers built over the valley, was nearly fifty feet long, a fragment of its northern end being yet seen in "Robinson's arch." The daughters, or women of Zion, are invited to take a look at their sovereign, who to-day wears his kingly robes, and on his head, if not the emblem of kingly power, the chaplet of the expectant bridegroom. Is it possible that he offers to make the Shulamite one of

his wives of first grade? That the country-maid is not only to join the harem, but to take high rank in it, as a princess?

So ends the first strophe of the third canto. The reference to Solomon's day of nuptials and coronation recalls his marriage with the Egyptian princess; and, as is yet the custom in the East, the chaplet or floral diadem was placed on his head by the queen mother, the beautiful Bath-sheba.

How times must have changed since the days of Moses! Then, Israel was a slave nation, and an Egyptian looked down on a Hebrew as one of a degraded race, as a chattel, but not a person. Now, Pharaoh makes an alliance with Solomon at the very beginning of his reign, — with the king of these Hebrews whom his ancestors held as slaves. He even assists the armies of Israel in putting down the Canaanitish rebels, and gives to David's son his daughter in marriage. To furnish her with a dowry, the Egyptian father sent a naval expedition of war-galleys across the Mediterranean, and, landing at Joppa, reduced and set on fire the town of Gezer, treated the Canaanitish inhabitants with the severity of a conqueror's rights, and then bestowed the revenues of the territory upon his daughter for her "pin money," or, according to ancient lan-

guage, "girdle money." It was possibly in honor of Solomon and his bride that the 45th psalm, which is a bridal hymn, an epithalamium, was written, and it is of her, the daughter, probably, of that Shishak whose portraits yet look at us with their granite eyes in the Egyptian monuments, that it is said:

"The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace."

This was in the days of Solomon's innocence and youth. And if the pretty princess out of sunny rainless Egypt with its overflowing plenty should, when leaving father and mother to live in a foreign land, sometimes feel homesick in the comparatively damp climate of cloudy and rainy Judea, notwithstanding that she dwelt in an ivory palace, that her lover was royal, and that her husband was a king, what then?

Hear what is said:

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, worship thou him. . . .

Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations : therefore shall the people praise thee forever and ever."

This happy event, remember, was at the opening of Solomon's reign, before even the temple had been built, before Jerusalem had become the superbly adorned city full of the metropolitan splendor of later days ; so that the lovely princess at first lived for some years in the old part of David's city, on Zion hill, until her palace was built.

Now, let us ask, How did Solomon the bridegroom in his later years act out the spirit of husbandly loyalty? Alas, we know too well what the years brought ; for Solomon's life degenerated from spirituality to worldliness and lust. He violated the express commands of God, and multiplied wives, dancing-girls, and concubines until he became a sultan with a harem. True, there have been harems larger than those which the Hebrew emperor reared and filled, but this is slight palliation of his iniquity. Well said a certain writer, "Europe could not have had a Solomon," for Israel's king was an Asiatic of Asiatics.

Here, in the Canticle, we find him, in addition to his heathen wives, endeavoring to win

over to his harem the Hebrew maiden, the Shulamite, who has thus far resisted royal blandishments, and remains faithful to her shepherd affianced. Having failed to gain her by ordinary addresses, or possibly taking it for granted that his spoken wish was enough, Solomon puts on his royal robes and the crown of a prospective bridegroom, and in all the pomp of a public procession enters city and palace with the idea that the "fairest woman in the kingdom" is already his own.

Far away from home in a gilded prison, the palace in Jerusalem, the maiden of Shunem still remembers her beloved.

ACT III. SCENE II.

LOVE-MAKING IN THE PALACE.

CHAPTER IV. 1–5, 7.

THE difficulty of interpretation of the poem is illustrated to the student of the various commentators on the Hebrew text who disagree as to the exact situation here. Ginsburg thinks "the shepherd, who had followed afar off the royal train in which his beloved was conveyed to the capital, obtains an interview with her, and is now addressing her." Renan, Delitzsch, and many others consider that it is Solomon who is speaking these words of praise. To our mind the idea of the poet seems to be to represent the lover as absent in body until the final scene, but ever present in spirit to the imagination of the Shulamite. The apparent interviews are those of dream, trance, narration, or reminiscence. The real trial of the maiden's pure love consists, as it seems to us, in the actual absence of her beloved even when her temptations are greatest in the presence of a king who wills to woo, but who may command.

Having braided her long black hair, made her toilet, and arrayed herself in the apparel befitting an inmate of the palace, we may imagine her looking more like a princess than before. How the toilette of the Hebrew lady impressed Isaiah may be read in that remarkable passage in his third chapter, which contains an inventory of a lady's costume. Viewing herself in the mirror, we can imagine the fair young girl murmuring to herself, "I know what my beloved would say to me, could he see me now. Would he not repeat what he has told me before?"

We can imagine the "beloved" speaking soft words of love, and praising her in terms of Oriental metaphors too warm for our cold Western taste; but the speaker who now addresses the Shulamite is a man of the world, who is familiar with refinements and the artificial adornments of nature. He takes a poetic and critical view of the landscape, and the features he most dwells upon are not those of untamed nature, but of a cultivated country. There is no white heat of passion here, only propriety and faultless rhetoric. Hear this connoisseur of beauty in the human figure and in civilization pour out his praises:

"Behold thou art lovely, my dear. Thine eyes are as doves between thy locks. Thy hair is like a

flock of goats springing down mount Gilead. Thy teeth are like sheep coming up white from the washing, all bearing twins and not one of them sterile. Thy lips are like a crimson thread, thy mouth is lovely, and like cut pomegranates are the temples between thy locks. Thy neck is like the tower of David built for trophies, whereon are hung a thousand bucklers, all the shields of mighty men. Thy two breasts are like two fawns, that are twins of a gazelle."

Does the king's speech end here? Or, after this sevenfold description of her charms, does he add the words which may have slipped out of their place under the pen of a copyist, and which are found just below in verse seventh, — "Thou art all fair my love, and there is no spot in thee"? This is sometimes the Hebrew method of beginning and ending a poem, to have the first and last line alike, or nearly so in form.

Snow-white sheep, ebony-black goats, pomegranates cut for the table, and silken or byssus thread dyed red, the memorial tower hung with war-trophies, are the terms of comparison with which the polished royal suitor praises teeth, hair, complexion, neck, and charms of the maiden who has fascinated him. His diction is as different from the shepherd's as that of the Norman conquerors, from whom came our

words beef, veal, mutton, and pork, was from that of the Saxons, who have given us the names of ox, calf, sheep, and hog. The Norman saw on the table the dressed meat selected from the animal tended in the fields by his serf or swineherd. Solomon sees the landscape from a pavilion or out of a palace window.

Is the Shulamite won by his praises? Brought into the lion's den, does she yield? The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; to provoke it may mean death. Yet will not Jehovah deliver her from his power?

Her love, strong as death, braves even the occupant of the lion-throne. Unyielding as Sheol, she remains loyal to her betrothed. We have heard her cry before, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." In like manner, and with the same intent, she tells Solomon her unmistakable preference, as heart and thought fly northward.

"Until the day cool, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense."

In thought she transports herself to her mountain home, where all around, or in sight of her cottage, rise the verdant and fragrant mountains rich in odorous forests — vastly different in this respect from the less richly

timbered and often bare hills surrounding Jerusalem. Into this region, and over mountains within the horizon of the Shulamite and of the northern poet, that is, over Lebanon and through the more distant Damascus, which is mentioned in the Canticle, Pompey the Great marched centuries afterward on his way to subdue the Jewish nation. Florus, the historian, tells us he passed "on that way through perfumed groves, through woods of frankincense and balsam."

As appreciative as an Indian of the sweet grass which he plucks to weave into his gayly dyed baskets, or as a Thoreau of the witchery of the woody odors, so these unspoiled children of Israel appreciated more than the merchant's powders and the apothecaries' mixtures the natural fragrance of nature. They long to walk together in the forest aisles, to enjoy the sweet breath of the balsam-woods when the summer sun distills a charm for the senses, which only Lebanon yields. If even a whiff from the pillow which imprisons the forest odors is grateful to the jaded dweller within walls, how must the homesick girl have longed for freedom and joy again! This, then, is her answer out of the lion's den — from Judah and Jerusalem, from Solomon and the palace, she longs to fly to her true love's home and be with him to whom is her desire.

A word here as to the artistic form of the charming little poem which the author puts into Solomon's mouth, and also upon the whole drama as a work of art in letters. Launched twenty or even twenty-five centuries ago, and once fresh, trim, beautiful, and perfect in all its detail as a new ship making first voyage, how looks this poetic craft now? Once complete from the master's hand, can it have sailed the seas of time without losing spar, sail, or aught of use or beauty? Or, like vessels home from long cruises, are marks of strain and stress visible? If it be almost a miracle to write a manuscript or print a book with absolute correctness, despite manifold methods of scrutiny and platoons of vigilant proof-readers, can we suppose a poem, which is possibly two and a half millenniums old, to reach us unscathed?

These questions arise when we study the form of the whole poem, and then compare its parts one with the other. Hebrew poetry has not rhyme or metre like the Greek, nor is it blank verse, nor is it in unrhymed stanza; nevertheless it has a metrical form, a rhythm, and a music all its own, in addition to its striking feature of parallelism. Some scholars whose ears are attuned to the harmonies, and whose eyes see the beautiful interior anatomy,

as well as the exquisite outward form of the Canticle, say that the lines of the poetry are dislocated between verses 5 and 8. Through the mistake of a scribe, a line has been lost, and two others have changed places. The restoration which they suggest brings both the metrical and artistic forms into closer correspondence with the other members of the poem, thus making unity. However interpreters may disagree, there is hardly standing room to one who doubts the consummate beauty of the Canticle as a work of art.

Making the proposed alteration, we have the end of Solomon's address quite similar to the beginning, while the reply of the Shulamite (remembering that the words "his flock" are supplied in each case) is likewise nearly the same as in chapter ii. 16, 17; and vi. 3.

"My beloved is mine and I am his, he feeds [his flock] among the lilies.

"Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away," etc.

Unfortunately, in the discussion of the question of literary form, the element of doctrinal interpretation enters in to confuse the inquiry as to fact and truth. The allegorists violently oppose the emendation which the upholders of the natural theory propose. It may be said, as helping the English reader, that in the

poem it is only the shepherd who "feeds [his flock] among the lilies" (chap. i. 7; ii. 16; vi. 3); and that the Hebrew word for "feed" does not signify to eat or to partake of food, but means to lead or conduct [to pasture], and is almost exclusively used of shepherds with domesticated animals. The roe or gazelle is nowhere mentioned in the Scriptures as feeding, but as being in motion, as hunted, or as furnishing game food. In Proverbs, chapter v. 19, where we have probably a reference to the passage before us (Song of Songs, iv. 5), the thought and sensuous imagery are nearly similar, but there is nothing said as to "feeding" or "lilies." These special words in the Canticle are applied to the shepherd only.

Concerning the pretty poem of Solomon in praise of the Shulamite, which begins and ends with "Thou art fair, my love," does it not suggest, as to this point of literary likeness, both the "Bow-song," or lament of David over Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel i. 19-27), and the eighth psalm? Of the author of this latter praise-song of Israel, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "one in a certain place;" while the title-maker and editor of the first great Hebrew hymn-book says, "A Psalm of David."

The true text of the Bible does not contra-

dict itself. Did the poet of the Canticle write both the "Psalm of the Astronomer" and the passage in Canticles we have just studied? It seems reasonably certain, at least, that the literary model of the three poems was the same.

Such questions may never receive satisfying answers. For spiritual nourishment, for edification, we do not need certainty; but this is sure, — we readers of the Bible have as much right, God-given and Christ-commanded, to search the Scriptures to-day and form our opinions, as had the scribes, Pharisees, priests, editors, title-makers, custodians, and traditionists of the past. As our fathers of Germany and England and in the centuries past did, it is ours to reverently inquire, study, and make up our minds concerning things left unexplained in the Scriptures. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not."

ACT III. SCENE III.

THE GARDEN OF SPICES.

CHAPTER IV. 8–V. 1.

SOLOMON has disappeared from the scene, but the Shulamite is wrought to a frenzy of excitement in view of her situation, and the possibility of a forced marriage. In vision, the wish being parent to the thought, she sees her lover coming to defy the lion and leopards of authority, and escaping with her to the mountain fastnesses of the North. In the language which we now read, the beating of a true lover's heart is felt, and the passionate appeal sheds a glow over this whole strophe of the poem. The language is at white heat. He calls her not "my dear," "my friend," but "my bride," and she delights to hear him.

"Escape with me! from Lebanon, my bride, with me from Lebanon thou shalt go; thou shalt go from the top of Amana, from the summit of Senir, from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards. Thou hast given me courage, my sister, my bride, thou hast ravished my heart with one look of thine eyes, with one jewel of thy necklace."

Even one eye-glance of his beloved has emboldened him, exciting him even to rebellion, to lift his hand against king and law to secure the object of his love. He is ready at every hazard to elope with her, even though he must know the fate of all who cross the will of Israel's despot. The keen sword of the secret assassin would soon find out the man whom "the lion" orders to death, but her lover, she knows, will dare all things if she but say the word.

Did the shepherd in actual clandestine interview read in her flashing eyes the suggestion of elopement, or was it his own impulse; or is the whole scene an ideal one? To our mind, it is in accordance with the art of the Hebrew literature of wisdom to represent here an ideal scene.

It is the aim of the poet, as we read between the lines, to portray this pure Hebrew girl as finally victorious, but as conquering only by gentleness and obedience to law. She is one of the King's daughters, the handmaid of Jehovah. She obeys God and conscience first and always, hoping thereby to save herself from the embraces of a polygamist king, and to keep, in obedience to law, her own beloved. Hers was the might of gentleness which makes great

The changes in the literary form of the strophes of the poem reflect the conflicting emotions, the changing moods, of the maiden's excited mind. She feels intensely, and in her day-dream of tumultuous feeling her lover is as if really present to her, breathing in her ears the proposal to escape from the harem to her free life of the hills. As in the other ideal scene in chapter ii., this waking vision of her active imagination will be succeeded by a night-dream, wherein her thoughts again wander afar off, always to find her beloved, but in this case to lose him again.

That is Hebrew poetry — utterly vague and misty as to chronological relation, or the processes of logic, but as quickly as a turning kaleidoscope expressing every impulse, every impression and emotion, or mixture of them. The Western mind, that looks for the sequences of orderly reasoning, is constantly put out at noticing the gaps and want of connection in the poetical books of the Bible. To expect close reasoning, or the perfect dramatic movement of a Greek tragedy, is to insure disappointment. The utterances of psalmist, poet, and prophet remind us of lovers' conversations, which lack logic, are full of tangents, and contain spaces of silence even when the speakers feel most intensely. One

emotion gives place rapidly to another, in a manner that makes a cold-blooded translator or commentator despair. If one adopts the allegorical method of interpretation, by which language can be made to mean anything and everything, there is no difficulty; but to keep track of the movement of sentiment and play of feeling taxes one's powers of attention severely.

In the mind of the maiden there is a struggle. Shall she yield to the proposition?

No, she will not encourage the shepherd in wild schemes of lawlessness. She gently dissuades him with a kiss, and with love's weaponry she is successful. The kiss and caress are invincible. The beloved becomes calm, and his words change in tone and subject. With a lover's guile, he makes further advances in the triumphs of the master passion.

"How fair is thy caress, my sister, my bride: How much better thy love than wine, and the fragrance of thy perfume than all spices. Thy lips drop honey, my bride; honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the fragrance of thy garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon."

So flow the lover's words, in a torrent of rapturous exaggerations. As the bouquet of wine and the perfume of the "soul-house," so the luscious lips and the loveliness of her per-

son enthrall him. Yet now he adds a more delicate compliment to her modesty, her instinctive refinement, her chaste life, her purity amid court temptation. He praises her inward ornaments, her soul's charms. He antedates and precedes Solomon in looking from sensuous charms to the interior graces of the spirit. With consummate art, the poet puts the shepherd in advance of the king in this.

"A garden locked, thou art, my sister, my bride; a garden inclosed, a fountain sealed. What sprouts for thee therein makes a paradise of pomegranates with most excellent fruit, henna and spices, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. Yea, a garden fountain, a well of living waters, a flowing stream from Lebanon, art thou."

In this rhetorical coloring and allusions to the scenery of his home, the speeches of the young man beloved of the Shulamite are quite different from those of the royal suitor. In free unstudied diction, which lacks the perfect rhetorical finish of the king's addresses, and drawing his metaphors from wild nature within the view of the life of the toiler, his words burn with passion. With many a glowing word of compliment and flow of pretty diminutives, which especially puzzle the commentators who seek in the text material for dogmatic theology,

yet with thought as pure as the waters of Naaman's favorite stream of Amana, to which he compares his love, the young mountaineer utters his heart to her who owns it.

Flattery, with a selfish object in view, is one thing. Ardent love, breathing out sincere praise, is another. Flattery of the wise breeds in them disgust, but the foolish and vain are led captive to the designs of the flatterer. True praise from the honest should encourage us, but the honeyed words of the wicked should humble us. When the wise and loving and true say kindly things of us, holding us high in their estimation, then ought this to stimulate us to fulfill their ideal. Woman's ears were made to hear the music of love. Alas, for her who never once hears the tale!

In truest womanly spirit the Shulamite maiden, who gave no response of favor to the polygamous king's advances, now encourages her betrothed; while she prays that she may fill his ideal of her, and be in sober reality what he fondly believes she is. We must remember that in Palestine the east wind is withering, and the west brings storm, while the north is cooling and refreshing, and the south heals and ripens. The north wind, powerful and strong, awakes or arises; the south wind comes as the soft breathing zephyr. She in-

vokes the winds of heaven to make her even more lovely.

"Arise, O north wind, and come, thou south wind, blow upon my garden, that its spice-odors may be wafted out."

With sweet responsiveness, in guileless love and childlike confidence, the maiden yields thus her heart and her all to her accepted lover. Her desire is that in all womanly graces and character she may be all he hopes of her. This is her "yes," her full surrender:

"Let my beloved come into his garden and eat its precious fruits."

Her sweet yielding fills him with a lover's bliss, and the second and last scene in the third canto of the poem ends with the first verse of chapter v. The accepted and happy shepherd-lover responds to her encouragement, saying to his beloved, this "faithful found among the faithless," this peasant girl who resists a king in order to be true to her plighted troth:

"I am coming into my garden, my sister, my bride. I am gathering my myrrh with my balsam. I am eating my honeycomb with my honey. I am drinking my wine with my milk."

In true Oriental rhetoric, under the poetic

figures of delicious fruits, sweets, spices, and drinks, the lover alike signifies his joy, his triumph, his rapture, and his embodied ideal. To the affianced couple, happy in each other's affection, the poet adds approving words. Shall we put them in the mouths of the court ladies, who overhear the Shulamite talking to herself? Or, do we recognize here, in the refrain of a chorus, the poet's own heart?

"Eat, O friends, drink, O beloved, yea, drink abundantly [of love]."

Thus, if our interpretation of this last line be correct, the seal of inspiration and divine approval is set again on pure love between one man and one woman. Between two great events — the nuptials in Eden, wherein God consummated the first marriage, and the wedding of Cana in Galilee, at which Jesus sat with approving smile — this divine poem stands midway, to testify to the heavenly origin of love and the holiness of marriage. For love is as strong as death, its passion as inflexible as Sheol, its coals are as coals at white heat, because love is a fire-flame kindled by Jehovah himself

ACT III. SCENE IV.

THE WAKING HEART.

CHAPTER V. 2–8.

As in the second movement of the poem, which we have called Act II., so in this part of the development of the plot, a night-dream succeeds the day-vision or ideal scene. The young girl falls into slumber; her body remaining in the palace, while her soul goes out to play.

"Hark, my beloved is knocking! Hear his voice! 'Open to me, my sister, my dear, my dove, my perfect. My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.'"

The Shulamite girl, by the dream-magic which annihilates distance, is no longer in the Jerusalem palace, but in her northern home, among her native hills. She is not now attired in silk and jewels and embroidered sandals, but in her vineyard dress and with bare feet. Wearied, after the day's hard toil, she has retired very early to rest, expecting no visit. In her dream she is again the simple country maid

under her mother's cottage roof. Suddenly she hears a knock at the door and a familiar voice pleading. He has come a long distance, he is standing out in the cold air after sunset, in the chill night of Palestine, in which the dews fall like rain. He calls her in that particular tone of address such as the king never uses, and by which we may easily distinguish the speakers in each of the dialogues. He did not know the house would be closed at so early an hour. He pleads that she will arise, dress, and meet him.

She, on the contrary, wishing not to be disturbed, answers coldly, petulantly, almost rudely. Just as a Hindoo of to-day, if called upon after the lights are out, makes excuse that he will soil his feet by rising, so she declines to open the door. A modern lady who had retired earlier than usual, not expecting a call or company, would, less accurately doubtless, answer or send word, "not at home," or at least, "retired." More frankly, but with equal discouragement to the visitor, the reply is made:

"I have undressed, how can I dress again? I have washed my feet, how can I soil them again?"

The idea is that not only has the bath been taken, but even the feet have been washed, so

that to tread again on the earthen floor of the cottage would be undesirable. Compare for illustration the words of Christ to Peter in the Revision, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet." In our summer sea-bathing, as all know, we wash our feet, even after the sea-plunge, and then are clean every whit: afterwards, we do not like to tread on loose earth, or the sandy boards of the bath-house. The floor of the average house in the East is of earth; hence the Shulamite's excuse.

But the lover, not knowing his beloved had already retired to bed, had at the moment of speaking put his hand on the wooden pin of the latch, and holding it while talking, he now, on being refused so unexpectedly, withdraws his hand and departs.

Then, — oh, how true to life this is! Every good, every honorable man who is suitor for a maiden's hand, but unexpert in the mysteries of a woman's heart ought to know it; and would that the pure and good men knew it as thoroughly for good, as wicked men who play on the weakness of feminine affection know it for evil! — then, after she has spoken harsh, repelling words, and driven her lover off, there comes to her a revulsion of feeling. Her heart within her is moved. When a woman denies you harshly, she is sure to be sorry she did it.

A woman's "no" often means "yes" — if you don't try to win her too easily. So, forgetting all her excuses, the Shulamite girl dresses hastily, and rushes to the door. Whether suggested in poetic hyperbole, or as a literal fact, that the lover has come dressed in his best clothes, and all perfumed to make his visit to his beloved, the latch is redolent with myrrh. Myrrh is the inexpensive drug with which even a poor shepherd could add to his personal attractions, and which, we may remember, being last and humblest of the three Magi's offerings to the infant Christ, tradition assigns to the slave, the king bringing gold, and the nobleman frankincense.

Lifting the latch and opening the cottage door, she hopes to catch sight of her lover's departing figure, but he has vanished in the night's darkness. She strains her ear to catch the echo of his distant footfalls, but in vain. Her heart sinks, as she realizes how hard, severe, cruel, she has been. She calls, but no answer, and the night but mocks her cries. She rushes into the void to seek and call him back.

"My love put his hand at the door-hole, and my heart was moved within me; I rose to open to my beloved, and my hands dropped myrrh, and my fingers with liquid myrrh, upon the handles of the

bolt. I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned away — he was gone! My soul went forth to him when he spoke; I sought him, but I found him not. I called to him, but he did not answer me."

Then, by that strange mixture of situations that belongs to dreams, and which the Bible felicitously exhibits, she finds herself not in the neighborhood of her home in Galilee in which the dream began, but a hundred miles away in the streets of Jerusalem. There the watchmen, about whom she dreamed once before, meet her. Evidently, and in reality, she had a dread of these officers of the law, for twice have they appeared in her dreams. Now, they treat her as a thief or a disorderly character. They beat her, they wound her, they pull off her veil, — the highest insult to an Oriental woman; to wear the veil being an honor, to have it torn off, dishonor.

"Yes, the ruffians, the sentinels on the walls did it," she cries with emphasis, as she wakes up and thinks of her dream.

How important to social propriety in the costume of an Oriental lady the veil or veil-garment was, is shown by the concern of Rebecca on coming in sight of Isaac, in Genesis xxiv. 64, 65. The characteristic token of a woman's being betrothed or married was the

veil. It was a sign, easily and purposely recognizable in public, that she no longer belonged to herself, but was part of another. To express the same purport the betrothed maidens and the wives of Japan formerly stained their teeth black and shaved off their eyebrows, thus veiling their beauty. It was this idea of the veil as a symbol of "power on her head," or "a sign of [her husband's] authority," to which Paul referred, in 1 Cor. xi. 10. To the Hebrew maiden the veil was at once honor and protection.

To return to the dreaming Shulamite, we find her waking up, startled and alarmed at finding the sad reality of her position. Was she overheard talking in her sleep, or weeping, or crying out? Do the ladies of the harem question her? She thus makes answer to their inquiries:

"I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem! O that you would find my beloved. And what will you tell him? — that I am sick with love."

Is this her cry of despair? Must she yield to the king, because of her very helplessness?

Man's sorrows are, in all literature and in the Bible, told often enough. Woman must take the iron into her soul, and complain not. For her travail, pain, physical woes, the He-

brew prophets and the Man of Sorrows spake often in tenderest compassion. With the griefs of the mind, there is for woman less sympathy, in expression at least. It was a man who cried out, "Lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." In chapter xxix. of the great spiritual drama of Job, the suffering hero utters his great cry *de profundis* that yet rises into a victor's recognition of his Kinsman-rescuer, who is to stand Survivor and Vindicator over his dust. Yet here is a woman with breaking heart, in mortal terror, and in mental travail, who, in the darkest hour that comes before the dawn, might have joined the cry of the Psalmist and the man of Uz, and uttered them in pathos of equal suffering. Surely for her there must be deliverance from One who in rescuing her will exalt his name Jah.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

THE BELOVED AND HIS CHARMS.

Chapter V. 9–VI. 3.

A very remarkable feature of the Song of Songs is the frequent description of the human body and its members. In other parts of Scripture, and especially in the books of wisdom, the body in whole or part is indeed referred to, and its interior arrangements or external appearance described. In the Book of Job, in Psalm cxxxix. and others, and in Ecclesiastes, chapter xii., where under the figure of a house the human body is scanned with a poet's eye, we have detailed allusions to the human figure. In the Canticle, however, we find no fewer than five minute and separate descriptions of the physical appearance of the persons in the drama. Three of these are by Solomon of the Shulamite, one is by the Shulamite of her lover, and one of the Shulamite by the court ladies. All in the Canticle treat of the external attractions of the body and its members, in terms of sensuous admiration ; whereas in the other poetical books of the Hebrews

the language is that of reflection, the view being directed to the wonders of the inward economy.

In this scene we find that the Shulamite, having been thrice told of her own attractions, now proceeds to describe those of her beloved, the shepherd.

The curiosity of the court ladies being aroused by the constant references of the Shulamite to her "beloved," they inquire of her, and ask her to tell them who and what he is. In their language do we not detect a tone of pique and the sarcasm which we heard before? Her persistent talk and one idea have become monotonous. They ask:

"What is this beloved of yours more than any other beloved, you prettiest woman in the world? What is your beloved any more than any other beloved, that you adjure us in this style?"

Then, excited to enthusiasm, as people deeply in love invariably are when any one speaks against the one they elect favorite, — for one easy way to discover what a maiden thinks of her real or supposed lover is to attack and abuse him, — the Shulamite bursts out for the first time in impassioned praise of the charms of her betrothed.

"What is my beloved, do you ask? —

"He is glowing white and blood red, as a standard-bearer among a myriad. His head is pure gold, his locks are bushy, curl upon curl, and black as the raven. His eyes are as doves by brooks of water, bathing in milk set in brimming vessels. His cheeks are as beds of balsam, as banks of sweet herbs. His lips are lilies dropping odorous dew. His hands are cylinders of gold tipped with topaz. His body is a figure of bright ivory inlaid with sapphires. His legs are columns of white marble set on bases of gold. His aspect is as Lebanon, impressive as the majestic cedars. His speech is most sweet, and his whole person is altogether lovely. This (in answer to your question), ladies of Jerusalem, is my lover, my friend."

With warmth of Oriental exaggeration, but in chaste poetic phrase, the maid of Galilee portrays the manly beauty of him who to her is the one altogether lovely and the chief among ten thousand. With exquisite abandon, this unsophisticated girl describes her beloved in terms of sensuous admiration. To her magazine of symbols drawn from nature and the landscape of her home, she adds others newly acquired from her luxurious surroundings in the royal palace. Hers is not the praise of a sage, an aged and reflective student, as in the description of the human body as a house in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, with its subtle

allusions to anatomy and the marvelous functions of the various organs. She sees indeed the veins that appear through the transparent skin of her beloved, but there is no suggestion of the circulation, nor reference to the cistern, or wheel or pitcher at the fountain, but only the contrasting colors of ivory and sapphire. So the fingers and legs are not seen with the eye of an anatomist, but the pretty contrasts in tint between the healthy skin and the rosy finger-nail, and in the column's shaft and base of limb and foot, are noted with admiration. Hers is the language of youthful enthusiasm. Her descriptions are those of an inexperienced young girl. With unerring artistic sense, the poet is here true to life.

The ladies of the harem are interested at least in her fluent encomiums. They are burning with curiosity to behold this paragon of manly beauty. They offer to go with her to find him. Reverting to the dream, in which he turned away from the doorstep, they ask:

"Whither has thy beloved gone, thou fairest among women, whither has thy beloved turned, that we may seek him with thee?"

Their curiosity is becoming dangerous, and she must evade their request. She answers:

"My beloved has gone down to his garden, to

the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies."

Thus baffling her inquisitors, the scene ends as usual in this poem, by the refrain of unwavering love :

"My beloved is mine and I am his. He feedeth his flock among the lilies."

This is the lover whom the poet of the Canticle pictures, and this is the nature of her sore trial to be perforce away from him and endure separation. No picture here, in this holy poem, of gross and carnal delights inflaming fleshly lust. The lover dwells upon mountains that are distant, retreats to the garden of spices, and feeds his flock among the lilies. An unearthly glory seems to wrap him round. In mind he seems ever near. In chaste love of the spirit he is at hand. Youth, beauty, wisdom, strength, are all his, and to her pure mind he is present, congenial, devoted, getting and giving happiness, but at the suggestion of the intruder's presence, of aught gross or carnal, he is far off, unattainable, like an ideal that ever eludes.

Yet the maiden loves him all the more, even while her eyes hunger for a sight of his form and her heart yearns for his presence. The poet purposely makes this the burden of her

trial, — to be kept long absent from him, that she may be tested. She is the one to be proved, not he. And thus, with superfine art, or divine inspiration, — shall we say both? — the Shulamite becomes to us a type of those who, not having seen, love with joy unspeakable and full of glory the great Lover of our souls.

We have but again to compare the addresses of the shepherd-lover with those of the king, to see clearly the nature of real love and of ambition or carnal desire. The intention of the poet, and of the Divine Spirit who inspired the poet, we doubt not, is that we all should see and discriminate.

Let lover and maid alike study this book, and by it cleanse their love from earthly stain. Truly the young man in love, or who may some day be in love, and the heart of youth may ever ask, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways?" And the answer is, "By taking heed thereto, according to thy Word," — the Word in which this Canticle is set as a gem. Surely we need no allegory, no mysticism, to cover up the pure and lofty meaning of this holy book. Strange, indeed, if in all the revelation of God to man there were no message for human love; but the message is here.

ACT IV. SCENE II.

COMPARED WITH PRINCESSES.

CHAPTER VI. 4–9.

LANGUAGE is petrified history. As the polished marble which tops the tables in our drawing-rooms reveals the forms of ocean life in the primeval world, so the fossil words of a language uncover man's thoughts. The geologist constructs his map and calendar by examination and location of the deposits in the rocks, and tells the visionary miner whether it is possible or impossible to find gold or coal, and whether the relics found of man or brute are of yesterday or of the ages, naturally deposited or artificial, anachronous, and foreign.

A study of words is as interesting as that of bones or footprints, and the Bible reads like a new book, its passages glow afresh with a glory all their own, when read not in the ten thousand broken lights of tradition, but according to the root-meanings. Eloquently does the Hebrew reveal the primitive state of society in the land of Jehovah. With equal suggestiveness do the intruded foreign words

tell their own story. Satan can easily be picked out among the sons of God. Speech is a subtle betrayer, not alone of Peter, but of itself.

In illustration of this is the word *pilegesh*, which in every book of the English form of the Old Testament, except Daniel, stands for concubine, or half-wife. This is a foreign word and does not belong to the Hebrew tongue. The speech of the Semitic tribes and clans, the patriarchs and prophets of Israel, used only the simple august words "woman," "wife." These are names sufficient for kings, priests, prophets, and the Christ who always addressed his mother by the grand title of "woman."

In the ancient unluxurious ages of simplicity and chastity, when the laws requiring personal purity were severe but wholesome, no word for concubine existed, for none was necessary. A man even like Abraham might have other women in his household beside the first and true wife, but this was for the sake of heirs, and such subordinate women were as servants, and subject to the wife who was mistress of the house. When, however, the ancient simplicity degenerated into luxuriousness, and from the heathen and their sensual orgies associated with idol worship

lewdness increased among the Israelites, women were multiplied in the household in mere wantonness of lust or ambition. Polygamy crept in and sought for recognition and even institution, and a new word was necessary. That word is *pilegesh*, unknown in the ancient Semitic languages, and borrowed from some Indo-Germanic people, probably the Greeks, through the Phœnicians, who traded in slave girls. The original Sanskrit root-word, *pallavaka*, means a girl, and underlies the Latin *pellex*, and Greek *pallakis*.

This history of the Hebrews, as reflected in speech, is substantially the same in all those nations which, emerging from primitive simplicity, when offenses against the laws of purity were summarily dealt with, passed into the stage of sensual luxury. With the degradation of morals went the disease and decay of language, the words of grand simplicity being degraded, and the terms for abominable persons and things made euphemistic. Between the history of Japan, especially, and of Israel, this correspondence as to words and facts, language and history, is very close.

In the later Hebrew of Daniel, these brevet-wives, holding but a fraction of their lord's affections, are called by a name meaning "she that amuses," "singing girl," or "sporting

one." It was Solomon, however, who first began the assembling of these idle people in large numbers, for his own selfish ambition and gratification, at the public expense. The poet in the Canticle represents him even boasting of the great harem which he had collected, and numbering his sinful possessions. In this poetical book the smaller number, as compared with the figures in the historical records, seems at first rather to his credit. The "maidens without number" show, on the other hand, that there is hardly ground even for a discrepancy, or copyist's mistake, in favor of the royal sinner.

Solomon again appears at verse 4, chapter vi., and begins his advances in the following address. He has heard that the Shulamite is the only daughter of her mother, and that the women of the harem have, in talking about her, praised her highly. They not only commend her character, but they wonder who she can be who is compared to sun and moon, terrible even to Solomon the emperor. The king's words now show far more respect and real admiration than before, for he sees in this pure-minded Hebrew girl something quite different from the frivolous beauties of the harem.

"Thou art fair, my dear, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as bannered hosts. Turn away

thine eyes from me, they have taken me by storm. Thy tresses are as flocks of goats descending Gilead, thy teeth as a flock of ewes that come up from the washing, each the mother of twins and not one of them sterile. Like a slice of pomegranate, are thy cheeks from behind thy veil."

With repetition of the same flatteries which he has used before, but with a notable difference, and with an abrupt change that is suggestive, the king again makes approaches, but with manifestly little success. He begins a set speech, which puts in comparison the picturesque city of Tirzah with the grand metropolis of Jerusalem. Does not the poet represent the royal suitor as influenced suddenly by the flashing eyes of the unyielding beauty, which apparently so disconcert him that he falls into repeating his former compliments? Yet is not this the effect upon a man who, it may be, even against his will and expectation, has found arising in himself, instead of a playful mood, a sincere feeling of regard? If Solomon, in place of a frivolous idling away of spare moments in the empty flatteries and erotic diversions by which he had led captive hundreds of silly women, now found that he himself was moved with new feelings, would not his speech betray his changed emotion? Indeed, does not the genius of Hebrew poetry

require this? Certainly it is very noticeable that this address, in its abruptness and sudden changes of thought, differs vastly from the almost perfect poem (chapter iv. 1–5, 7), in which his former praises were wrought in superb literary proportion and in unbroken and progressive ideas. In this one scene, devoted entirely to the king's unsuccessful love-making, we gather that the Shulamite is less approachable than before, and the royal suitor is utterly disconcerted. He no longer draws comparison with the inanimate things of architecture, or with the pretty doves, snow-white sheep, and glistening goats of Gilead, but lifts his ideas and raises his standard even so high as to set this rustic maiden above the ladies of the palace, — yes, even above the princesses. They are a mass, a crowd; she is one and perfect. Hear him:

"There are threescore queens, fourscore concubines (*pilegesh-im*) and young maidens without number. My dove is my only one, my undefiled, the delight of her mother, the choice of the one who bore her. The daughters saw her and blessed her; the queens and the concubines (*pilegesh-im*) and they praised her."

Since the Canticle contains many allusions to the book of Genesis, it may be that here the poet had in his mind's eye the expression

of Leah (xxx. 13), "Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed;" and of this ancient womanly song of triumph, the reference of Solomon is an echo; while of this again, that of Proverbs xxxi. 28 is a prolongation of the same strain of praise to her who remains content with the chief treasures of woman's estate — purity in single, and motherhood in married life. Most naturally the wisdom-literature of the Hebrews, transcending the narrow limits of Israel, takes hold on abstract, that is, universal truth, with all that belongs to humanity. It refers in retrospective glance even to time when the very name of Hebrew was not even so much as "a geographical abstraction." Before Israel was, the human heart is.

ACT IV. SCENE III.

THE DANCE OF MAHANAIM.

Chapter VII. 1–7.

Three times has the sovereign of the Hebrew empire made love to his subject, the maid of Galilee. In three separate forms of address has the wooing been done, — once in the chat of informal conversation, once with elaborate sonnet in which the graces of speech were presented in fascinating forms, again in language fair but broken, — that reflect the changing emotion of the speaker. Yet the girl who has left her heart behind her, in keeping of her lover who feeds his flock among the lilies, gives no sign of swerving from her beloved.

That the other women should either jealously inquire about, or admiringly praise, the new-comer, the meadow wild flower, does but fire Solomon's desire to possess her to adorn his garden of beauty. Her charms and graces and love-sickness, and, above all, her obstinate refusal to be satisfied with harem life, her flat rejection of the king, have made her the talk

of the harem. It is the ladies of the court who ask,

"Who is she, what is she, that looketh forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, this one as terrible as an army with banners?"

Or, in the rendering of a modern translator,

"Who is this with glances like the dawn,
Fair as the silver moon,
Bright as the noontide fire,
Inspiring terror like the bannered host?"

The Shulamite answers the questions of the ladies by narrating her experience when, as a modest young girl, she was brought unintentionally into the very presence of royalty. She did not seek the notoriety which has been thrust upon her, but encountered it unexpectedly in the ordinary line of duty and experience.

"To the nut gardens, I went down to look at the shrubs of the valley, to see whether the vines budded, or the pomegranates bloomed.

"Then, before ever I was aware, this desire of mine brought me into the chariots of my princely people" [Aminadab].

Here in this almond-garden, while the beautiful maiden found something that changed her environment and made her immortal in poetry, the student finds a nut which no one

has satisfactorily cracked. There is evidently rich meat in the kernel when once obtained. The Hebrew text reads Ammi-nadib, which is most probably a proper name. The Septuagint and Vulgate versions read Aminadab, which is a common noun of multitude. Does the passage mean that this chance impulse of the maiden was the means of placing her in the chariot by which she was brought to the royal harem? Was she kidnapped? Let us see.

In the Hebrew expression, "my soul made me chariots of Ammi-Nadib," there may be a possible reference to the king's charioteer, perhaps the Jehu of his time. In the version of 1611, the rendering is "My soul made me *like* the chariots of Ammi-nadib." In the version of 1884, it is "My soul set me *among* the chariots of my princely people." The theory of a proper name has been adopted in the one case, and that of a common noun in the other. What can be said on both sides of the question?

In Exodus vi. 23, Ammi-Nadab is a man's name, meaning "one of the people" (of the prince). In 2 Samuel vi. 3, Abinadab, whose name means a "princely" or "royal father," was the keeper of the ark of God, which was put in the new chariot or cart driven by his

sons to Zion in Jerusalem. Is the allusion here to Solomon, as the "princely father" of Israel, and to his chariots that were to move to Zion and Jerusalem with their new freight — the Shulamite?

Or is the contrary the idea intended, that, as if in the swift chariots of Ammi-Nadib, the thoughts of the young girl were in an instant swiftly transported to her home, so that she turned to flee?

May it not be possible that the word originally written by the poet here was Ahinadab, the name of Solomon's commissary officer at Mahanaim (1 Kings iv. 14), and that on this particular journey of the king and court he had charge of the transport and commissariat of the whole party? Ahinadab may have been a skilled and swift charioteer. His name means "noble brother," and a slight change of stroke in the second Hebrew letter would make either reading. It is remarkable that both the Septuagint and the Vulgate spell the name with one *m*.

In the joy of her young heart, this lovely country girl in the valley of Jezreel has thrown aside her veil, and is singing and dancing in innocent glee, rejoicing in her own opening life, the joy of new-found love, and the freshness of springtime. Solomon, ac-

companied by his court, is making a pleasure excursion in the northern part of his kingdom — a land rich in vineyards and pastoral scenery. The noble lords of the court are lost in admiration of this fair creature dancing in the nut-gardens with joy. The girl, hitherto unconscious of their presence, soon comes near the road, and is startled at beholding the splendid array of palanquins, horses, and chariots. She shrinks back shyly from the knightly riders in the cavalcade and turns to run away. The people in the royal train, possibly the king himself, at once cry out:

"Return, return,
O Shulamite!
Return, return,
That we may look upon you."

Coyly the maiden approaches and asks,

"What do you see in the Shulamite?"

Full of admiration, the courtiers answer in chorus:

"As it were, the dance of Mahanaim" [double choirs].

Here, again, a difficulty arises in translation of the proper name Mahanaim, but the case is of extreme interest. The Revision of 1884, changing the text of 1611, prints the word untranslated. Herein also is illustrated the

truth that, to the reverent and critical students of every generation who study the Bible afresh, new beauties become visible like new stars and constellations which appear in the sky. Yet the stars are not new-born, they have always been there, unseen or unnoticed. We may see how fresh scrutiny revealed a forgotten historical allusion and a poetical antithesis in the name Tirzah contrasted with Jerusalem. So, too, it is doubtful whether the earlier translators caught the delicate allusion in the reply of the ladies to the Shulamite's question. Our old version, following the Septuagint and Vulgate, says, What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were, the company of two armies (the margin giving Mahanaim).

The Revision translates, putting the two sentences below in the mouth of the young girl, —

> "Why will ye look upon the Shulamite,
> As upon the dance of Mahanaim?"

We prefer here to read not only the question of the maiden, but also the answer of a chorus requesting her to repeat, in the palace, before their eyes, what the courtiers in the cavalcade had seen in the northern valley.

Here again a proper name, the name of a place famous by old and sacred associations,

was forgotten, or passed over, until Luther and the Reformers saw the point.

The reference points to the second vision of angels which Jacob saw east of the Jordan, after leaving Mizpah. He named the place Mahanaim, which means two camps, or two hosts, or armies, — the one earthly, his own household and following, and the other the heavenly host of throbbing, singing, happy angels.

So here, the courtiers of Solomon, looking upon this living tableau of maidenly loveliness, declare that the young girl's airy, fairy motions remind them of Jacob's celestial visitants. The sight of her is that of angelic beauty and heavenly winsomeness, recalling the ascending and descending of the angels upon the ladder or stairs from earth to heaven.

The full import of these words of the dance or graceful motion, as of angels, was first discerned by Ewald, the great German scholar, who has unraveled so many knotty passages in the Old Testament, though Luther first caught the idea that the proper name of Mahanaim should be in the text and not the margin, and so inserted it in the page of the German Bible. To this one of several reminiscences of ideas or events in the book of Genesis, and not to the "hanging dance" of

the Syrian peasantry, made by double rows of youths and maidens, described by Wetstein, we believe the reference in the Canticle to be made. Still, it is possible that the name of the dance refers only and immediately to the festive celebrations which the court people and the king may have witnessed only a few days before at the chariot-town east of the Jordan, of which Ahinadab was overseer.

Charmed with her modest description of that episode in her life which brought her near royalty, the court ladies insist upon her dancing before them, in the manner of the dance of Mahanaim. The verses following at the beginning of chapter vii. show that she yielded to their request, for these words are the description of an active dancer, and the praise is that of a woman by women.

The copious vocabulary in Hebrew for the variety of dances mentioned in the Old Testament, and the many references to this mode of showing delight, of celebrating great national events, or of worshiping God, show that the chosen people of Jehovah made their religion a part of common life, and mingled joyousness with worship. Services commemorating great deliverances of Providence, miraculous events, famous visions or theophanies, were held at the various sacred places. These places were

quite numerous before worship was centralized at Jerusalem. Dances were a regular part of these popular memorial celebrations, and the vision of angels seen by Jacob at Mahanaim was doubtless commemorated by the people of this famous town, Mahanaim, and by the inhabitants of the adjacent region, who were accustomed to visit the holy place. The idea and purpose of the dance may have been to represent the ascending and descending of the angels upon the ladder, or rocky stairs, leading up to heaven. The Hebrew word *mecholah*, which the Shulamite here uses, is the term for a religious dance, and is the same as that which describes the holy and patriotic rejoicings of Miriam (Ex. xv. 20), and of the maidens who met Jephthah (Judg. xi. 34), and David (1 Sam. xxi. 11), as well as those of Shiloh whom the men of Benjamin (Judg. xxi. 21) caught to make wives of. The dancing of the maidens at the popular festival at Shiloh was probably in idea, if not in technical method, the same as the dances at Mahanaim. It may be remembered that Elisha (1 Kings xix. 16) was born at a place meaning "The Meadow of Dancing."

To gratify the ladies of the court, and perhaps to forget her own present sorrows by throwing herself heart and soul into the past, the young girl begins the *mecholah*, or dance.

From the compliments and exclamations of the admiring ladies the poet composes another of those glowing descriptions of the human figure which form so notable a feature of the Song of Songs, and indeed of the poetical books of the Bible. Beginning most fitly with the feet, and mounting to the luxuriant tresses, the women praise her, calling her "the daughter of *nadib*," or nobleness; or "princely daughter." It is probable that the poet here represents not the voice of one, but the exclamations, the enthusiastic cries, of many delighted spectators; and that the first part of verse second turns from the person of the dancer to the elegance of her art.

"How graceful are thy steppings in thy sandals, O noble daughter!"

"The curves of thy thighs are like circlets of gold, the work of a master's hand!"

"Thy round dancings are perfect circles!"

"Let not variations be wanting!"

"Thy body is like a sheaf of wheat garlanded with lilies!"

"Thy bosom is like two fawns, twins of a gazelle!"

"Thy neck is like an ivory tower!"

"Thine eyes are as the pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim!"

"Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, facing Damascus!"

"Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the tresses of thy head like dark purple!"

"In the ringlets thereof, even a king is held captive!"

"How fair and pleasant art thou called 'love' for delights!"

"This thy figure is like that of a palm, and thy bosom is like its clusters!"

Here ends the description, for a new voice and presence unexpectedly break upon the scene. From the tints spread on Nature's palette, wheat-yellow and lily-white; from things striking and graceful in art, architecture, and household adornment; the artificial splendors of parks, gardens, villas, and fortresses; the face and figure, the color and expression, the lovely charms of the rustic dancer are portrayed, as she snatches many a grace beyond the reach of the harem's art, and seems to the gazers incarnate poetry.

The change of words from those in the ordinary versions of the Hebrew of verse second, which our readers will notice, making the reference to motion instead of to nature's scar left on the body at birth, is, we think, fully justifiable. It was first proposed by Daland. The reasons for the change are, first, that the word "navel" is never used in the Bible in connection with beauty, or as an object of ad-

miration ; second, that it seems useless, disproportional, and an unusual repetition in so short a passage, to praise first the depression in the waist, and then the waist itself, there being no parallelism in this purely descriptive portion of the poem ; third, it seems to break the harmony and progress of the poetic inventory of attractions ; fourth, the Hebrew word here used is the active participle of the verb *shorar*, meaning to turn round, to move in a circle, and this is the only one in the Bible which contains this particular grammatical form ; the other places, Prov. iii. 8, Job xl. 16, and Ezek. xvi. 4, having different forms, though from the same root, as even the English reader may see in Young's Concordance ; fifth, the word translated "goblet" is derived from a root meaning circular treading with the feet, and the term "perfect circles," or "cup-round figures," seems here most appropriate ; sixth, the word translated "mingled wine," or "liquor," means mixture, and, applied to the dance, would mean variations, even as we read in musical notation the phrase "add mixtures ;" seventh, the sense, modesty, and form of this English rendering seem to be more in accord with the general idea of the poem, which is chastely pure in word and delicate in idea throughout.

ACT IV. SCENE IV.

THE IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS.

Chapter VII. 8–VIII. 4.

Does the poet represent the king present as an unsuspected and unseen looker-on, who from behind column, screen, or tapestry has enjoyed the spectacle of the dance of Mahanaim ?

However this may be, we find him at verses eighth and ninth addressing the fair one named "love," who has so pleased the women of the harem. Is the strong king, who is not accustomed to be crossed in his purposes, now about to crush the obstinacy of his humble subject, and make her know her place, — the place of passive obedience? Such a doctrine was taught even to people of the Germanic race in Great Britain two centuries ago. Does the wooer here become the sovereign? Hear Solomon's ultimatum :

"I said, 'I will climb up into the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches : may thy bosom be unto me as clusters of the vine, and the fragrance of thy breath as apples, and thy mouth as the best wine.'"

The king would say more, but is here interrupted by the maiden, who gives him to understand that her charms are for her beloved only, and that for him are her favors reserved. In this, her sharpest conflict with the royal tempter, she is still unswervingly true to her absent lover. No sooner does the word *tob* (best) leave Solomon's lips, than the maiden interrupts him to reply :

"Flowing properly [only] for my beloved, causing slumbering lips to move. I am my beloved's, and to me is his desire."

In addition to the reasons before given for seeing at this point an interruption, and a change of speaker, we may add that the original word here translated "properly" and by the revisers of 1884 "smoothly," or in the margin "aright," is the same as in chapter i. 4, "rightly," or "in uprightness." In several other places, as in Isaiah xxvi. 7 and xxxiii. 15, in which the word occurs, the root idea is that of righteousness, propriety. The manifest import of the words here put by the poet into the Shulamite's mouth is that her kisses and caresses, even though a king not only desires but compares them to his best wine, belong rightly only to her betrothed lover. No open "door" free to suitors, even though royal, is

she, but a "wall," resisting all improper advances. The charms of this virgin reared in a pure Israelite home are as "towers," impregnable to the strongest assaults of the tempter. She herself is an invincible fortress.

Kisses and caresses are among the good gifts of God rightly to be used, and not abused unto sin. The wine of love "causes even slumbering lips to move," and after separation from her beloved, even in the hours of sleep, the raptures of love's communion are enjoyed again in dream, and the parted lips move with audible question and response. In slumbering or in waking hours, the lover remembers his beloved; and his soliloquies are of her "who dwelleth in the gardens." Love invades all states of body and mind with welcomed despotism.

In this, the Shulamite's firm declaration, is again the keynote to victory, for the religion of Jehovah, which the king with all his errors has not renounced, forbids him to use force against a woman. Here we behold the better nature of Solomon. The nobler side of his character comes into view when we find that he honors and admires the steadfast resistance to all his flatteries and blandishments. Magnanimously he, though a king, confesses himself a rejected suitor and lets her go free. The lion will not

rend the lamb, the eagle does not tear the dove. Unlike many a baffled suitor of our day, who by murder or slander wreaks revenge upon the woman who has declined his addresses, or unlike Henry VIII., who sent his wives to the axe and block, the Hebrew king does the Shulamite no harm in body or in character, orders her not to sword, dungeon, or disgrace, but magnanimously gives her to freedom and home, to lover and marriage. He who sent his political enemies to death yet spared this girl.

Resuming the thread of our narrative and the plot of the poem, we find the Shulamite has not yet started for home. She is still in the palace in Jerusalem, but indulging in the thought that she is already free. She anticipates in day-dream that meeting with her betrothed which is so soon to be. Solomon, great-hearted even in his disappointment, will send her back to her northern home, even as he lately took her away. This is what she will say to her lover when she meets him safe at home, on the dear old doorstep once again :

"Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields, let us lodge under the cypress boughs. Let us start early for the vineyards, to see whether the vine has sprouted, or its blossoms opened, or the pomegranates budded. There will I give thee my love. The love-apples smell sweet, and over our

cottage-door grow all sorts of excellent fruits, new as well as old, which, my beloved, I have reserved for thee."

Then follows the joyful innocent outburst of a guileless child, to whom, though she be a maiden grown, a lover is but a good brother. An angel might envy such artless love dwelling in a human heart. To the pure, that is pure which another judges vilely of. One line of difference ever dividing good and bad men is this, — their belief or unbelief in the absolute guilelessness of natural maidenhood. As pure as a sister's affection for her brother, or as a mother's for her babe, is this transparent rapture of a crystal heart when she cries :

"O that thou wert as my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother. Should I find thee without the door, I then would kiss thee and no one would condemn me. I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother's house, and thou shouldst be my teacher and I should cause thee to drink the spiced wine of my pomegranate juice."

"Ah, yes," she would say, "if you were only my brother, I could do this and none would be shocked or scandalized at it. Not yet can this be ; but some time by marriage we shall be one, and the pleasures of constant companionship will be ours."

Yet, in imagination, she continues :

"His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me."

Then for the last time she adjures the palace ladies, and this time her formula of importunity is abbreviated ; but there is added a new element of earnestness, and the refrain takes the form of an emphatic question which means exultation and victory.

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, for why should ye rouse or excite love till it please ?"

Why is the formula of adjuration here abbreviated, and with no mention of the "roes and hinds of the field" ? Is it a sign of her haste, and desire at once to leave the palace, shake off the dust of Jerusalem, and be off to her mountain home ?

Or is it because the whole question of artificially excited love is safely past, and pure spontaneous love is now in view again ?

Or does the poet mean that that part of passion which is of the flesh, which man shares with the brutes of the field, must be forgotten in the holy friendship of souls united in divinely ordained wedlock ? Certainly the omission of the one reference, and the reinforcement of the other, at this point, are equally remarkable, adding another to the distinctly dramatic features of the poem.

Shall we say that now for the first time the Shulamite begins to catch a gleam of the truth which the inspired poet is teaching all readers of his song? That she is now mounting to the clear vision that will enable her to say "Love is a fire of Jah"?

Some students of this biblical drama would have us believe that the constructive art of the Hebrew author is so crude that at the close of each act he anticipates the conclusion. This we do not believe, but rather that by her trials she learns to walk with God, and that He walks with her as He did with his tried servant Job. No more making adjuration by her earthly pets, or admired creatures of freedom, she now refers the burden of her thoughts and feelings to the Holy One. As the intent of the author of the Book of Job is to conduct his hero through earthly calamities, through the utmost temptations of Satan, through all clouds and darkness of the flesh and the spirit, through the mist and twilight of human philosophy, that he may bring him to God and see his hero even more than a Jacob made Israel, so, through all that most tries a woman, the singer of the Song of Songs would bring the Shulamite where she may look up into the face of her Heavenly Father.

May not this emancipated one have sung words like these?

"Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him."

"God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land."

ACT V. SCENE I.

THE UNION OF THE LOVERS.

Chapter VIII. 5–7.

Twice from the persons of the drama does the question arise, "Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness?" In the first instance, the exclamations of wonder are compelled from the lips of citizens of Jerusalem by the gorgeous train of King Solomon, and his state palanquin surrounded by the famous veterans of the wars of David. Then it was the stately approach, amid clouds of incense, of one who expected to win with a word. The outlook was from Jerusalem, the occasion one of the public pageants usual upon the appearance in state of Solomon, — such, for instance, as on the occasion of his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, or his return from a pleasure or hunting tour, or his entrance into the city with the idea of adding another star of beauty to the galaxy of his harem.

Now, the question is again asked, as in other scenes of the drama, but this time the

scenery is unmistakably Galilean. It is in the north, in Shunem. The spectators are shepherds or toilers of the vineyard on the fields looking southward over the wilderness or plain of Jezreel. These companions of "the beloved" of the poem descry not a glittering cavalcade, nor clouds of dust amid which flash spear and scimiter, gold and silver, but the prominent figures are a young man and a young woman. She leans upon him for strength, for the journey has been long. It is the Shulamite girl freed from her captivity in Jerusalem. Perhaps her mother has come also to meet her daughter.

Eagerly the happy girl, returning from exile in a strange city, surveys the old familiar spots, dear to her from childhood. She recognizes the orchards, in which every tree has its associations. The first place most redolent of sweet associations is the witnessing tree under which his heart was first captivated by her beauty, and under which they plighted their troth. Most sacred of all spots on earth to true lovers is that one which heard the proposal, which became the dawn of love's long day. They who, under the leafy boughs of the old home's fragrant orchard, or aisle of evergreens in college campus, or in the forest, or by the river side, sealed love's compact, have sweeter

associations with Nature than they whose words of love are spoken in parlor or drawing-room.

Did the Hebrew lovers of twenty-five centuries ago carve sign or symbol on wood or bark, or simply invoke the tree to be their witness? To these people, who called a spring of water "the eye" of the landscape, and in unconscious natural poetry gave to a river "tongue," "lips," and "mouth;" to a mountain "head," "nose," "ears," "shoulder," "side," "back," "ribs," "loins," and "elbow," a tree was even more of a living thing.

In their parables, fables, and allegories, instead of the animals that talk to us and instruct us in Æsop, the trees stand as symbols of God's law in Eden, hold a convention to decide upon having a king, and become the emblem of the man who meditates on God's law. In Bible language the trees "know," they "rejoice," they "clap their hands," they "faint," they are "the Lord's." They become places of dwelling and of judgment, not only landmarks, but underneath them birth and death, love-pledge and legal covenant, and all the events of life and love take place.

Upon the apple-tree the Shulamite casts her eyes in welcome and delight, as memory recalls the happy past.

"Under this apple-tree I wakened thy love" [I won thy heart].

"There [as she passes her lover's home and birthplace, says she] thy mother was in travail with thee, there in travail she brought thee forth."

The final scene is introduced by verse six. It is the wedding. The Shulamite, safe in the arms of him to whom her heart has been given, having come out of temptation unscathed, stands before the marriage altar and plights her troth. Jehovah has given her a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. She takes the nuptial vow and utters the prayer and sentiment which together make the keynote of the poem, — the unconquerable nature and lofty inflexibility of true love, — bidding him cherish her as one who has been tried to the uttermost and not found wanting.

That keynote and final strain of triumph thus sounds:

"Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a signet upon thine arm; for love is as strong as death, jealous love is as unyielding as Sheol, its flashings are flashes of fire, the flames of Jah."

No mere Hebrew superlative is this "very flame of the Lord," — as the Revision trans-

lates this culminating word *shalhebeth-Jah.* Set at this dramatic climax of the drama, it can mean nothing less than a reference of the theme of the poet, and the subject of the drama, to Jah Jehovah, whose glorious name we read in the margin of Isaiah xii. 2, xxvi. 4. This name of God, used only in poetry, is here set at the culmination of the poem of poems most felicitously and appropriately.

This is the divine side of love; it has also a human side. The image and superscription are of Jehovah, the worth of stamp and legend must be tested in human experience. As she remembers the deep waters of trial and the bribes of a king she adds:

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man were to give all the substance of his house in place of love, it would utterly be contemned."

The commentary and explanation of these glowing sentiments, we have had in the whole poem itself.

That the maiden of Shunem or the poet of the Canticle had reached the heights of the truth revealed in the Scriptures of the New Covenant, which the allegorists seem to assume, we do not believe. The full corn in the ear does not come before the tender blade. "That

is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." Not in this poem do we reach the spiritual heights marked by the Christian's word *agape*, in which glows both God's love and man's, which is deeper than sex and as high as heaven; but here in the Canticle is the foregleam of the glory revealed in Christ. Is there not inspiration in a book which gives to a woman, first in the Old Scriptures, to prophesy that love is of God?

Man by his reasoning powers reaches, woman by her feelings first discovers, truth. Man's mental attitude and method can never be just the same as woman's, yet the Lord gives her too his word to publish. Truth is not always revealed to him who gazes only in one direction. In the story told by Herodotus, when all looked to the East because the oracles had promised the sceptre and kingship to whoever should first see the rays of the morning sun, one gazer "looked at the opposite side of the heavens; and while his competitors had still before them nothing but a sky yet buried in the shades of night, he saw at the West the gleam of dawn that had already whitened the summit of a tower."

This one book of the Old Testament seems as unique and strange as the man of Herodotus' story, who to see the rising sun's rays looked

westward. The Shulamite, gazing at the tower of her own experience, saw first thereon a truth, to be fully revealed in the day of Christ. It is noticeable also that when the Greeks of Alexandria, long afterwards, and much nearer the true Messiah's time, turned this marvelous poem into prose, they expressed the term for love which the Hebrew poet chose for use in the refrain by the purely biblical and sacred coinage of thought, — *agape*. The choice of this precious word, so often on the lips and pens of Paul, John, Peter, and Jude, and doubtless of the Son of Man, shows how the seventy translators of Alexandria regarded the idea of love as treated in the Canticle. Here, first, as Professor Thayer shows, and occurring in no classic Greek author, the word *agape* made its appearance as a current term in this glorious world-language, which, with all its verbal riches, had known only those inferior terms for love in which fleshly enjoyment was the basic idea. De Quincey remarks that "The act of translating . . . out of a mysterious cipher . . . into the golden light of a language the most beautiful, the most honored among men, and the most widely diffused through a thousand years to come, had the immeasurable effect of throwing into the great crucible of human speculation, even then beginning to ferment,

to boil, to overflow, — that mightiest of all elements for exalting the chemistry of philosophy, — grand and, for the first time, adequate conceptions of the Deity." Without the eloquence of the wizard of English style, we utter our belief that this Song of Songs, in which it is shown, through a woman, that the fountain of love is in God, bore a noble part in preparing the world for the ideas dominant in Christianity.

ACT V. SCENE II.

THE VIRGIN FORTRESS AND THE VINEYARDS.

Chapter VIII. 8–14.

After her passionate appeal and apostrophe to love, the happy bride turns to the shepherd-bridegroom and the assembled company, and entertains them with a witty speech, in which she recalls a promise made to her by her older brothers ; or, possibly, a conversation overheard by her when she was an undeveloped girl. She then gives them a little parable about Solomon, in a genuine womanly way, and in true Oriental style.

We must remember that, in describing herself to the ladies of Jerusalem, in the sixth verse of the first chapter, she apologized because her complexion was so dark and sunburned, explaining it by the fact that she had been sent to work in the vineyards by the sons of her mother, that is, her brothers. Presumably, her dear father was dead, and the children of a former marriage, her step-brothers, were not kind to their step-sister. We also

heard their commands when they perhaps prevented a meeting of the lovers, and bade her go to work and catch the little foxes. To her mother the Shulamite was devoted, and having few or no young girl friends or brothers to sympathize with her, she made her mother, as we have seen, the repository of all her joys and sorrows. Indeed, this tender affection of the daughter to the mother, both in dreams and in waking hours, is one of the striking characteristics of the heroine, and forms a marked feature of the cantata, so that the most ordinary reader easily detects it. The mother doubtless reciprocated the child's affection, but the sons were severe and magisterial in their notions.

Although the Hebrews paid more regard to women than many Asiatic peoples, yet the position of an unmarried female, and especially of a step-daughter, even in an Israelite's family, was not, from our view, a desirable one. As matter of fact the step-brothers were severe with her, and like many other owners of vineyards who harvest the revenues, but let their hired men do the hard work, the brothers made the step-sister keep the vineyards, hoe and plant, trim and pick, and drive out the foxes; so that, as she said figuratively, "mine own vineyard" — that is, her personal appear-

ance — "I have not kept." "Cultivating for my brothers, I have not cultivated myself."

It is probable that these step-brothers were in reality harsher in the treatment of their little sister than they knew or intended to be. They did not mean to make her miserable, but if she was to be happy, it was to be in their way. Perhaps they belonged to that class of persons, not so very rare, to whom adheres the infirmity of wanting every one to be and think and act after their notions. Many a really kind, good, well-meaning older brother will make his young sister perfectly miserable, while at the same time meaning to make her happy. He will even cheerfully sacrifice himself to make her wretched, while thinking to make her happy *in his way*.

What a mistake we make when trying to arrange the happiness of other people on our own cast-iron plans, and how unchristian to refuse our help to others, who decline to alter their whole life course in order to run on our gauge!

The "little sister" is the Shulamite, and one day, when not yet in her teens, she overhears their plans when they are talking about her. Her words, now addressed on her wedding day to her friends, are a playful reminiscence of what she once heard long ago. One brother talks in this strain:

"We have a sister, she is little. She is not grown, not developed. She is not a young lady yet. What shall we do? [not, what shall *she* do, but what shall *we* do] in the day when she shall be spoken for — when young men seek her company, when lovers come for her hand and heart, when she is to enter society?"

A second brother answers, with apparent severity, but with real generosity and justice:

"If she be a wall," resisting all improper advances, keeping maidenly dignity, defying by the strength of firm principle and chaste instinct all improper familiarities, "then we shall build upon her a palace of silver."

"Upon a foundation of such a character," he would say, "we shall erect the superstructure of our regard, and an honorable marriage, giving our approval to her choice, welcoming her betrothed as a brother, showering our presents, and dividing our hereditary substance generously for her dowry."

A third brother cautiously and justly, but still severely, continues:

"But if she be as a door," — open to every one's flirtations, and accessible to miscellaneous attentions, and to every lover professing so to be, — "then we shall fence her with cedar boards;" that is, marry her to a hard crusty man, who will allow her no company,

and permit no lightness or folly; or, "we shall sell her into a harem." Withdrawn from all society she will be buried in a life of monotony with her master.

However we may criticise the selfish form of their deliberations, we must admire their decisions.

Triumphantly, now, the maiden, no longer a little undeveloped girl, but a woman grown, and who doubtless profited by overhearing her brothers' wise severity, cries out:

"I have been a wall, and my bosom is as the tower upon it. I have withstood the flatteries and blandishments, even of a king. Armed only with innocence, I have resisted every assault."

"Then," after thus refusing to yield to Solomon, "was I in his eyes as one that found peace."

Ay, as in Chinese history the defeated conqueror, leaving behind the victorious Corean fortress, against which he had hurled his armies in vain, sent rolls of costly silk to the defenders as token of his admiration; as the hill tribes of India, issuing from their strongholds, tied a red cord round the wrists of the defeated British soldiers lying dead on the field, to show that they regarded them as heroes; as the caps of the Russian officers were lifted in

admiration when the Turkish leader at Shipka Pass, wounded and a prisoner, entered their camp; as every Union soldier honored the courage of the beaten Confederates, so in Solomon's admiring eyes was this pure girl as one who found peace, never more to be molested even by a king. Thus by the valor of purity, this virgin fortress, this unsoiled lily, obtained that the king should leave her at peace. Tranquilly, happily, she left Jerusalem and came to her humble home at Shunem, with the joy of a good conscience and a heart at peace.

"Solomon," further speaks the happy bride, in one of those riddles or enigmas in which the Hebrews delighted, from the time of Samson to that of Solomon, "had a vineyard at Baal-hamon" (or is it Baal-Hermon?). "He let out the vineyard on shares to farmers," and so rich was the crop, so valuable the stock, that "every one for selling the crop must pay rent in a thousand pieces of silver."

"O Solomon, keep thy thousand shekels, and give two hundred to the keepers of the fruit." Let him and them keep their wealth, "my vineyard, my own, is before me." I own myself. What I had, my beauty and my purity, the king, with all his vineyards, could not buy.

No longer made the keeper for others, she

dwells in the gardens of requited love and desired affections.

Now, for the first time in the drama, the beloved comes publicly upon the scene and his own voice is directly heard. Heretofore he has been addressed, described, remembered, dreamed about, made participant in the scenes of thought and imagination, but so far has had, to the reader of this grand love poem, only subjective existence in the pure mind of the maiden. Now, as lover crowned and happy husband, he appears on the scene in objective reality. Yet even then, all his thoughts are directed towards his bride. In her shadow he lives, and appearing only for a moment vanishes upon the mountains of spices.

"O thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions are listening to thy voice, let me also hear it."

He asks here for more than the song which she has been singing for the festal wedding company. He craves, now that she is with him, a sweet word that assures him that her whole love and heart are forever his.

Will she yield too easily, even to the one whom her soul loveth? A sweet innocent coquettishness is a maidenly charm. A modest winsomeness, tempered with just enough spirit

to moderate the would-be victor's conceit, is better for both lover and maid. We cannot conceive even of Eve engaging too readily to become Adam's wife, nor Rebecca becoming Isaac's bride without giving him something to wonder about. No man can utterly fathom a woman's ways. It is good that he cannot. Take away all mystery, eliminate every element of unexpectedness from a woman, you make her a machine which none but a wooden man loves. The very impossibility of a man finding out all about a woman is one of the ingredients in that "charm which Eden never lost." Even an old, settled-down husband ought to enjoy being occasionally "carried up to Paradise by the stairways of surprise," through the element of woman's unexpectedness. And so, at the end of the Canticle, though the bride yields to this, the first command, rather request, of her beloved, we note in her what Milton pictures in our first mother Eve:

> "Implied
> Subjection, but required with gentle sway
> And by her yielded, by him best received,
> Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
> And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay."

Truly a wanton flirt is a wicked woman; a jilt is the devil's own daughter. A creature who encourages attentions capriciously, and

gives her lovers hopes only to deceive and disappoint, belongs to the company of Delilah, Jezebel, and Sapphira, and will be judged of God. Naught of this spirit belongs to the Shulamite. Here is a woman who has refused to encourage one whom she cannot love, yet mildly teases the one who has won her. Steadfast and true to one only, she is yet of womankind, and her words have the flavor of bitter-sweet. Here in the very hour apparently of his triumph she tells him to flee, to hasten to the mount, to "break away."

"Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a gazelle or a young hart upon the spicy mountains."

Does she mean to say, "No longer are we divided by the mount of separation, not now with their valleys that keep us far apart, not as when a prisoner in Jerusalem I looked upon the range upon range of dividing hills, home, heart, love-sick, but be thou upon the mountain of spices. Enjoy thou thy life henceforth in the fragrance of my love. I am your garden"?

Does she mean this? Shall we leave the lovers happy in the joy of their union, in the fond faith and rapture of hope that reality will be equal to anticipation?

Or will love, that came "with music in his

feet," and tuned "young pulses to his roundelay," not "turn proser when he comes and stays"?

What does it mean, that, in the supreme moment of happy love, this Shulamite — the most womanly to our thinking of all the women of the Bible — answers her beloved in language which cannot possibly mean "come," but which unmistakably says "flee"?

Who can tell? What commentator explain? Does not the poet intend here an enigma? Does not even inspiration picture the course of true love as never running smooth, and hinting that whether affectionate courtship be with ease or with stress, its forecast, however bright, may fail of its fulfillment in happy marriage? Does it not compel the searching of heart which asks whether the elements of love-making are the same as those of a true marriage? Must not one, even on attaining the heart's immediate desire, mount even yet higher the mountains of fragrant endeavor?

Do not these last words of the poet, put in the mouth of the Shulamite, propound the possibility that winning a maiden to marriage is not the end of either right ambition or holy guile in holding and developing that love which is a spark of the Eternal? Does it not suggest that the mountains of spices have yet greater

heights to be won, even until passionate love be transformed into purest friendship, when sex and its charms are lost in the heavenly glories of spiritual love? And thus, abruptly closing, does not this loftiest strain of Hebrew poetry teach that earthly love, though of the purest, cannot satisfy the soul, and that nothing can do this but God?

These questions may be answered us in eternity, when in the presence of the Lover of man we shall see our Beloved as He is, and find in our Christ the eternal satisfaction of the soul.

"JAH JEHOVAH IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG;
AND HE IS BECOME MY SALVATION."

"TRUST YE IN JEHOVAH FOREVER, FOR IN JAH
JEHOVAH IS THE ROCK OF AGES."

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