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THE
SONG OF SONGS:

AN

EXPOSITION OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON

BY THE
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ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,
EDINBURGH.

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PREFACE

OF THE PUBLISHER OF THIS EDITION.

THE Publisher of this first American edition of Rev. A. Moody Stuart's excellent Commentary on THE SONG OF SOLOMON, has much pleasure in presenting it to American Christians. Commendation of it is almost superfluous; it requires only to be attentively read to be appreciated.

But since, in these times of restless activity in publication of all sorts of books, those of more weight and permanent utility are too apt to be overshadowed, it may not be amiss to introduce this solid and enduring work, by presenting some testimonials of its superior merits, emanating from high authorities.

A Scottish Magazine says of it:—'This elaborate, eminently spiritual, and exhaustive work, forms now the great Commentary on the Song of Songs. If our readers know what Leighton has done for the First Epistle of Peter, and what the Rev. Andrew Bonar has done for the book of Leviticus, they will understand us when we say that Mr. Moody Stuart has done a similar service for the book of Canticles. He has so expounded it, that no man of sense, learning, and spirituality of mind, would, during the present generation at least, think of writing and publishing another Commentary upon it. The work is thoroughly and therefore conclusively done; and the

only things now necessary to be done by all wise ministers of Christ who can spare the price, and all Christians generally, is to transfer it to their libraries as *the* standard work on that particular subject, and read it with an earnest desire that the Holy Spirit may transcribe its holy and heavenly truths into their souls.'

Rev. Dr. Jacobus (author of 'Notes on the Gospels and Acts,' &c.) says of it:—'I regard Stuart's Exposition as a very ingenious and interesting comment on THE SONG, suggesting the Gospel interpretation throughout, quite beyond what most would find in it, and what many would admit, but always in a way fully appreciating the evangelical aim of the Song.'

Rev. Dr. Paxton of New York also writes to the Publisher:—'I am glad to hear that you are about to republish Rev. A. Moody Stuart's Commentary upon THE SONG OF SOLOMON. I have been familiar with this work for a number of years and esteem it very highly. I have five or six other commentaries upon "The Song" in my library, but for all the practical purposes of the ministry I find this to be the best.'

The new *Metrical version* of THE SONG, which will be found at the close of the volume, and which was composed expressly for this edition of Mr. Stuart's work, will, it is hoped, give added interest and value to it.

The Publisher humbly trusts that the publication of this work in this country, together with the other valuable works of his series of *Special Expositions* of Books of Scripture, will conduce, through the divine blessing, to give increased breadth, intelligence, and spiritual tone to the American pulpit, and American Christians.

PHILADELPHIA, }
 May, 1869. }

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

To set forth the Word of God in such expositions as these is to present the pure wine of heaven, not in golden goblets of answerable purity, but in clay vessels of the potter with notable contrast. But if the Lord shall stoop to take the earthen cup into his own hand, and out of it shall give one of his little ones to drink of the bright wine of the kingdom, we have our reward, and shall consent meanwhile to the humbling scrutiny of our coarse handiwork.

We are deeply and increasingly sensible of the imperfection of our work, and have earnestly desired another year toward the removal of faults and the supply of defects. But amidst the pressing duties of a joyful but laborious calling, to defer would have been to lay aside and probably never to resume. Other authors plead only their avocations; if the old homely word is inserted in the manuscript, the very types return it with the wanting letter supplied; but the plea of the minister of the Gospel still is his vocation, the immediate duties of which leave him little leisure for other works however important.

For the sake of readers to whom the author may be an entire stranger, and lest any of them should conceive that the subject has been embraced through the ardour of youth, he thinks it not irrelevant to state that he had been a minister of the word for nearly twenty years, before he ventured to select

a single text from these mysterious communings between the Lord and his people; and that when his friend Mr. M'Cheyne, with his own singular unction and sweetness, was often preaching in his pulpit from the Song of Solomon, he was standing meanwhile in what the Jews termed the Outer Court of the Temple, and lecturing through the book of Proverbs.

This volume we now commit to Him in whose hands 'are the righteous, and the wise, and their works'—not as if it could be numbered with those works, but with the humble petition that it may be received into the hands which hold the recorded thoughts of all the children of men who have been taught of God; and thus committing it, we would leave it there, saying, 'It is in the hand of the Lord, let him do with it what seemeth to Him good.'

EDINBURGH, *April 20, 1857.*

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A NEW METRICAL VERSION OF THE SONG.

PART I.

CHARACTER AND STRUCTURE

OF THE SONG.

Oh that I knew how all thy lights combine,
And the configurations of their glorie;
Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
But all the constellations of the storie.

Herbert,

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

I.

THE SONG OF SONGS—CHARACTER OF THE BOOK.

The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.—CHAP. i. 1.

THE Song of Songs is Solomon's, as composed by the wisest of men, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and Solomon's also as composed concerning the true Solomon the Prince of Peace, of whom the son of David was an eminent type. It belongs to the earthly Solomon, as the skilful work of his hands; to the heavenly Solomon, as the utterance of his heart to the Church, and of the heart of the Church toward him. 'The Song of Songs of Solomon' would nearly express both the ambiguity and the fulness of the original, and might with us be interpreted, either by Solomon or concerning him; and in a hieroglyphic book, every word of which is an earthly symbol with a heavenly meaning, it is altogether probable that the title itself has a double significance, and has been so framed as to intimate that the Song is of, or by, the earthly Solomon as its author, and of, or concerning, the heavenly Solomon as its subject.

It is the Song of Songs as the choicest both of all the songs of the sons of men, and of all that Solomon sung; the chief of his thousand songs and five; the sweetest, the simplest, the highest, the deepest of the songs of the Church in the house of her pilgrimage; above all others her song in the night, until the day break, and the shadows flee away. 'For this reason, also,' said one who knew it well, 'would I call it the Song of

Songs, because other songs must be sung first, and this as the fruit of all the rest; grace alone teaches it; experience alone can learn it.' (Bernard.)

Bride of the Lamb, the song is thine; for if anywhere in the oracles of truth is found the new song, which no man can learn but they who are redeemed from the earth, and which is sung by none but the virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, it must consist in part of this same song of Solomon. Emphatically this is a song which the men of earth can never learn; like Christ himself, to one it is a stumbling-block, to another foolishness; but by this very token dost thou recognise the word and image of thy Lord, and bind the book about thee as a crown, glorying in the reproach of the cross.

If thy pleasure be
In sacred song and sweet soliloquy,
Thou that art troth-plight with the endless ring
Of lasting love unto the Heir of heaven,
And hast received thy wedding-ropes, may sing
The Song of Songs—to thee alone 'tis given.

Troth-plight Spouse.

Before attempting, however, to unveil its mysteries, let us briefly consider the Character of the Book in itself, in its reception by the Church, and in its relation to the other Scriptures; and first,

The Character of the Book in itself. 'If a fact can be established by testimony,' to quote the words of another, 'it is established by testimony, that the Song of Solomon was a part of the Hebrew canon in the time of Christ.' (Prof. Stowe.) It forms an unquestionable portion of those ancient oracles, to which our Lord set his divine seal, when he issued the command, 'Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.' But the Song itself, if it bear any testimony at all to Jesus, must be an allegory throughout; and, resting on whatever ground of earthly imagery, the allegorical meaning must be regarded, not only as containing its principal use, but as forming its primary, and we doubt not its exclusive design.

An earthly imagery constitutes the basis of the spiritual

allegory, but certainly not an earthly history. Pharaoh's daughter has, indeed, been regarded by many as the outward type under which the Church is here set forth. But it admits of positive demonstration, that this Egyptian princess is in no sense the subject of this song. There is not a single expression throughout the book that can be held to favor the supposition; for the solitary allusion to Pharaoh's chariots (i. 9) is more suitable for Israel, to whom those gorgeous equipages formed a well-known subject both of history and of song, than for the King of Egypt's daughter, who was familiar with them as an every-day sight in her father's court. The modern critics have expended much labor and learning in proving by classical analogies, that in order to commend his bride on her marriage day, the most tasteful of kings could not have soared higher than to compare her to one of her father's carriage horses. The point of taste we leave to others to decide, but we are thoroughly persuaded that the earlier interpreters were right, when, with one consent, they found no allusion except to the Egyptian host at the Red Sea. Doubtless it is to the hymn of Moses, to the timbrel of Miriam, and to the harp of David that the Song of Solomon is attuned, when Christ employs it to address his Church,—‘I have compared thee O my love to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.’ In every other passage throughout the book, all that could be intelligible or interesting to a princess of Egypt is avoided as completely as if by solicitous design. The book abounds in local references; mountains, hills, plains, vineyards, fish-ponds, cities, and towers, are specified by name; and not one of them all lies between Egypt and Jerusalem, where they might have been seen or heard of by the bride in her journey. En-gedi, which she is represented as acquainted with, is on the border of the Dead Sea, far out of the Egyptian route (i. 14); the rest are all north or north-east of the capital; many of them are beyond the Jordan, and generally they are at the greatest possible distance from her native land. There were fortified border cities, such as Gaza, which must have been known and might have been seen by her, and would have afforded images as suitable as the distant and disputed tower of Lebanon (vii. 4). It is incon-

ceivable that so great a master of acceptable words could have sought to gratify Pharaoh's daughter, by extolling the fish-pools of Heshbon in the far-off tribe of Reuben, and overlooking the world-famed waters of the Nile (vii. 4)—by commemorating the remote and alien Damascus, and omitting the more celebrated and not more idolatrous Memphis of her fatherland (vii. 4)—and still more, by representing her under the garb of a shepherdess, when Jew and Gentile knew that every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians (i. 7). These circumstances render the supposition in the highest degree improbable; others render it impossible. The delicate daughter of the haughty Pharaoh, for whom Solomon built a sumptuous palace, could not in any supposable manner have ever been a sun-burnt keeper of the vineyards (i. 6); she could not have been unveiled and beaten by the watchmen of Jerusalem (v. 7); she could not have come from the snowy heights of Lebanon, when she had no occasion to be within a hundred and twenty miles of its base (iv. 8); and she never did conduct Solomon into her mother's house which was in the land of Egypt (iii. 4). In every way, the marriage of Pharaoh's daughter neither was, nor could be, the historical or typical basis, or in any sense whatever the groundwork of the Song of Solomon.

The place of this Egyptian princess in the Song having been disproved, we shall not occupy the reader's time with combating the groundless and endless fancies that have competed for the filling of the blank. She alone has an eminent position in Scripture; there is no other for whom any historical claim has been or can be advanced; and if she is not the subject of the Song, much less can any other imaginary bride be so regarded. Many of the objections we have noted, such as keeping the vineyards and wandering through the city at midnight, apply equally to any prince's daughter and consort of the king (vii. 1). Then, there is the magnificence of all the comparisons, 'beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners,' so widely different from the simplicity of Scriptural emblems to represent objects earthly and human, as in David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, where the most intense emotion still pours itself forth in the simplest images,—

'they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.' Further, there remains the extreme improbability of the wise Solomon drawing so lofty a portrait of his own person, and describing himself, even in the most subordinate sense, as the 'chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.'

The truth is, that the Song in its whole conception and structure is such as never could have been welcomed or tolerated by any earthly bride, by whomsoever composed; and least of all if written for her by her own consort. With the exception of the fourth chapter, the greater part of it is, in one form or other, put into the mouth of the bride; it is commenced by her, closed by her, chiefly conducted by her; while the narrative throughout is put into her lips, never into the lips of her Betrothed. Would any earthly bridegroom so construct a song for his bride, or earthly bride receive it so constructed? Then, she is represented as now self-condemning, and again self-excusing, but as uniformly helpless, reverent, entreating; while the Bridegroom is always full of majesty, his affection ever mingled with condescension, frequently he is reserved and distant, sometimes stern and severe. All this is intelligible only on the supposition that the Song itself was never in any form designed for scenes of earth; but, under an earthly veil, to shadow out the communion of the ransomed Church and her glorious Redeemer.—But let us look now at the character of the book,

As received by the Church. Truth will ever assert its own supremacy in the end. The Jews revered the Song of Solomon as amongst the holiest of sacred books. Likening his works with the pen of a ready writer to his less durable fabric of wood and stone, they compared the Proverbs to the outer court of the Temple, Ecclesiastes to the Holy Place, and the Song of Songs to the Holy of holies, the inmost sanctuary of God. The Chaldee Targum, which is the oldest Jewish Commentary on the book, entitles it 'The Songs and hymns which Solomon the prophet, king of Israel, delivered by the spirit of prophecy, before Jehovah the Lord of the whole earth;' and explains it throughout as a divine allegory, representing the dealings of God with his people Israel. The Christian fathers compared the whole teaching of Solomon to a ladder consist-

ing of three steps, moral, natural, mystical; Proverbs embracing instruction in morals; Ecclesiastes indicating the nature of things sensible, and the vanity of the present life, that despising these things as transient we may desire the future as firm and eternal; and the Song of Songs containing the mystic relation and union of Christ and his Church, that we may fly upward to the great Bridegroom to love and embrace him as promising everlasting blessedness. (Origen, Theodoret.) Any attempts either amongst the Jews or Christians to attach a lower sense to this divine Song were extremely few and quite exceptional, serving only to bring out more clearly the general and all but universal judgment for the allegorical interpretation. 'Far be it! far be it!' exclaims one of the Hebrew doctors, 'that the Song of Songs should treat of earthly love; for had it not been a pure allegory, and had not its excellence been great, it would not have been numbered with the holy books; nor on this head is there any controversy.'

During the mists that preceded the dawn of the Reformation, these divine Canticles must have been songs in the night for weary pilgrims, as is testified by the explanatory headings which interspersed the verses, such as—'The voice of the Father, the voice of Christ, the Church saith of her tribulations.' And when the sun was rising on Britain, and, as the fruit chiefly of the labors of the noble martyr Tyndale, 'The Byble truly and purely translated into Englysh' was presented as God's best gift to this country, the 'Ballet of Ballettes' stood forth distinguished in the centre of the noble book. The rest of the massive volume is printed in black letter, but in the Song of Songs, dividing its passages and verses and sometimes even clauses, are bright lines of red shining between the black and shedding rays of spiritual light—'The voyce of the Patriarches speakyng of Christ, the voyce of the Churehe chosen out of the heathen, the voyce of the Synagogue marvellyng in itselfe at the Churehe.' In our own Scottish land more than a century later, when the clouds returned after the rain, and the Church betook herself like a bird to the mountains, the dove plucked this page of holy writ as an olive leaf in her mouth, and bore it to her hiding-place in the clefts of the rock. As our covenanting

fathers threaded their bloodstained path through the mysteries and cruelties of a thinly disguised Anti-christ, the beaten oil from the Isle of Patmos fed the lamp that lighted their midnight way, and the Song of Songs supplied their holy hymns of praise—the sweet utterance of their Bridegroom's voice and their own responsive echoes (viii. 6). Meanwhile, quickly following the light of the Reformation and the diffusion of the word of God, not a few devoted ministers of Christ expounded this Song of Solomon from the pulpit and the press, and dug from its deep mines the richest treasures of Gospel truth, to the great comfort and edification of the Church. Metrical translations, also, and paraphrases were prepared by eminent divines, eagerly welcomed by the people, and circulated in great numbers; and the Bride of the Lamb rejoiced that in these holy Canticles she could with understanding 'sing to her well-beloved a song of her Beloved touching his vineyard.'

But the gold did not lack its alloy, for, in the course of the seventeenth century, some theologians, distinguished by talent more than by spiritual discernment or soundness in the faith, advanced and eloquently illustrated the theory of a double interpretation, expounding the book throughout, both of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter, and of Christ and the Church. In the early interpreters, Jewish and Christian, Greek and Latin, Pharaoh's daughter has no place whatever; and although she is introduced in some of the first English Bibles, no more seems to have been intended than what all allow as a ground-work of earthly imagery, for without further reference to her the interpretation is purely spiritual. The Great Bible retains the simple idea of the 'Mysticall Song,' but in Taverner's is added, 'Solomon made this Ballate or Songe to himselfe and his wyfe the daughter of Pharao, under the shadowe of himselfe figuring Chryste, and under the person of his wyfe the Church;' while on the contrary old Dudley Fenner stoutly asserts that it was 'not of Pharaoh's daughter or any queen of Solomon's.' But the idea of an outward or historical basis which had either not been entertained at all, or entertained as if not at all, was in the next century brought forward and advanced with all the beauties of eloquence, though not without a decided protest by

the leading orthodox divines. Solomon's Bride, thus conjoined with the Bride of the Lamb, was in process of time promoted to the exclusive occupation of the throne; for thereafter followed that dark and cloudy day in the latter half of the past century, when here, as everywhere, the blind leaders of the blind were stumbling into the ditch of their own delusions—divines abroad denying, and divines at home forgetting, any other sense of the Song save the literal.

Hating the light from above, they set themselves like moles to burrow under ground, and to fashion an earthly passage for the free progress of this mystic song. The first insuperable difficulty, a stone too heavy for their strength, drives them to conjure up a fictitious person who straightway removes it for them; the next, a rock which they can neither pierce nor displace, forces them to create an imaginary scene around it, and the difficulty dissolves. But both these expedients fail them at last, and then their never-failing resource is in dreams which they multiply according to their own fancy, till they occupy a large portion of the book—meanwhile they are continually denouncing and triumphing over the wildness of allegory. Those foolish laborers in the vineyard passed away, but the dregs of the poisoned cup which they had mingled, having been sipped by certain good men, led them likewise away with the error of the ungodly. These, first misinterpreting the book, proceeded next to question its inspiration; they attached to it a grovelling and unfounded meaning, and then said that it could not be divine. But the old truth abides and ever returns again, and within the last thirty years some of the ablest of the biblical critics abroad have rejected and disproved the fallacies of their predecessors, and have seen and shown that this Song must be an allegory, a pure allegory without any historical groundwork. This, we doubt not, will come to be universally acknowledged; and the day may not be distant when the great Bridegroom of the Church will employ this glorious Song more than ever heretofore, for the maintenance and the expression of holy fellowship between himself and his redeemed from among the sons of men.—Let us consider now the character of this book,

In relation to the other Scriptures. Leaving every other view, we receive and interpret the Song of Solomon as not less purely figurative than if God announced over it as he does elsewhere—‘I have likened the Daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.’ In this allegory, Christ is set forth as the Anointed, for ‘Ointment poured forth is his name;’ as the King, a title which, when used by way of excellence, Jews as well as Christians acknowledge to belong to the Messiah; as Solomon, the Prince of peace; as the Beloved, and as the Chief among ten thousand, altogether lovely. The Church, on the other hand, is described as the Fairest among women, the Prince’s daughter, the King’s sister, the King’s spouse, and her more special designation is the Shulamite. This is not her own original name, but is a significant appellation suited for an allegory, and means the Peaceful; for Shulamith or Shulamite is the feminine of Solomon, just as Joanna is of John; and if Solomon the Peaceful may, in scriptural expression, be translated the Prince of peace, the Shulamite may be rendered, in like manner, the Daughter of peace. Figuratively interpreted, the structure of the book presents no difficulty, for the vinedresser and the prince’s daughter, the midnight inquirer and the royal consort, the supplicant drenched with night dews and the king in his palace, stand in the most perfect congruity to the relations and characters of Christ and his Church.

Nor can it be deemed otherwise than most accordant with the entire scope of the Word of God, that one of its books should be thus expressly devoted to a delineation of the union and intercourse subsisting between Christ and his redeemed, under the aspect of the relation formed by the marriage covenant amongst men. From the commencement of Genesis to the close of Revelation, this emblem of marriage is employed by the Holy Spirit to shadow forth that spiritual mystery. In Moses it is, ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh,’ which is declared in the New Testament to be ‘a great mystery concerning Christ and the Church;’ in the Psalms it is, ‘Hearken O daughter and consider, forget also thy father’s

house and thine own people, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty;' in the Prophets it is, 'Thy maker is thine husband,' and 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals;' in the Gospels it is, 'He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom which standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice,' and 'How can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the Bridegroom is with them?' in the Epistles it is, 'The chaste virgin espoused to one husband even Christ,' and the believer 'married unto him that is raised from the dead;' and in Revelation it is, 'The Bride the Lamb's wife,' and 'the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready.'

If it be objected that within the compass of the book itself there is no key to the spiritual meaning, there is the ready answer that this allegoric song is only part of a book; that the New Testament itself is but half a book requiring the Old as another essential half; that this entire song is no more than one chapter in the Word of God, and that the other chapters furnish keys enough to open all its locks. 'It lies in the casket of revelation, an exquisite gem, engraved with emblematic characters, with nothing literal thereon to break the consistency of their beauty.' (Burrowes). To have inserted the solution within the hieroglyphic itself would have been to mar all its symmetry, because it is not written in the form of a parable spoken by another, but of an allegory personating the speakers themselves. The writer never speaks; it never is—'ten virgins took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom;' but the bridal virgins are themselves the speakers—'draw, me we will run after thee.' This accounts also for the designed absence of the name of God; with this additional argument, that if words exclusively religious had sometimes been introduced, the hasty inference would have been drawn that the whole of the rest was earthly, while all is now spiritual, heavenly, divine. Let it be further noted, that the directness of the allegorical form, as distinguished from the narrative style of a parable, makes the greater part of the book to consist of immediate address either by Christ to the soul or by the soul to Christ,

and, as of necessity, moves us to ponder every word, and 'suck honey from every letter.'

'Oh Book! infinite sweetnesse! let my heart
Suck every letter, and a honey gain,
Precious for any grief, in any part;
To cleare the breast, to mollifie all pain.

'Thou art joye's handsell . . . thou art a masse
Of strange delights . . . who can endeare
Thy praise too much?'

Herbert.

II.

THE SONG OF SONGS—SOLOMON'S FITNESS FOR
THE WORK.

The Song which is Solomon's.—CHAP. i. 1.

HAVING considered the character of the book, let us look next at the writer's peculiar fitness for the work in his qualifications, historical, natural, spiritual; in the years he had attained when he sung this song; and in his speaking as the Spirit gave him utterance.

'God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets,' has chosen his own season and his own messenger, giving to us no account of his matters; yet both in the time and in the writer, as well as in the character of the book, we may humbly recognise the manifold wisdom of God. The time suited the manner of the revelation, because types and allegories specially belonged to the old dispensation; and that dispensation reached its ripeness in the days of Solomon, when the temple was built, when sacrifice and offering and burnt-offering were in thousands of rams and as ten thousand rivers of oil, when the glory of Jehovah filled the house, and the tabernacle of God was visibly and gloriously in the midst of men. Previously, the daughter of Zion was still growing into maturity, but now she had reached her prime, was richly endowed, and was openly married to the Lord of Hosts; subsequently the prophets with one voice testify against her for unfaithfulness to her marriage covenant. If ever in all her history, it was now the season for such a song. The songs of the law and the prophets were the preparatory lessons of her infancy, the hymns of her lovely childhood; but the last and crowning song of all, the Song therefore of Songs, was prepared for the now mature maiden against the day of her marriage to the King of kings. (Origen).

The time had come, and also the man; the time for the nuptial song and the man to sing it—Solomon the king of peace, Solomon the ripe consummation of wisdom human and divine. Judging from the product, it had been the will of God to employ the utmost knowledge attained by man of what was fair on earth, and of what was mysterious in heaven, along with the deepest skill in parabolic imagery, to frame this mystic song of the communings of the great Redeemer with his sister Bride. In the lowest of these qualifications Solomon had no equal, for the earthly works of the Lord were sought out by him from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; and none knew as he did all that was pleasant to the eye, or harmonious to the ear, or fragrant to the scent, or delicious to the taste of man. In the words of one who possessed a most discriminating eye in the beauties of graphic delineation, ‘This entire song abounds with delightful objects: on every side are flowers, fruits, and a profusion of the loveliest plants; the pleasantness of spring; the luxuriance of the fields; flourishing and well-watered gardens; streams, wells, fountains; odours artificial and natural; rock-pigeons, songs of turtle-doves, honey, milk, and flowing wines; together with all that is beautiful and graceful in the human form. If any object of horror is introduced, such as rugged rocks, wild mountains, and lions’ dens, the whole is arranged to produce a pleasing effect, and as if for the ornament and variety of a most beautiful painting. To what end are these things? except that being delighted with their beauty, we may learn how much more beautiful their Lord is than all these, and may commence the song of divine love.’ (Bossuet). To draw such a picture Solomon was the fittest of all the sons of men.

In the higher qualifications for the work Solomon equally excelled, for, above all the prophets preceding or following, he was enabled to discern and to describe the eternal Wisdom or Word of God. (Prov. chap. viii). Of the man of sorrows Isaiah wrote the obedience unto death; but to Solomon it was given to speak of the Lord Jesus with the Father ‘as one brought up with him, daily his delight, and rejoicing always

before him,' and likewise as 'rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights being with the sons of men'—which is the precise theme of this Song. But he possessed a third preparation for the holy task, in which none ever equalled him save the Greater than Solomon, who in his parables, as in all things else, spake as never man spake. Of his 'wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the sea shore,' one of the most distinguishing features was the power of clothing spiritual realities with earthly images; and this, above all others, was the faculty to be employed in composing such a song. 'To understand a parable (Old Bible) and the interpretation, the words of the wise and their dark sayings,' and to frame such parables or proverbs for the use of the Church in all ages, was peculiarly the divine vocation of Solomon amongst the ancient prophets, and for this allegoric song such was the very gift to be called into exercise. 'Solomon divinely inspired has uttered the praises of Christ and the Church, the mysteries of their eternal marriage, and the longings of a holy soul; and, exulting in Spirit, he has formed these things into a pleasant yet figurative song. Even as Moses, so hath Christ here drawn a veil over his face, which might else have shone too brightly, because in that age few or none could, with face unveiled, look upon his glory.' (Bernard).

The Song, however, was not the work of Solomon without preparatory aid. But as the father framed the plan and gathered the materials for the temple which the son was to build; so the father in the seventy-second, but especially in the forty-fifth of his Psalms, sketched the outline and laid the foundation of the Song, which the son was to fashion into its goodly fabric. David 'the sweet psalmist of Israel' sung psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of most heavenly melody, but his calling was not to cast divine truth into the form of allegory. Ezekiel, after the interval of ages, wove lofty allegories, but into the writer's inkhorn by his side the golden vials full of wrath often poured their fiery stream; for the time of singing songs was past. Solomon, standing between the two, united both—elaborately fashioned an allegoric song; sung

an allegory. The son of Jesse breathed the longings of holy desire, 'My soul thirsteth for God,' and the fervour of divine affection, 'I love the Lord;' and rose to the source of these responsive echoes in Jehovah's free love to men, 'Many are thy thoughts to us-ward, they are more than can be numbered.' The son of David, moved by the Holy Ghost, took hold on these two golden threads, spun them with singular skill so as to develop both their strength and their beauty without impairing either, and wove them into this wondrous Song of Songs; which is nothing else than the interlacing of these two cords, the one drawn from heaven downward, and the other drawn from earth upward—the interlocution of these two hearts, the human and the divine.

This, then, being a song of the love of Christ under the veil of allegory, we must take heed lest, in the contemplation of the beauteous veil, we should for a moment forget him whom it both manifests and conceals: manifests, because without it we should look upon a blank; conceals, because in it as regards the letter we see but an outward picture, and not the very person of Jesus. 'We should in this resemble the skilful musician, and touch these chords lightly with the finger, only to elicit the sweet music of divine love; or like the roes and hinds of the field which this Song commemorates, we should scarcely tread the earth with our feet, and only for the purpose of springing upward toward heaven.'

'So by the aid of one celestial Guide
 Implored and rested on, not safe alone
 Those precincts will appear, but rich in mines
 Of pure and precious gold.'

Regarding the time in Solomon's life when he wrote this Song, we possess no materials for a certain conclusion, yet are not without rays of light. That it was the work of his old age is not impossible in itself; and many believers to whom it has formerly presented few attractions begin in the decline of years to find great delight in this book, even as 'in good wine which the master of the feast has kept for them until now;' wine causing the lips of the ancient to speak, and reviving them for the later stages of their pilgrimage (vii. 9, marg.).

But all the law and the prophets prove that it is contrary to the mind of God, and therefore impossible, that open defection in high places, such as marked the declining years of Solomon (however penitent for his own personal sins), should be followed by a public song of gladness. During the sad season of his follies it could not be composed; and advancing toward his earlier years, we should not notice the argument from the 'tower of Lebanon,' as if it proved the song to have been written after the house of the forest of Lebanon was built, were it not so often adduced. Allowing that house to have been built in Mount Lebanon, as well as of its cedars, it could have no connexion with the watchtower 'looking to Damascus,' because the last spot that the peaceful king would choose for a summer retreat would be a border fortress erected against a restless foe whose king 'abhorred Israel.' On the contrary, the song appears to have been composed before the building of the temple; for after that period, and even earlier but with reference to it, Jerusalem stands alone in the land, 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King.' If another city is added to complete a parallel, it is only part of itself, as 'the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and yet choose Jerusalem;' but the introduction along with it of a different city altogether, in the comparison 'beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem,' leads to the conclusion that the temple, which was Jerusalem's glory, had not yet been reared. Being thus conducted toward the beginning of Solomon's reign, we receive at its own value the information given by the son of Sirach, who addresses Solomon; 'The countries marvelled at thee for thy songs, and proverbs, and parables, and interpretations' (Ecclesiasticus xlvii. 17). In the same order the marginal dates in our authorized version arrange his writings; Ecclesiastes at the close of his reign, Proverbs after it had continued fifteen years, and Canticles within about a year of its commencement.

But we advance one step further, and unhesitatingly concur with those who hold that the Song of Songs was written by Solomon before he ascended the throne of his father David. There is not a single circumstance of improbability in this view. Solomon was beloved of God from his birth, and was

named Jedidiah or the Lord's Beloved, and throughout his youth and childhood he retained this divine favor, 'for he was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel.' (Neh. xiii. 26.) Full of grace and wisdom, there was every reason to expect that in his youth both grace and gifts would tend to flow in the channel of holy song; for if any child on earth might imbibe the love of divine melody, it was the son of David; and if any house on earth would encourage and exercise the gift, it was David's house in Jerusalem. Nor was there any season in Solomon's life more adapted to call forth all his gracious affections, or more free from distracting cares, than after David had given him, in presence of assembled Israel, the solemn charge to build the temple of the Lord; had received for it at the hands of a willing people gold, silver, precious stones, brass, and iron, and doubtless also (as in the tabernacle) blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen for the curtains of Solomon; and had written the forty-fifth and seventy-second Psalms for the great Prince of Peace that was yet to come. If Solomon was the chosen man, this seems the choicest time to sing the Song of Songs; 'and saith not the law the same also?' Ecclesiastes is entitled 'the words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem;' and is it not because the words were written after Solomon had been settled in his house and kingdom in Jerusalem? The Proverbs are 'of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;' and is it not because he wrote them after he was king of Israel, yet before his palace in Jerusalem was completed, and himself established there? Canticles are simply 'the Song of Solomon,' and surely because that song was sung before he ascended his father's throne. From the days of Origen downward, long and labored disquisitions have been written on those three titles! but nothing penetrates the mind or adheres to the memory save these simple distinctions, which lead to the conclusion that it was a holy song of first love to the Lord, 'a spiritual and mystical device' given to him in the kindness of his youth, and in the love of his own espousals to the King eternal, immortal, invisible. Nor is it the least argument against this conclusion that he sings of 'King Solomon,' because David had now publicly de-

clared that Solomon was to succeed him in the throne; had himself sung ‘touching the King fairer than the sons of men;’ had entitled the seventy-second Psalm for, or rather of, Solomon; and had therein described none but that King, ‘whose name is to endure for ever with abundance of peace’—even as his son in these Canticles sets forth not himself at all, but only the true Solomon, the one Prince of Peace.

But it must further be noted concerning the author of the book, or rather the ready writer whom the Divine Author employed in this work, that in one Solomon three several men are found. There is the child of Adam, ‘the old man corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;’ there is the child of God, newborn, taught, chastened, and ‘among many nations no king like him, beloved of his God;’ and there is the inspired writer of Holy Scripture, of Canticles,—of Proverbs, of Ecclesiastes. How divinely even the covetous and accursed Balaam sings, when ‘he hears the words of God, and sees the vision of the Almighty,’ and prays for the death and the heaven of the redeemed. ‘Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end—my after state—be like his.’ So Solomon, hearing the words of God and seeing the vision of the Almighty, speaks not the words of Solomon earthly, nor of Solomon spiritual yet fallible, but of Solomon ‘moved by the Holy Ghost;’ words which at another season he could by no effort have uttered; words which in their utterance he could only partially understand, and which he would afterwards study as a humble inquirer, ‘searching what the Spirit of Christ which was in him did signify.’

One grand principle remains both to be broadly stated and constantly kept in mind in the perusal of this book,—the great Baconian rule for Bible interpretation, that ‘these two *known to God* and *unknown to man* do make a just and sound difference between the exposition of the Scriptures and all other books.’ Once incorporated with the Word of God, written and recorded for all ages of the Church, every image it contains is to be examined not by the lamp of Solomon, but by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness; of the true light that now shines on every page of God’s great revelation. In our hearts also may it shine, giving “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!”

III.

THE SONG IN ITS UNITY AND IN ITS SEVERAL CANTICLES.

The Song of songs which is Solomon's.—CHAP. i. 1.

THE Book having already been considered in its character, the next subject of inquiry is the arrangement of its parts. Searcher of the Scriptures for eternal life, this is not thy principal study in the sacred oracles. One who stands among the chief of the wise and learned in this world has told thee truth in saying, that the 'Scriptures being written to the thoughts of men and to the succession of all ages, in the foresight of all differing estates of the Church, yea and particularly of the elect, have in themselves, not only totally or collectively, but distinctively in clauses and words, infinite springs and streams of doctrine to water the Church in every part.' (Bacon.) It is, for the most part, from those infinite streams that spring out of the clauses and words, that thou art enabled to draw the living water both for life at the first, and for daily refreshing; yet additional light is thrown on each separate word by the discovered connexion of the whole, and over this Song will the interpreter often breathe the prayer,

'Oh that I knew how all thy lights combine,
And the configurations of their glorie;
Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
But all the constellations of the storie!'

Not more intently does the midnight astronomer seek to penetrate the heavens and divide the stars, than he must strive to discover in those bright pages 'the constellations of this storie;' and the patience of the reader must also be entreated for a part of the subject, that is less attractive than important.

First of all, the unity of the Song, though questioned by a very few interpreters who would divide the book into various unconnected scenes gathered round a common subject, is allowed

almost universally, and by critics and divines widely differing from each other in its interpretation. This unity is clearly established by the oneness of subject throughout; by the recurrence in every part of the same expressions (ii. 6, 7; iii. 5; viii. 3, 4:—ii. 16; vi. 3; vii. 10:—iii. 6; vi. 10; viii. 5, etc.); and by an evident chain of connexion through the whole, however some of its links may lie concealed. It is also confirmed by the fact that the theory of complete division solves no real difficulty, because the most abrupt transitions occur in the heart of what all acknowledge to be parts of the same scene; as when the midnight knocking at the door of a humble cottage is followed by the most glorious description of the King that the book contains (chap. v.)

Receiving, then, the entire Song as one, our attention is next attracted by the marked peculiarity of the scriptural statement that the Songs of Solomon were a thousand and five, combining a number extremely general and complete with another comparatively fractional. The sacred writers are far from indifferent regarding numbers, and when it is recorded that Solomon's proverbs were three thousand, we cannot conceive that this exact figure was the result of accident, but of intention on the part of the writer. A thousand songs present the same or even greater completeness of character, and had this been their number, we should certainly have ascribed it to design in the author; especially when we consider how naturally he might either divide a larger song into two, or combine two shorter songs into one. When, therefore, the broken number of five is added to the already perfect thousand, we are irresistibly led to ask the reason. Were these five songs of a character different from all the rest; was there a complete thousand of their own class, and another five of a different order that did not admit of amalgamation; the five also complete in themselves, but wholly distinct from the thousand? Now the Song of Songs, though one, is universally admitted to consist of several songs or parts, according to the title the Targum gives, 'Songs and Hymns,' and our old English title, the Book of Canticles. Were there, then, a thousand songs good and holy in their own kind; over and above these, was there one inspired song, the

Song of Songs, the song of a thousand, the song above the thousand; and did that song contain within itself five songs, separate yet forming one whole?

If the reader attach any weight to these observations, let him lay it aside; and if he attach none, he will be the more free, when we now examine the book itself. Let us also forget all theories of interpretation, literal or allegorical; let us then note the occurrence of every complete break in the connexion indicated by the double mark of one scene fairly closed, and another commencing abruptly; and by these breaks let us divide the Song into its principal parts, irrespectively of any scheme of construction, any theory of interpretation, and all other considerations whatever. Only, let us be sure that we have found both a close and a commencement, for otherwise we shall be quite entangled by what at first appears a multitude of abrupt transitions. Proceeding on these principles, we find three closes exactly alike, 'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up nor awake my love until he please' (ii. 7, iii. 5. viii. 4); followed by three abrupt commencements, 'the voice of my beloved' (ii. 8), and 'who is this that cometh out of the wilderness' twice repeated (iii. 6 and viii. 5). Another full close we find, 'eat, O friend, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved' (v. 1); and followed by the abrupt beginning of a new scene, 'I sleep but my heart waketh' (v. 2).

Let us now search through the eight chapters of the book, and we shall not discover a single additional passage combining the conclusion of one scene with the commencement of another. Amongst all the apparently sudden commencements, the most remarkable are these three: 'By night I sought him' (iii. 1),—but it is the immediate sequence of the preceding verse, 'Until the day break, turn my Beloved, by night I sought him;—'Who is she that looketh forth as the morning' (vi. 10),—but it properly forms part of the verse preceding, 'They praised her saying, Who is she;—and lastly, 'How beautiful are thy feet with shoes' (vii. 1),—but it is in the closest connexion with the verse before, 'Return that we may look on thee, how beautiful are thy feet with shoes!'

These four breaks that we have noted divide the Song into

five parts, all alike ending in fulness of rest and refreshing, in the form either of quiet repose or of abundant repast; except indeed the last, which strikingly concludes the book, as it had commenced, with the intense longing of unsatisfied spiritual desire—beginning, ‘Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,’ and ending, ‘Make haste my Beloved.’

But if all biblical interpreters divide the book, must not these five divisions if correct have commended themselves to their adoption? And so they have; for though not one eminent critic has arranged the Song into five parts, but into six, seven, eight, twelve; yet they fix on these five parts with a general and all but universal consent, and the moment they try to find one more, there is disagreement and confusion. This will be seen at a glance by the following table (p. 28), in which, regarding the one that is least striking at first inspection, the consent is unanimous (v. 2); while the slight diversity on the other three is more than compensated by the almost universal concurrence of other authors regarding them. After these five parts the discordance is apparent, and the actual disagreement much greater than appears; for example in chap. vi. 10, which has four advocates out of the eight, the remaining four, Bishop Percy, Dr. Good, Mr. Taylor (*Fragments of Calmet*), and Mr. Williams, not only disallow any main division, but hold the most immediate connexion with the preceding verse, which they separate only by a comma, while their division is equally disallowed by the others. The case is substantially the same with chap. iii. 1, and chap. vii. 1, where some make a chief division while others deny any subdivision.

But the concurrence will be still more evident if we take the first seven authorities, omitting Bossuet because he led the way; and the others taking the benefit of his labors were more exact in their divisions. From Theodoret downward the Song had indeed been divided, but apparently without any special study, till Bossuet took it up, and by the lustre of his genius attracted toward it the regards of literary men for the sake of its external beauties. Among the first of these was Dr. Percy, Dean of Carlisle and afterwards Bishop of Dromore, able as a scholar and acute, but in things divine the least of the sons of

Gibeon, that have been hewers of wood and drawers of water for the children of Israel. Bossuet while explaining the book as a spiritual allegory, based his exposition on two suppositions equally untenable; the first that the bride was Pharaoh's daughter, the second that the Song describes a marriage feast of seven days' duration. The first of these ideas Dr. Percy disposes of in the following just and decided sentence: 'As for the common hypothesis that the Bride was Pharaoh's daughter, it is incompatible with many circumstances in the poem, and indeed is contrary to the whole tenor of it.' But the other supposition, of a literal marriage festival extending over seven days, is the foundation of his whole work; of which he states that 'the plan is borrowed from that of the celebrated Bishop of Meaux as described by Dr. Lowth, for the Bishop's book had been sought after by the translator in vain.' This want his readers have to regret as much as himself, for had he seen the work from which his plan was taken, he might possibly have been ashamed to place his own grovelling speculations side by side with its comparatively just and frequently noble sentiments. But, in striking contrast to his precursor, he was encumbered with no riches of thought, no loftiness of view, no treasures from the Christian fathers to distract his attention. The Bishop of Meaux set himself to rear an elegant palace on the ancient groundwork prepared by the King of Israel, and, engaged in the erection, he mistook some of the original lines, the Bishop or Dromore, with a style of interpretation serving only to cast up walls of mud on the marble foundations of Solomon, gave his whole attention to the groundwork, traced the lines with far greater accuracy, and had his views corroborated by succeeding laborers. If therefore we omit Bossuet, we have seven critics all agreeing on these five divisions with the exception of a single verse in the case of Jahn (viii. 4); whose work is the only one we have not before us, and whose other divisions would almost lead us to suspect an error of transcription in this.

The various authors give different names to their divisions, sections, days, idyls, songs, which however we have not distinguished, but have classed them all under the time-honored

term of Canticles; taking the five on which they nearly all agree as the basis of the table. With such a concurrence of authorities we hold it as established beyond reasonable doubt, that this book consists of five Canticles; yet not of five different songs, but of five combined in one,—five porches pertaining to one pool of Bethesda.

Having thus ascertained the various parts of this noble Song, let us now examine whether any connected progress can be discovered throughout the whole, which, taken together with the several Canticles, may shed reciprocal light on each other; and in doing so our readers will suffer us to state, that the preceding partition of the book into its principal sections was made without the remotest reference to any interpretation with which it may appear to accord. On the contrary, having divided the Song into five on principles purely literary, and being satisfied that the division contained a portion of scriptural truth which is all precious, we could, notwithstanding, make no use of it whatever; and while engaged in the study of the separate verses, it lay on our table for months as a key that seemed fitted for some lock, but useless to us, because we could discover no door for the key to open.

In our old bibles the heading of the Song of Solomon is, 'A mystical devyee of the spiritual and godly love between Christ the Spouse, and the Chyrche or Congregation his Spousesse.' Now, while amongst the literal interpreters scarcely two can agree together, and to establish his own views each must overthrow the work of his predecessor, the case is exactly contrary with those who receive it as 'a mystical device;' because they are unanimous in holding the mystical song as descriptive of the dealings and intercourse of God with his People. The Jews understand it of Jehovah and the Congregation of Israel, the Christians of Christ and the Church; some have taken it historically of transactions past, others prophetically of transactions to come; some explain it of the Church collective, and others of the individual Bride, the living soul. But amongst these various views there reigns the most perfect harmony, because each is true in itself and none conflicts with another, and in the combination of all lie

the depth and fulness of 'the mystical device.' It is a many-sided mirror designed to reflect, and reflecting most truly, whatever portion of the Lord's dealings with his people is placed before it, Judaic or Christian, past or future, public or personal; and there is nothing incompatible in the combination, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and his ways are the same; and in all generations heart answers to heart in man as face to face in the water. Of this lofty pillar, with its foundation deep beneath the ground and its summit high above the clouds, uniting earth and heaven, one discovers a portion and says, Mine must be the very pillar, because its material, its circumference, its flutings, tally exactly with the divine model; and haply so they do, yet it is not therefore the entire column, but one of its many noble stones; and thy brother has found another, which is also an harmonious part of the whole, and so unto whatever number of such discoveries and applications. The case is more difficult in two spiritual interpretations of a particular passage, which seem so evidently to spring from separate roots that the difference must be radical, and one or other inadmissible. But in all Scripture it will often be found, by digging deeper, that what appeared to be two distinct trees have really one common root and stem, which the overlying earth had covered from our imperfect sight.

	CANT. I.	CANT. II.	CANT. III.	CANT. IV.	CANT.	CANT. V.	CANT. IN ALL
Percy.....	Ch. i. 2.	Ch. ii. 8.	Ch. iii. 6.	Ch. v. 2.	—	Ch. viii. 5.	5
Fragm. Calnet.....	do.	do.	do.	do.	vi. 11.	do.	7
Delitzsch.....	do.	do.	do.	do.	vii. 1.	do.	6
Good.....	do.	do.	do.	do.	vi. 10.	do.	6
Rosenmuller.....	do.	do.	do.	do.	vi. 11.	do.	12
Williams.....	do.	do.	do.	do.	vi. 10.	do.	13
Jahn.....	do.	do.	do.	do.	vi. 4.	do.	14
Bossuet.....	do.	ii. 7.	iii. 1.	do.	vi. 10.	viii. 4.	8
					vii. 11.	viii. 4.	7

Good, Williams, and Rosenmuller make a division at iii. 1, as well as Bossuet; Good, Williams, Rosenmuller, and Jahn, have also one at viii. 8, but against the whole current of general opinion; Good and Williams have i. 9; Rosenmuller and Williams, iv. 1; Percy and Good, iv. 8; Good, vii. 10; Rosenmuller, i. 7, ii. 1; Williams, i. 15 and iv. 7; Jahn, viii. 13. Many of these are obviously mere subordinate parts; and after the five acknowledged divisions, some of the best of these critics state that they add another, partly in order to make up a certain number, and partly to divide too long a Canticle. In the sixth column, for want of corresponding parts, we have inserted two out of order.

IV.

RECEIVED REFERENCES IN THE SONG PRESENTING
A DEFINITE HISTORIC OUTLINE.

The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.—CHAP. i. 1.

IN the spirit of these remarks, we proceed to attempt a sketch of the Song—historical now, prophetic at its first utterance, yet not properly either history or prophecy, but communion of Christ with his Church on an historical basis. Such an outline does not set aside other sketches, either on the ground of Jewish history, with the progress of the ark through the desert for its centre, or on the ground of personal history and experience, which we hold undoubtedly to be the principal design of the book. The groundwork that we take is, our Lord's life on earth, in connexion with the times immediately preceding and following; and if its unfolding meet with various passages which, without being contrary, appear irrelevant, this proves nothing more than what we earnestly maintain, that the Song was not exclusively designed for any one portion of the universal Church, or any one period in its history.

Before proceeding, however, we must anticipate the objection that will arise in some minds to the introduction of the death of Jesus Christ as a leading, or rather as the leading and central topic of the book; because death seems discordant or even incompatible with a marriage song. But the incongruity is entirely in our own conceptions, and arises from forgetting the nature of the Song as allegoric, and the nature of the marriage as of the redeemed with their Redeemer. Allegory appears to us artificial, because our own mode of thinking has departed from nature. Figurative speech is natural to man, not only to the ancient and the eastern nations, but to infant nations in general; and has a deep and firm hold on human

nature in its highest as well as in its lowest stages of development, which is only partially weakened by the artificial lacings of the mind in a stage intermediate. The allegoric dream of Bedford Jail commends itself to all; the allegoric song of Jerusalem's Palace has turned the bread and water of many a prison into a royal banquet. To a Hebrew, the literal sense of such a song as Solomon's would appear strained; the spiritual would appear fit and natural. 'My Beloved,' saith the Bride, 'is white and ruddy'—the elements of health and beauty in the human countenance and form are in him most perfectly blended; but Solomon knew that he was not painting a face of flesh and blood of exceeding comeliness, and never meant to portray it except as the veil that might enable the undazzled eye to catch a glimpse of the divine form within—of the health and the beauty divine that are beneath the veil. But does this general idea exhaust, or fully meet, the white and red that characterize the whole person of the Beloved, and distinguish him from all others in heaven and earth? Did Solomon mean more? Probably he did, but at least he knew his own ignorance of the full import of the words uttered through his lips, and searched what the Spirit signified when it spake beforehand of the sufferings of Christ; and to us and to the Church in all generations, the white and the red are, above all other tokens, the two marked and constant characteristics of the Lamb of God—the blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot—in the midst of the throne the Lamb as it had been slain.

But this leads us directly to the mingling of the sorrows of death with the joys of a marriage feast, and the setting forth of those sorrows under images of gladness; which may seem to some to be unnatural or inadmissible, even in purest allegory. In all other allegory the objection would be valid, but this seemingly foreign element must form the very pith and substance of every allegorical delineation of the marriage of the Lamb. The riddle of Manoah's son at his own marriage feast, 'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong one came forth sweetness,' forms the warp and the woof of the whole wedding garment of salvation. The attempt to pick out the scarlet threads, and leave the marriage robe white,

will undo all its texture and rend it into rags. 'Who is this glorious in his apparel—clothed in a vesture dipped in blood?—his name is the Word of God.' (Isa. lxiii.; Rev. xix.) Not only is the Bridegroom of the Church He who poured out his soul unto death on her behalf, but the more that the marriage itself is brought forward, the redder is the dye of the Bridegroom's robe. 'Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it—married to Him, that is raised from the dead.' The Lamb is a name that has constant reference to the shedding of his blood, and inseparable from his sacrifice; and this is the name by which he is called as the husband of the Church, when she is expressly termed his bride or his wife. She is never called the Bride of Jesus, or of Christ, or of the Root of David, but always and only the Bride of the Lamb—that is, of him who is both white and red. 'I looked and lo a Lamb—these are virgins, they follow the Lamb—Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb—I saw the holy city prepared as a bride adorned for her husband—come hither and I will show thee the Bride the Lamb's wife—The marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife has made herself ready.' (Rev. xiv., xix., xx., xxi.)

Nor does it present any difficulty regarding the Song, that there is no express introduction of the element of sorrow as affecting the Bridegroom. In his own marriage parables Christ himself never once introduces it; and there is more of the Bridegroom's sorrow in these words of the Song, 'my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night,' than in all the wedding representations of Christ, who magnified not his own griefs, but endured the cross for the joy set before him. Solomon's parable of Wisdom building her house, killing her beasts, mingling her wine, furnishing her table, and sending forth her maidens, saying, Come eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled—is replete with the liveliest images of joy, (Prov. ix. 1-5); and exactly the same are the images employed by our Lord in the marriage of the King's son—the dinner prepared, the oxen and the fatlings killed, and all things ready. The element of grief never

emerges till we solve the parable, and ask, what is the fatling killed?—‘he is led as a lamb to the slaughter’; what the prepared dinner?—‘my flesh is meet indeed’; what the marriage-bread?—‘this is my body broken for you’; and what the nuptial wine-cup?—‘this cup is the New Testament in my blood.’

Having thus endeavored to clear our way, we now take up the book historically, and find three notes of time which have commended themselves to general reception, and which we shall give in the words of three of our old bibles. Commencing with the last, ‘We have a little sister,’ the note is, ‘The Jewish Church speaketh of the Church of the Gentiles’ (viii. 8); then in the centre, ‘Eat, O friends, drink,’ it is, ‘Christ speaketh to the apostles’ (v. 1); and in the commencing verse of all, ‘Let him kiss me,’ the note is, ‘The Church of the coming of Christ speaketh saying.’ Combining these three, we shall have at the beginning of the Song, Christ about to come; in the middle of it, Christ finishing his work on earth; and in the end, Christ ascended and having poured out the Spirit: first, Christ absent, because not yet descended from the Father; second, Christ present, being come in the flesh; and last, Christ absent again, having reascended where he was before. If there is individual historic reference in each of these three points, their remarkable conjunct feature is, that they are not isolated points, but three distinct links belonging to one chain in regular order of history—the cry for the Advent, the last Supper, and the calling of the Gentiles.

Now, it appears to us that this outline may be filled up by the intermediate history taken from the Gospels and Acts, and that not merely in a few occasional texts, but in a narrative consecutive throughout in its leading features. Isolated texts have been referred to historic facts, now in accordance and again at variance with these landmarks, and historical sketches have likewise been drawn on bases entirely different; but no attempt has been made to fill up this grand and simple outline from the Song itself on the one hand, and the New Testament narrative on the other. Yet having waymarks so well defined, so recognised by the concurrent voice of centuries, and, sparse though they be, yet determining the three great points of the

road, beginning, middle, and end, we feel constrained to endeavor to mark out the intervening stages. If this can be done satisfactorily, we shall gain the two advantages of obtaining a corroborative proof of the purely allegorical character of the Song, and of increased light shed on the interpretation of its individual passages. As the simplest means of attaining this end, we have transcribed the entire Song, dividing it into its several canticles, and illustrating it throughout by parallel texts.

In perusing this illustration, the reader is requested to remember, that because allegory is figure, its most just solution may appear fanciful to a hasty inspection. He is respectfully reminded, that the structure of the Song is proved to be inexplicable throughout on any other basis than the allegoric; that its five grand divisions, on which our interpretation so greatly depends, are not derived from our own imagination, but from the concurrent voice of the most eminent modern critics; and that the great outlines of the interpretation itself are based on the general consent of the Christian Church.

We have further to remark, that the illustrative texts are not chosen as the fittest from the wide field of the Word, but, with few exceptions, from within the limits of the prescribed periods; and that our object will be gained if assent should be given to the justness of the general view, irrespectively of many of the particular quotations, the aptness of which may commend itself to one mind and not to another. Some of the texts are adduced merely to indicate the occasion that may have suggested the particular figures in the Song; as, the offering of the turtle-doves in the temple, from which our Lord, according to his usual manner, might in Spirit take occasion to compare the waiting eyes of the little church there assembled to the beauty of doves (i. 15). In like manner, the greenness of the couch on which the Bride is supposed to be seated with the King, we have illustrated by the grass prepared for the cattle, on which there can be little doubt that the whole family at Bethlehem were resting, when there was no room for them in the inn, although the infant Jesus was wrapt in swaddling clothes besides; for, whatever might have been the season of

the year, when the shepherds were all night in the open fields, green grass would be provided for the cattle in the stalls. Nor is so lowly and humbling a circumstance at all unsuitable for an element of praise, for it is characteristic of the mind in a state of holy thoughtfulness, to lay hold on the meanest provision of divine goodness, to discern beauty in it, and extract from it a hymn of gratitude. Then, indeed, as ever throughout the life and the death of the Lord Jesus, there met together the lowest and highest extremes of humiliation and of glory.

‘For see, the virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest:
And all about the courtly stabl
Bright harness’d angels sit in order serviceable.’

Milton.

The more carefully this Song of Songs is studied, the deeper will become the impression, not only of divine beauty shining in all its words, but of divine wisdom adjusting all its parts, and divine order reigning through the whole, even in the most irrepressible outbursts of the devotional affections.

Let us now put our shoes from off our feet as we draw nigh, for the ground on which we are about to tread is holy; let us well remember that ‘interpretations belong to God;’ and let us ask the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened to know the mystery of Christ, and this great mystery concerning Christ and his Church. To them that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; and in their darkened minds the whole volume of the Word is a parable unopened. But to the children of the bridechamber it is given by the Father to know the mysteries of the kingdom—in privilege it is theirs to ‘know all parables’—in experience may it now be ours to ‘know this parable!’

V.

SUMMARY OF THE SONG

CANTICLE I.—CHAP. i. 2.—CHAP. ii. 7.

SUBJECT.—*The Bride Seeking and Finding the King.*

PART I. CHAP. I. 2-8.—THE SEARCH FOR THE KING.

THE Bride desires and prays for nearer access to the King, and more immediate tokens of his condescending love, which she values far above all earthly joys (2). Addressing him, though not visible, she assures him that his very name is fragrant as most precious ointment in her own esteem, and the esteem of all the virgins forming one Bride along with her (3). Finding that instead of approaching he has rather withdrawn, she asks him for strength to rise and overtake him (4); she talks with her own heart of the grace the King hath shown her before; she addresses him again, and assures him that the very remembrance of his love is above all present earthly gladness, and that all who love truth love Him (4).

She then reflects on her unworthiness of this desired honor, her unmeetness for this royal marriage, and owns it to all around her; but she claims a fitness, nevertheless, to stand not unbeseemingly before the curtained oracle of Solomon; and also reminds the narrow scrutinizers of her person, that the deformity they now see is at once contrary to her high origin, and covered by her glorious privilege and destiny (5, 6). But, meanwhile, she seems to lose, instead of gaining, ground in her own suit with the great King; he has so withdrawn that she has lost trace of him (as in the glory absent from the temple); or rather, she has now become so intensely earnest in her suit, that she refuses to be satisfied with the recovery of the past, or to accept of any of his messengers or companions, however honored, but must find himself (7). He hears her, answers

her, but as yet grants not her request; he reveals not but hides himself, yet directs her how to order her steps that in due season she shall find him, if she faint not (8).

PART II. CHAP. I. 9-II. 7.—THE KING FOUND.

The Bride has now found the King, the tent of the Good Shepherd, and his noon-tide rest; or rather, he has suddenly revealed himself to her, because there is no intermediate history between her going forth by the footsteps of the flock and the sudden salutation from his lips (9); she is no more merely the fairest among women, but he now addresses her, O my love, or, more exactly, my friend, my associate, my companion; because he no longer speaks to her through a dark veil as before, inviting her to seek him, yet hiding himself all the while, but accosts her as one present, seeing him face to face and associated with him. For other reasons also, but more especially for her rapidity of pursuit in striving to overtake him, he compares her to the chariots of Pharaoh at the Red Sea; for Israel knew nothing comparable to these in swiftness, as well as few objects equal to them in splendor. He commends both her comeliness and the beautiful jewels with which she was arrayed, and promises an ornament, which royalty alone could bestow, of a silver-studded crown of gold (10, 11). The Bride, now seated at the King's table, brings forth her choicest perfumes: but only to signify that his name is all her precious ointment—is a casket of myrrh which she will keep in her bosom continually; that he is her fragrant flower, her rich cluster of grapes (12, 13, 14). The King replies by commending her beauty, which she had herself disparaged as only blackness; and by comparing her waiting eyes to those of eastern doves, or to the doves themselves (15.) She answers that the fairness is his and not hers; that his gracious presence sheds beauty over all things, and therefore the seat, on which they rest at their repast beneath the shepherd's tent, is of the greenest sward, the tent-poles like cedar beams, its humble canopy like carved ceilings (17). The King then condescendingly compares himself—for everywhere throughout the Song there is

conscious and marked condescension on his part—to the rose of Sharon and the lily of the Valleys, and the Bride to a lily among thorns (ii. 1, 2). The rose which the King chooses for the emblem of himself is, by an ancient interpreter of great accuracy, translated bud or rosebud, and by some modern scholars the exact meaning of the word is held to be, the rosebud bursting into beauty not fully developed. (Parkhurst. Aquila.) The Bride then likens him to the one tree in all the forest with shade to shelter her from the scorching sun, with fruit to appease her hunger and quench her thirst (3). She confesses, to his praise, that the King has now brought her into the royal palace, has feasted her with a heavenly banquet, has shown her all his loving-kindness and tender mercy, has filled her with the Spirit as with new wine, and has left her nothing to desire but the continuance of his peace, his presence, his everlasting love (4, 5, 6, 7).

Let it be remarked that throughout this Canticle there is no introduction of the King's vineyard or garden, which occupies subsequently so large a space. There is the King's tent and his palace, the King comparing himself to the rose of Sharon, the Bride comparing him to the apple-tree in the fruitless forest, but no garden or vineyard in which they both meet—which is gradually opened as the history advances.

CANTICLE II. CHAP. ii. 8—iii. 5.

SUBJECT.—*The Sleeping Bride awakened.*

This Canticle is distinguished from all the rest by the circumstance, that throughout, the Bridegroom never speaks directly, his words being all reported by the Bride, who is herself never once in his company till near the close of the Canticle (iii. 4).

As this is the first account that is given of the King's vineyard, it will assist in the elucidation of the book to note in succession all its subsequent descriptions. That the Vineyard of the Song is the same as the Garden, may be gathered from many considerations, and is conclusively proved by the Bride

undertaking the charge of the vineyard in the eighth chapter (12), and being thereafter immediately addressed, 'Thou that dwellest in the gardens' (13). It is, in fact, an extensive royal garden or park including a vineyard with fig-trees (ii. 13), an orchard with pomegranates and all delicious fruits (iv. 13; vii. 12), a grove of nuts (vi. 11), a flower garden (ii. 12), beds of aromatic plants and shrubs with groves of aromatic trees (iv. 14), and even fields interspersed with cottages (vii. 11), the whole being well watered with fountains and streams, and securely enclosed (iv. 12, 15).

Besides frequent allusions throughout the Song, there are four more exact accounts of this garden or of its several parts, and clearly distinguished from each other by position, by the productions specified, or by the season of the year to which the description refers. Arranging these, not by their exclusive products but by marks distinctive of earth, we have **THE GARDEN OF FLOWERS** (ii. 12), **THE GARDEN OF SPICES** (v. 1), **THE GARDEN OF NUTS** (vi. 11), and **THE GARDEN IN THE FIELDS** (vii. 11). In what we have called the garden of flowers, because these are named nowhere else, there are no ripe fruits, but green figs and tender grapes; in the garden of spices all is in perfect ripeness, nothing budding or green or immature; in the garden of nuts there are no ripe fruits except the nuts of the previous year, the vine is just expected to flower and the pomegranate to bud; and in the garden of the fields there is the bud, the flower, and the tender grape, the fruit newly ripe and old fruit preserved, everything except spices—for these are found only in one garden, which, along with aromatics, contains all that adorn the rest, but in perfect maturity. These distinctions are clearly defined, and will be found most important in the interpretation of the book. We need scarcely add, that all those varied seasons of spring and autumn, followed by spring and autumn again, could have no place in any bridal festival of earth.

PART I. CHAP. II. 8-15.—CALL TO MEET THE BRIDEGROOM.

The Bride, after a long sleep, awakened by the Bridegroom's sudden call, descries his distant and transient appearance, as of a hart leaping from hill to hill, yet swiftly drawing nearer,

hid now and again seen (8, 9); she hears his loving invitation to come forth and meet him in the vineyard (10); receives his assurance that the cold and rainy winter is now past, and the summer of hope and joy, of sunshine and of song, is come (11, 12, 13, 14); and finally has the injunction laid on her and her assistants to remove all that is noxious to the vines, which are now full of richest promise (15).

PART II. CHAP. II. 16-III. 5.—RESPONSE TO THE CALL.

The Bride has heard and rejoiced in the call of the King, but he has invited her to come forth to him without waiting to meet her, addressing her and then withdrawing. She comforts herself, however, with the thought that he is indeed her own, and is feeding his flock at no great distance (16); then entreats him to return and remain (17), seeks him in solitude and darkness (iii. 1), and seeks him again more earnestly and openly (2). In this search she meets Jerusalem's watchmen, who are not introduced in the Bride's inquiry at the beginning of the Song, probably because there were no living prophets to point to the Messiah after the close of the Old Testament dispensation. In another midnight search in the fifth chapter she meets with other watchmen, who hate both her and her Beloved, and of them she never thinks to inquire for the King; but the present watchmen are near to the Messiah, friendly and helpful to his Bride, and immediately on leaving them she finds Him (3, 4). In so far this repeats the first scene of finding the Beloved, but with the marked and characteristic difference, that this second time she will not let him go till he has come home to her mother's house. The joy is less ecstatic than the first; there is no left hand under the head nor right hand embracing as in that first communion, but it equally results in fulness of divine fellowship and holy rest.

CANTICLE III. CHAP. iii. 6-v. 1.

SUBJECT.—*The Bridegroom with the Bride.*

The attentive examination of this third Canticle cannot fail

to produce the conviction of very special design pervading the structure of the Song of Songs. It stands in the center of the book, and is altogether remarkable and peculiar in these three respects: *First*, in its conduct, which in distinction from the rest of the book, is undertaken by the Bridegroom; while the Bride, who is elsewhere the principal speaker, utters only a brief sentence toward its close. *Second*, in its terms, for the Bridegroom, who is elsewhere either King or Solomon, is here twice called King Solomon; and, as is often noticed, the Bride is now called the Spouse and never before, and never after either, which is always overlooked, while the title is repeated six times in this single Canticle; the term Sister being likewise applied to her four times, and, except in the first verse of the next song, nowhere else. *Third*, and most of all in its scenes, the Bridegroom and the Bride being never for a moment separate; no distance, no absence, no complaint throughout, with which all the other songs abound from the first verse of the book to the last.

PART I. CHAP. III. 6-11.—THE KING IN HIS BRIDAL CHARIOT.

There is seen a royal bridal palanquin, the entire account of which agrees with the tabernacle, and more especially with the Holiest of all and the Ark of the Covenant, where Christ dwells with his people, and which was borne just like an Eastern palanquin on the shoulders of the Levites. It comes out of the wilderness (6); is accompanied by the glorious pillar and by clouds of incense (6); approaching nearer, is seen to be surrounded by the host of Israel (7, 8); coming quite up, is minutely described by its frame of wood, its silver-socketed pillars, its seat (mercy-seat) of gold, its covering veil of purple, its stone pavement of the tables of the law in the midst of the ark. A tessellated floor is possible in a royal palanquin, but why this pavement should be called the 'midst thereof,' and how it should be 'love,' is simple and obvious in reference only to the Ark of the Covenant (9, 10). It is the ark but more glorious: instead of Shittim wood, the wood of Lebanon; instead of pillars socketed with silver, pillars composed of silver; and instead of the pavement of law, a pavement written

over with love. In this royal chariot the daughters of Zion are invited to behold the King, accompanied by his Bride, and adorned with the nuptial crown (11). (Targum, Wycliffe.)

PART II. CHAP. IV. 1-7.—BEAUTY OF THE BRIDE.

The King commends the faultless loveliness of the Bride, whom he has not yet married or taken home to his Father's house, but has betrothed for his wife (1-5); he then intimates that as the shadows of evening are now drawing on, he must soon leave her and withdraw to his own resting-place in the mountain of myrrh, till the dawn of morning (6); but he lingers awhile ere he goes, and anew expresses his admiration (7).

PART III. CHAP. IV. 8-V. 2.—GARDEN OF SPICES.

The King, in a scene designedly impossible, meets his betrothed bride on the summit of Lebanon, and invites her to leave its dangerous precincts along with him (8); expresses the delight he takes in her company and conversation (9-11); directs her to look from the top of Amana upon a garden at the foot of Lebanon which he has prepared for himself and her, abounding with fountains of water and with all fruitful and fragrant trees (12, 13, 14, 15); calls upon the winds to refresh this garden (16); is invited by her to enter it (16); enters and partakes both of its fruits and of a prepared feast, inviting his friends who are themselves the Bride, to share it with him (v. 1).

The Second Garden of the Song is here described. It is distinguished from the rest by its spices, which are found in none of the other gardens, and by the perfection of all its products. The pomegranates and pleasant fruits are all ripe for an autumnal feast, the spacious royal enclosure has added both honey and milk, and the grapes have now been pressed into new wine. The garden is obviously the King's, and by him provided for the Bride, though he calls it also hers as his espoused wife; but the Bride is never herself the garden. (Wycliffe, Dathe.)

CANTICLE IV.—CHAP. v. 2—CHAP. viii. 5.

SUBJECT.—*The Bridegroom's Withdrawal and Reappearance,
and the Bride's Glory.*

It is evident that we have now passed the centre of the Song; for while the terms of commendation on the part of the Bridegroom are amplified, the tokens of endearment are gradually diminished, and then entirely withdrawn. The word Spouse has ceased already with the last verse of the preceding Canticle; the word Sister ceases with the first of this. On the return of the Bridegroom in the sixth chapter (4–10), some of the previous terms of affection are resumed, but thence onward till the end of the book, during more than two chapters, he does not use a single expression of endearment. Even did we grant (which we cannot) that the words 'O Love' in chap. vii. 6 are employed by him, it would scarcely affect this statement; because the expression itself is comparatively distant, and in the preceding songs we find no parallel, till retracing backwards we pass beyond the ninth verse of the first chapter. There the King calls the Bride *my* Love, or my friend, on her first finding him; but previously he had only called her Fairest among women (i. 8); and at the close of the book he gives her no more affectionate title than, Thou that dwellest in the gardens (viii. 13). It is impossible to observe this without confessing great peculiarity in the structure of this Song of Songs, unaccountable on any ordinary principles. On the other hand, the expressions of affection on the part of the Bride maintain or increase their intensity to the last, but under a sense of renewed absence and distance, as at the commencement of the book.

PART I. CHAP. v. 2.—VI. 3.—SLEEP AND SORROW.

The scene is now transferred from the royal park and gardens at the foot of Lebanon to humble wedded life in the city, and the Bride sleeping in her own lowly cottage refuses the King her husband, who greatly needs some hospitable roof

(2, 3); a scene quite accordant with her original position, but most inconsistent with her present rank, and explicable only by allegory, as is also the fact of the King requiring such hospitality. She at length arises ashamed and sorrowful (4, 5); opens to admit him but finds him gone (6); searches for him through the city, and is unveiled and wounded by the watchmen, who are altogether different from those she consulted formerly, and from whom her only desire is, not information but escape (7). She then tells her grief to certain friendly daughters of Jerusalem whom she meets; is by them asked concerning her Beloved (8, 9); and gives in reply a full and a glorious description of the King (10-16). She is asked by them further which way he has gone, in order that they may accompany her in the search (vi. 1); recollects herself, and answers that he has gone into his garden (2;) and reassures herself with the consolation, that notwithstanding all that has happened she is still the King's, he is still hers, and he is feeding his flock at no great distance, though by her unseen (3).

PART II. CHAP. VI. 4-10.—THE BRIDEGROOM'S RETURN.

The Bridegroom suddenly reappears, and for the last time formally addresses the Bride, any future salutations not exceeding a single sentence. His address, however, is more brief than before; partly rehearsing the same words, partly adding others expressive of greater glory in the Bride (4-7). He then contrasts the queens, the wives of second rank, and the maids of honor, that adorned or dishonored the courts of kings, with the one Bride whom he had espoused, who was her mother's only daughter and the single object of his affection; and describes her as admired, and beheld with awe-struck wonder by them all (8-10). It is unintelligible how any one, believing in this book as a portion of divine truth, could interpret these words as referring to Solomon possessing at the time such a number of queens, and now introducing another. Polygamy was then tolerated for the hardness of men's hearts, but falsehood could never be legalized; and the words so interpreted are such as no sincere man could possibly utter, no

woman could ever believe, and the Spirit of truth could never sanction. But, like all the book, they are manifestly the words of pure allegory.

In substance, this description of the assembled spectators of Messiah's marriage is the same as David gives in the forty-fifth Psalm. For the Queen of Tyre are here substituted threescore queens, representing sixty sovereign courts; the kings' daughters or princesses are here the concubines, or king's wives of secondary dignity; and the honorable women of the Psalm are here the virgins without number—constituting a vast and dazzling assemblage of witnesses. (Sanctius.)

PART III. CHAP. VI. 11—VII. 10.—GLORY OF THE BRIDE.

This scene commences with a description of the GARDEN OF NUTS, which wants the tender grape and swelling fig of the first garden of flowers (ii. 12); the myrrh, and calamus, and the pleasant fruits of the second garden of spices (v. 1); and is visited not for the sake of fruit either green or mature, but in order to watch the first bursting of the buds of an expected spring, the blossoming of the vine, and the budding of the pomegranate (11). There are, however, nuts in this garden, either gathered the previous autumn and laid up at the gates, or still hanging on the trees before the first signs of an early spring.

The Bride has gone down alone to the garden, but is suddenly transported with desire to return to her Lord and King; her soul making her like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, or of the attendants of the Prince (Gesenius); or in other words like the chariots of God, which are thousands of angels (12).

The daughters of Jerusalem, some of whom had been anxious to see the King, now desire in his absence to see the Bride, whom they netreat to return; at the same time calling her by the new name of Shulamite, or Bride of Solomon the Prince of Peace, and afterwards also Prince's daughter (13). She had first intimated to them that whatever deformity they might see in her, there was comeliness also (i. 5); and she now re-

minds them that in the midst of comeliness, there is still deformity (13).

The daughters of Jerusalem now survey the Bride, not from the head downward as the King does, but from the feet upward (vii. 1); the description of the beautiful shoes, with which the portrait commences, proving, beyond all controversy, that the whole is a delineation of the Shulamite's attire. There is a tendency in all languages, and especially in such as are more simple, to attach to the dress the names of the corresponding parts of the person; and the whole account exemplifies the statement of the apostle, that 'on our uncomely parts we bestow more abundant comeliness.' There is the perfect proportion, and firm knitting of the entire person (1); the clasp of the girdle, set with rubies, is like a full cup sparkling with wine (2); the clothing of wrought gold, described by David in the forty-fifth Psalm, is compared to a heap of golden wheat (2); and the girdle of white needle-work, which there adorns the golden robe, is here a circle of lilies encompassing the wheat (2). From foot to head the Bride is so beautiful that the King, who does not speak, is notwithstanding a captivated spectator (5); and the daughters of Jerusalem cannot refrain from expressing their own affection toward her (6). They resume the description by comparing her to a palm clustered with fruit, and one of them for herself, or in name of the rest, plucks the clusters (8). She ends the scene by calling the King her own Beloved (v. 9), and by declaring along with the Bride, that she also is his (10). This terminates the interesting history of Jerusalem's daughters; first charged not to disturb the Bridegroom (ii. 7, iii. 5), next inquiring into his character, as to them a stranger (v. 9), then asking where he is to be found and seeking him along with the Bride (vi. 1), then in his absence admiring and loving the Bride who represents him (vi. 13; vii. 1-6), then uniting themselves to the Bride (8), and calling the King no longer her Beloved, but their own Beloved (9, 10). These or other daughters of Jerusalem are charged not to disturb the Beloved (viii. 4): but there is no further account of them.

PART IV. CHAP. VII. 11-VIII. 4.—GARDEN IN THE FIELDS.

This is the last garden, or vineyard, of which there is any special account, or rather it is the last special account of the garden or vineyard of the Lord; for they are all included in one, but are distinguished by position, or production, or state of progress. The first character of this is remoteness, for, to reach it, the fields must be crossed; and not only so, but the distance is so great as not to admit of return the same day; and there must be lodging in the villages or hamlets, which were to be found in the remoter portions of the vast enclosure of the royal park (11). The next characteristic of this garden is the universality of its productions, or rather of its seasons, spring, summer, autumn, all included. There are no spices mentioned, neither is the object to gather nuts; but there is the bud of the pomegranate, the flower of the vine, the tender grape, all manner of ripe fruits newly plucked, and of old fruits carefully preserved (12, 13).

There is afterwards an instructive expression of desire on the part of the Bride, that the King were to her as her brother; not an infant brother, for she is to conduct, not to carry him home; but one who in his infancy had sucked the same breasts with herself, her own mother's son whom she might openly kiss (viii. 1). This carries us quite back to the first scene of the Song—'Let him kiss me;' and seems to intimate, that all that was intermediate had for the present passed away. If he were now as a brother, she would bring him into her mother's house, and then his left hand should be under her head with his right embracing (2, 3). Now, every part of this prayer had been answered long ago. The King had been as her Brother, for again and again he called her Sister (iv. 9, etc.), she had already led him into her mother's house (iii. 4), his left hand had been under her head, his right hand had embraced (ii. 6). But all this has ended with the betrothing supper at the close of the third and central song (v. 1). From the hour when his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, all this holy familiarity has ceased,

and he has never since called her either sister or spouse. She prays therefore, and that most earnestly, that she may so possess him again as in those cherished seasons. Meanwhile, although she cannot declare that in this fullest sense his right hand does embrace, but only that she greatly desires it, yet in spirit she finds it true, and charges Jerusalem's daughters not to break the divine repose.

CANTICLE V.—CHAP. viii. 5-14.

SUBJECT.—*The Little Sister.*

The Bride is seen coming up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved, and excites the inquiry of Jerusalem's daughters (5). The King reminds her of her outcast, helpless origin (5). She desires to be set as a seal on his heart and arm, which implies or contemplates personal absence (6), and describes the strength, exclusiveness, and unchangeableness of love (7). The virgins who constitute the Bride, and in the beginning of the Song speak of themselves as many (i. 4), now consult together about a younger sister of the Bride, soon to be proposed for marriage to the King, and promise to give her every aid and ornament in their power. They compare her to the two principal parts of a temple, the wall and the door, and offer suitable adornings in either case (9). The sister, encouraged, rejoices in these gifts, which she has now received; and still more in the fact that from the King himself she has obtained favor or peace (marg.), and has thus become also the daughter of Peace, the Shulamite (10). As herself now the Shulamite, speaking of her husband Solomon, she narrates the history of his vineyard which has been assigned to unfaithful husbandmen, who have not returned its revenues to the King (11). She next addresses the King himself; thanks him for giving her this vineyard to be her own, instead of being a mere slave-girl as at the first in the vineyard of strangers (i. 6); and undertakes to render the full return of the vines, which the former husbandmen had appropriated to themselves, at the same time apportioning a suitable allowance to the keepers

(12). The King then from a distance addresses her, as having now taken up her abode in the vineyard or gardens, and having its friendly keepers, his companions, attentive to her voice, and invites her to speak to himself (13). She replies by entreating him to come quickly over the distant and lofty mountains (14).

This whole Song of Solomon commences in absence between the Bridegroom and the Bride, which soon terminates in presence and mutual delight (Cant. I). This is followed by a second absence with a similar termination (Cant. II). Then succeeds a much longer and more varied season of unbroken intercourse and fellowship, closed with a bridal supper (Cant. III). The sequel to this feast is another absence, during which the Bride is subjected to great hardships; then a brief and affectionate intercourse with the King, in which he accosts her in terms of higher commendation, but with greater distance and reserve; followed by complete silence on his part, but on hers with earnest entreaties for his presence (Cant. IV). A single sentence more from the King, who is again present but with higher majesty than ever, reminds the Bride of her out-cast condition when he first looked upon her. Then follows entreaty by her that he will bear her on his heart wherever he may be; a brief and distant invitation from the King to address him, though he will not show himself; and an earnest cry from the Bride, that he will conceal himself no longer (Cant. V). What resemblance does all this bear to any actual, or any conceivable nuptial history on earth?

VI.

HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATION.

CANTICLE I.—CHAP. i. 2—CHAP. ii. 7.

TIME.—*Immediately before and after the Birth of Christ.*

PART I. CHAP. I. 2-8.—THE CRY FOR THE ADVENT.

THE acknowledgment is general or universal amongst the Christian Fathers, that the prayer in the second verse, for the kisses of his mouth, is the cry of the ancient Church for the coming of the Lord's Anointed (ver. 3, Orig., Theod., Bern.). The fourth verse is only a more earnest and more argumentative presentation of the same petition; and the scriptural representatives of the true Hebrew Church, immediately before the birth of Christ, are Zacharias, Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary, Simeon, Anna, the shepherds of Bethlehem, with all them that looked for redemption in Israel. In the fifth verse, the Gentile Church is introduced under the image of the dark tents of Kedar. In connexion with this, the earliest interpreters adduce the instances of the Queen of the South coming to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and Moses the lawgiver marrying an Ethiopian woman, against whom arise the murmurs of Aaron and Miriam, representing the daughters of Jerusalem; with the promise that Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God,—the Ethiopia of the Bible including not only Africa, but Arabia which is Kedar (Orig. Tres Patres). At the end of the book the charge of the vineyard is transferred from the Jews to the Gentiles, who had not kept their own vineyard. It is quite in keeping with this close, that representatives of the Gentile Church should be introduced at the commencement; and, in point of fact, amongst the earliest inquirers after Christ and owners of his advent, were the Eastern sages, whose offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh have led many to con-

clude that they came from Kedar or Arabia. It need scarcely be added, that to interpret the sun-blackened Bride historically of the Gentile Church, no more removes the character of deformity from the entire Church in herself, than does the analogous representation of the Gentiles by the younger and prodigal son in the parable. In answer to all these inquiries and prayers Christ does not yet speak personally, but through his servants ; whether employing in His ministration the light that guided 'the star-led wizards on the Eastern road,' or the brighter star of prophecy shining in a dark place till the day dawned.

PART II. CHAP. I. 9-II. 7.—CHRIST BORN IN BETHLEHEM.

Taking the several utterances of the King as the words of the Eternal Son, now the incarnate Immanuel, they were given by him of old through Solomon to the Church, to which without new expression they are now applied by the Spirit. Prophets in Jerusalem, holy women in Judea, shepherds in the field, and sages in the East, with all the expectants of redemption, constitute a goodly company comparable in numbers, in array, in beauty, and specially in the ardor and swiftuess with which they have overtaken the King, to the chariots and horses of Pharaoh (9). The image possibly found additional aptitude in the cavalcade of camels or white asses in costly trappings, that bore the Eastern worshippers to the door of the lowly house where the young Child was. These presented gold to Jesus, and probably wore both gold and jewels pendant from their ears, and peradventure encircling their necks. From this the Spirit in Christ takes occasion to compare the graces of the Church to the most precious ornaments ; and promises to add the crown of royalty to the Bride of the great King (10, 11). The Church then expresses her joy that the King of heaven had come to dwell among men, spreading his royal table in the midst of them. The body of Jesus was infantine as yet, but it was the temple or palace in which the Eternal Word was dwelling ; and it was fit that the treasures of myrrh and frankincense brought from the East should be opened, and the house be filled with the odour. He is himself, however,

the true myrrh, the fragrant cluster of camphire, the beauteous cluster of the vine to be crushed in the wine-press for the joy of all nations (12, 13, 14). The King had said of old that if his Bride forgot her father's house, he would delight in her beauty; she hath done it by coming from far and confessing her darkness, and he now owns her comeliness (15). At his first meeting with the little Church in Jerusalem he is presented along with the sacrificial doves, the most beautiful probably that his parents could find, and to their beauty he compares his waiting people (15). The Church had called him fairer than the sons of men while unseen, and seeing him she cannot but repeat the praise; and his presence, which to the wise men converts the lowly roof into a royal banquet-hall, turns also the resting-place of Joseph, and Mary, and the Holy Child, on the grass prepared for the cattle, into a verdant lawn on which they joyfully repose (16). Either the same royal majesty transforms for them the rude fittings of the stable into cedar beams and carved ceilings, or the scene is transferred to the Lord's house in Jerusalem when the Babe is presented (17). The Child Jesus in Spirit then calls himself the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys, which from the earliest ages have been expressly interpreted of his incarnation (ii. 1, Origen, Theodoret). The image is peculiarly significant as a Rosebud, faultless and absolutely perfect, yet possessing a loveliness that is to unfold and display itself from hour to hour. The Church likewise, because his bride, He praises as a lovely lily. She rejoices that her weary spirit has found rest at last; confesses that the King's chambers, into which the ancient church had been introduced, were but empty when contrasted with those now before her, and contained no token of love to be compared with the Babe in Bethlehem, the Saviour born in the city of David; and filled with the Holy Ghost she has nothing more on earth to desire (2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

CANTICLE II.—CHAP. ii. 8—CHAP. iii. 5.

TIME.—*From the appearance of John till the Baptism of Jesus.*

THE absence of direct speech by the Bridegroom through-

out this Canticle, corresponds exactly to the period of John the Baptist's ministry. Personally, Jesus is silent during that ministration; in Spirit, he speaks to John, as one of the bridal virgins, and through him as his messenger to all the rest; but it is not till the close of the ministry [of John] that he presents himself to the Church.

The King's Vineyard is now for the first time introduced; and an attentive examination of all the passages in which the word occurs, will lead to the conclusion that in the Song of Solomon, the Garden or Vineyard uniformly signifies 'the Kingdom of heaven.' The insertion of the italic *is* after the Garden Enclosed in the fourth chapter (12), tends to obscure this important point, as if the Bride herself or the Church were called the garden. Now, it is most true that the Bride is a garden enclosed; and it is just to apply these words to her in a secondary sense; but she is a garden enclosed because the Kingdom of heaven within which she is, as well as it within her, is an enclosed garden. That Kingdom of heaven includes both the redeeming Bridegroom and the redeemed Bride, yet is neither; but is a garden or vineyard provided by the King at the cost of his own blood, and belonging to both, in which they labor together, walk together, and feast together. It includes the garden of Gethsemane, the garden of the Sepulchre, and even the garden of Paradise above; the upper room of the passover, the upper room of Pentecost, and Christ's name with two or three [met] together, in the utmost ends of the earth.

All the passages agree if we hold that the garden is the kingdom of heaven, or, in the words of an old Bible, that it 'signifieth the kingdom of Christ.' But while the Bride is nowhere called the garden, she is often or always expressly distinguished from it. Here she is invited by the King to enter it (ii. 10); again, she says that he has repaired to it when she is not there, 'My beloved has gone down into his garden' (vi. 2); then again, she descends into it, 'I went down into the garden' (vi. 11); and finally, she is said to abide in it, 'Thou that dwellest in the gardens' (viii. 13); that is, remaining within the kingdom of heaven on earth.

In this second Canticle the swelling of the fig, and the appearing of the tender grape in the vineyard, with opening flowers, songs of birds, and the voice of the turtle, proclaim not that the kingdom of heaven is mature, but, in the words of John the Baptist, that 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' The winter and the rain have generally been interpreted of the clouds and darkness that preceded the coming of Christ (Theodoret); certain eminent Hebrew expositors understand the singing of birds as among the tokens that shall precede the coming of Messiah, and take the prophet Elias to be the voice of the turtle; and this turtle's voice early Christian interpreters have expressly applied to John the Baptist. (Gregory Nys., Tres Patres.)

PART I. CHAP. II. 8-15.—JOHN HERALDS THE COMING CHRIST.

After a long silence, John the Baptist hears and proclaims Jesus approaching. He is seen as on the highest hills in his first descent from heaven to earth (8); and has since come nearer in preparation to meet the Church; yet is more hid than when he first appeared on the mountain top as the Babe of Bethlehem, for his subsequent seclusion is as of one close at hand but concealed by a wall (9). But again he begins to reveal himself, coming forth from behind the high wall, and looking as through a latticed window, partly seen and partly hid, standing now in the very midst of the people, though not yet known and embraced (10). John proclaims the winter of displeasure past (11), the warm rays of the Sun of Righteousness begun to shine, the good tidings of joy sounding, and the beautiful grapes already found on the Good Vine whence is to be pressed the rich wine that shall give life to a perishing world (12, 13). Through John, Jesus calls the Bride, and invites her to enter the kingdom of heaven (13); and, moved by the heavenly call, the people flock like a cloud of doves from their hiding places, even Jerusalem and all Judea (14). But the sight of many of the Pharisees and Sadducees along with them evokes a loud note of warning from the prophet (15).

PART II. CHAP. II. 16—III. 5.—JOHN'S DISCIPLES SEEK AND FIND CHRIST.

John the Baptist's ministry having reawakened an intense desire for him that was to come, the hope of the rising morn makes the night seem long till the breaking of the day (17). The souls that wait for the Consolation of Israel first of all seek him by night on their beds (iii. 1), or, in New Testament language, 'sitting in darkness, and musing in their hearts concerning him;' then they rise and go about the streets in open quest of him, and send publicly to John, that most vigilant of Jerusalem's watchmen, to ask for Christ (2). But both their heart musings and public inquiries end in disappointment, for they find not him whom their soul loveth, Jesus himself (2, 3); yet they have scarcely passed the watchmen when they meet him, and hear the voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son' (4). This time they do not kiss him and then say, Let me depart in peace; or worship him and straightway return to the East; or see him lying in the manger and go back to their fields and flocks; but they 'hold him and will not let him go till they bring him to their mother's house;' that is, till they have the assurance that Jesus has indeed come to 'dwell among them, full of grace and truth' (4).

CANTICLE III.—CHAP. iii. 6—CHAP. v. 1.

TIME.—From *Christ's Return out of the Wilderness till the Last Supper.*

All the various characteristics of this Canticle correspond exactly with the season of Christ's ministry on earth. *First*, He then takes charge personally of every thing regarding the Kingdom of heaven, himself, or his Church, down to the answering of secret communings and thoughts against himself or his disciples; whereas both before and since, the charge has been left with the Church, under the guidance of his Word and Spirit and the ruling of his providence. *Secondly*, He is then proclaimed as King, King of Salem, King of Peace, King Solomon, in his holy triumph through Jerusalem as the King that cometh in the name of the Lord, and in the title on his

cross, The King of the Jews. He has then also become Brother indeed and Bridegroom to the Church, tells her everything he has heard from the Father, calls his disciples friends, washes their feet, suffers them to lean on his bosom, desires their sympathy; and in every way manifests a condescension, which shall never be repeated till, coming and finding them watching, 'He will make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them' (Luke xii. 37). And *thirdly*, He constantly reminds them of the fact of his personal presence with them—'Me ye have not always; Yet a little while I am with you; Can the children of the Bridechamber fast while the Bridegroom is with them?'

PART I. CHAP. III. 6-11.—THE WORD MADE FLESH, AND DWELLING AMONG US.

This Ark of the covenant, this bridal chariot of Solomon, is the holy human body, or human nature with true body and reasonable soul, which the Eternal Word took to himself. Like the completed tabernacle set up and filled with the glory of the Lord, this holy human body fully prepared became the manifest dwelling-place of God, when the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove and abode upon him. His body Jesus himself calls 'This temple,' and John in like manner testifies that the 'Word was made flesh and dwelt' or abode as in a tabernacle, 'among us,' for the tabernacle was nothing else than a movable temple. Like the ark through the desert with the cloudy pillar and pillars of incense, so Jesus comes from the wilderness—the Eternal Word dwelling in the tabernacle of flesh, and the Spirit as clouds of fragrant incense (6). He is attended by a detachment of the angelic host 'bearing him up in their hands;' holy guardsmen armed with swords, as angels are often represented, 'because of fear in the night,'—in the dark night of his agony, or with the wild beasts in the desert; and called men, as often elsewhere, and these same angel-watchmen at the tomb—'two men in shining garments.' In this tabernacle or chariot the Church dwells and moves with Christ, for in her members she is of his body, of his flesh, an

of his bones. She was betrothed or espoused to him on the day when he became Immanuel, God with us; more solemnly and openly when now after his baptism she beholds his glory full of grace and truth; more fully still when, crowned with thorns, he is offered up on her behalf—and all in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb in the day of his appearing (7–11).

PART II. CHAP. IV. 1–7.—SPOTLESSNESS OF THE CHURCH.

Christ, after cleansing the Church by the words of eternal life, of which his outward healing formed the type, declares that she is without spot or wrinkle (1–5); intimates that the night is coming when no man can work, and that through the incense of the Eternal Spirit he must soon be offered on the hill of frankincense, or Mount Calvary contiguous to Zion, and lie embalmed in that mountain of myrrh till the dawn of day (6); yet tarries to comfort her with parting words (7).

PART III. CHAP. IV. 8–V. 1.—THE CLOSING SCENES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

Jesus takes his chosen disciples to the top of a high mountain, and gives them a foresight of the glory to which he invites them, and an assurance of their deliverance from all evil (8). The penitent thief, looking to him with a sidelong glance, and with but one eye briefly beholding, is addressed as a lively type of the rescued Church, and of all the sight of Christ that she obtains on earth (9). The love of this penitent is the one cheering cordial on the cross, refreshing more than wine (10), and drawing forth from Jesus the only joyful word there uttered, his lips also dropping milk and honey instead of gall, and himself invited into paradise (11, 12). Other followers are not forgot, especially in their preparations for the embalming of his body (10, 11, 13, 14.) There is the prepared garden of Paradise for the soul, and for the body there is Joseph of Arimathea's garden enclosed, where for our sake Jesus longed to be laid, and where he was to be embalmed with regal abundance of odours, typical of the healing fragrance of his death (12, 13,

14). There is also the new sepulchre in the rock, whence is to issue the living water for the world, for it is only in his death that Christ becomes to us the well of life; but a sealed stone covers over the mouth of this well (12), from which however the living fountain will soon burst forth (15). This whole scene, like many of Christ's works and acts, is by anticipation; and of necessity, because both the Lord's prayer for the Spirit and his last Supper are founded on his death and resurrection as if accomplished. Then follows his prayer for the Holy Ghost, and his invitation by the disciples to the passover (16); and finally the last Supper—the feast not so much of marriage, as of betrothing and espousal through his blood, in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb above.

There is a very remarkable accordance with the death of Christ in the perfection of all the products of this garden, everything in Jesus being now perfected. His work is now finished. There is no beauteous bud to develop, but all has brought forth its ripe fruit, and the rich grape of the Good Vine is pressed for the bridal wine-cup. It is the same with the aromatic plants,—‘I have gathered my myrrh with my spice’; the Rose of Sharon is no longer in its early bloom, but plucked and crushed, distilling and diffusing abundantly all its odours. It is not more to be remarked in the Song than in the Gospels, how frequent is the mention of ointments in connexion with the death of the Lord's Anointed.

CANTICLE IV.—CHAP. v. 2—CHAP. viii. 5.

From the Agony in the Garden till the Evangelizing of the Samaritans.

The future progress of the Song, sketched in the preceding summary, tallies as perfectly as the past with the history of Jesus Christ and his Church. The words of Christ spoken by him while on earth to his Church are ours for ever, and the tenderest of them are the expression of his present mind and heart toward his people. But taken historically, Christ after his resurrection never permitted the same familiarity and near-

ness, and the part which he plays is both so and partly addressed
them in spite of some terms of affection which he then
uses in describing them as his brethren. He says, "My Father
and your Father." After this he says again, "I have
not need of man's service, neither do I seek the praise of men;
I seek only to do the will of my Father who is in heaven," and he
has already said, "I have not need of man's service, neither do I
seek the praise of men." He never speaks of the
King, nor of any of the angel messengers—his Stephen
is very far from his mind as he makes no mention
of him, and he does not say that the Church is only to be
built on a rock, or that it is built on Christ, or that it is
built on the apostles, and he does not say that the Church
is to be built on a rock, or that it is built on Christ, or that
it is built on the apostles, and he does not say that the Church
is to be built on a rock, or that it is built on Christ, or that
it is built on the apostles.

CHAPTER XLV. — THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY AND OF
THE CHURCH.

The story has for the present been concluded—the first part
is now a history—of the present church, and is now
to be resumed and finished till the great morning—supper of
the Lamb, when he will finish the work of the time now
which he has begun. So now he tells his full story of the
church, and tells that still and accompanied with more
terms of affection than anywhere else in the whole Song. He
says, "I have not need of man's service, neither do I seek
the praise of men; I seek only to do the will of my Father
who is in heaven." He never speaks of the King, nor of any
of the angel messengers—his Stephen is very far from his
mind as he makes no mention of him, and he does not say
that the Church is only to be built on a rock, or that it is
built on Christ, or that it is built on the apostles, and he
does not say that the Church is to be built on a rock, or that
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is now a history—of the present church, and is now
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of the angel messengers—his Stephen is very far from his
mind as he makes no mention of him, and he does not say
that the Church is only to be built on a rock, or that it is
built on Christ, or that it is built on the apostles, and he
does not say that the Church is to be built on a rock, or that
it is built on Christ, or that it is built on the apostles.

as extending through the whole of the dark night, which began in Gethsemane and ended only on the morning of the resurrection (7); so also the sympathies of secret friends (8). Never would the beauty of the Lord Jesus appear so attractive, as it did to the eyes of his weeping followers in that dark hour, and never is it so gloriously portrayed (10-16). The same night of sorrow brings out for the first time Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and probably other less noted secret disciples, into open acknowledgment of Jesus—daughters of Jerusalem before, weeping companions of the Bride now (vi. 1). The heart of the disciples reverts often both to the earthly garden that contained the body of Jesus, and to the paradise or heavenly garden that had received his soul (2). Repairing to the garden of the sepulchre they find him not, but seeing the linen clothes orderly arranged, are assured of his resurrection; of his interest in them, and theirs in him; and are informed by the angels that he is gone into Galilee to meet his disciples,—or, in allegoric speech, to feed among the lilies; for ‘lilies among thorns’ he has called them from the first (3).

PART II. CHAP. VI. 4-10.—CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

Christ suddenly reveals himself to the sorrowing disciples, and acknowledges them as clothed with greater glory than before (4); yet will not suffer them to gaze too intently on him, but vanishes from their sight while they look most earnestly (5). He brings to their remembrance the things that he had said unto them, both to assure them of unabated love, and to enable them the more to recognise himself by his words (5-7). This we know he did, saying before he died, ‘Peace I leave with you,’ and ‘as thou hast sent me, so have I also sent them;’ and when he rose again, ‘Peace be unto you, as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you,’ with other words in like manner repeated. Then follows his description of the Church as his only beloved (9), as everywhere in the Word; and her mother's only child, for she is the only daughter of the new covenant and the new Jerusalem. In marked contrast with her

unity in herself and toward Him, and with her simplicity and weakness, are set forth the multitude and the pomp of the great ones of the earth (8).

In such an allegory it is impossible to represent the powers of earth, civil or ecclesiastical, Roman or Jewish, otherwise than by queens and great and honorable women, because the Church herself is represented as a woman comely and delicate. Christ is a King, and therefore in a parallel description of him it is said, 'The kings shall shut their mouths at him' (Is. lii. 15). But here it is impossible, without destroying the whole allegory, to describe the adverse powers as kings, because the Church, consisting in great part of men, is represented as a woman, and her followers, being men, are figured as females. Simeon, the shepherds and the Eastern sages, Peter, James, and John, are the Bride,—Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are among the daughters of Jerusalem; and of necessity Annas and Caiaphas, John and Alexander, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, as well as Drusilla and Bernice, are queens, and concubines, and daughters. The risen Saviour assures his one and simple Bride, how the glittering and haughty company of the earth's mighty ones would be filled with wonder and awe, when she is endowed with power from on high; and conveys in allegoric terms the promise of her being clothed with divine light and majesty and power (10).

ART III. CHAP. VI. 11-VII. 10.—THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

The disciples descending from mount Olivet to Jerusalem, 'go down' to the garden, in which there is no more mention of spices; for as in the Gospel history, so in the Song, these center round the person of Jesus Christ. The last reference to them is in his going down to the beds of spices (vi. 2); after which, just as in the second Canticle where Christ is not present, they are never introduced till the last verse of the Book, in reference to Christ's return like a roe on the mountains of spices. This third garden is distinguished by the expectation of the first buds of spring; which agrees exactly with their

waiting and watching, after the dark cold winter of sorrow through which they had passed, for the outburst of Gospel spring in the descent of the Holy Ghost, the quickening Spirit, the south wind breathing on the garden. Along with this there is the interesting peculiarity of the nuts, which the early interpreters understand of a hard shell to be opened, with a sweet kernel within (Origen). Never in the whole history of the Church of Christ was she so introduced into a garden of nuts as in that upper room, with one dispensation closed, another not yet commenced, and Jesus by the Spirit opening to them the Scriptures, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, and expounding to them the things concerning himself (Luke xxiv. 27, 32).

Suddenly through this garden blows the rushing mighty wind from heaven (12); then the devout Jews crowd around the infant Church which (not accidentally either in the fact or in the record) held its daily meetings in Solomon's porch, and from this in connexion with the Kingdom of Peace might well be termed the Solomonite (13); and the apostles are willing that the beauty of the Lord upon them should be admired, but not attributed to themselves (13).

The Pentecostal Church is now described publishing peace, knit together in love (vii. 1), holding forth the cup of the new wine of the kingdom (2), and having in the midst of it vast stores of the bread of life, not jealously fenced with thorns but attractively 'railed about with lilies' (Old Trans.), or harmless followers of the Lamb (2). The glory of all is that Christ, though absent in body, is manifestly present in Spirit (5). The inquirers love as well as admire the Church (6); come and grasp for themselves the exceeding great and precious promises she holds forth (8); finally profess their own love and union to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Beloved of their own souls (9); and among them that are saved are 'added to the Church' (10).

PART IV. CHAP. VII. 11.—VIII. 4.—CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITANS.

From the earliest times the going forth into the fields has

been interpreted of seeking out, and gathering in lost and neglected souls (Theodoret). The disciples have hitherto been in Jerusalem, but after the death of Stephen they are scattered abroad everywhere preaching the Word, and more especially the gospel is now extended to Samaria and its villages. The soundness of this interpretation is not affected by the absence of any reference to the persecution that occasioned this village preaching; because it brought no darkness to the church as at the time of Christ's death, but they took the tribulation joyfully; and they went forth not only for the progress of the Kingdom, but also 'there to give Christ their loves,' implying some interruption to their fellowship with him at home. The persecution itself when overpast is fully brought out in the next song, in the connexion most interesting to the Church; when the Bride refers to the many waters that had gone over her, but only to bring out the glorious fact that they had not quenched love (viii. 7). It is obvious how, in such a missionary tour through the wide outfield vineyards, there should at once be found buds, tender grapes, and ripe fruit; as well as old fruits sought out from the season of Christ's own visit to the well of Sychar, and now presented to the Beloved along with the new (vii. 13).

The progress of the history renders also clear what is otherwise obscure, in the prayer for the King becoming as a brother to the Bride, when he had been a brother already. The whole resurrection history of Christ proves that the previous amount of intimacy in the disciples was never allowed, while it intimates that it might be resumed at a future day. 'Touch me not for I am not yet ascended' might mean that before the ascension there would be sufficient opportunity; but the subsequent narrative discountenances such an idea, and shuts us up to the conclusion that a greater nearness will be permitted in the final state, than during Christ's resurrection stay on earth. It is said, indeed, in one of the Gospels that 'they held him by the feet and worshipped him;' and this probably implies that Mary approached with the design of kissing the Saviour's feet as had been done before, which Jesus in this

intermediate state forbade. The last kiss that Christ has ever received on earth till this day is the kiss of Judas the traitor—the last of our family on earth that ever kissed the Son of man. In the resurrection, however, when ‘we shall see his face’ and ‘in our flesh shall see God,’ he will fully be unto us a Brother and the Son of our mother. We are far from meaning, either that any one of his words of love while on earth is taken away meanwhile, or that by the Holy Ghost we do not now attain great boldness of access, and nearness as of brethren. Such spiritual liberty was, no doubt, a chief part of the Church’s desire in this prayer, as in the apostolic supplication for holy boldness and power (viii. 1; Acts iv.); and however the actual sight of Christ was longed for, the spiritual presence was all that was granted to the Bride (2, 3). Then for the last time in this book she charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb the holy rest (4), and for the last time in Bible history there was a season of general outward and inward repose and refreshing—recorded in the memorable words, ‘Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost’ (Acts ix. 31).

CANTICLE V.—CHAP. viii. 5–14.

TIME.—*From the Calling of the Gentiles till the Close of Revelation.*

The espousal of the little Sister is universally acknowledged to refer to the calling of the Gentiles; with that calling Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles is about as closely associated, as John the Baptist with the preparation for Christ’s coming; and he is also expressly given as an example of long-suffering grace, and a pattern to them that should afterward believe. The first preaching to the Gentiles by Peter took place after the last general rest in the churches referred to at the close of the preceding Canticle; and after some further lapse of time the whole subject, which is great and outstanding in the history of the Gospel, was brought before the Church at Jerusalem by

Paul coming up expressly on that account (Acts xv). The conversion of Paul was previous, and in this Canticle is referred to not as present but past (5). The appearance of Christ to Paul going to Damascus is the last direct interview which the Bride on earth has ever had with the Bridegroom—'last of all seen of him also.' The other revelations either to himself or the other apostles are by angels or by visions, and never by a direct appearance, which is therefore worthy of special notice in this Song (5). But its character is more marked by majesty and distance than the resurrection interviews, as these again more than the earlier intercourse, the gradation being preserved as exactly in the prophetic song as in the historic narrative. The next petition to be 'set as a seal on the heart' implies absence and distance, for in continued presence, as in the third chapter, there could be no room for desiring to be thus kept in remembrance (6). Then the late persecutions are recorded as having failed, as will all the future, to quench the church's love to the Lord Jesus (7). Next comes the solemn discussion at Jerusalem of the Gentile question (8), the very terms of 'wall and door' being employed regarding it either then or previously (9); and the Gentiles, who had been in great fear of an iron yoke to be imposed on their necks (Acts xv. 10), rejoice greatly in the apostolic decree (31), by which the Gentile Church is fully admitted to equality with the Jewish as the Bride of Christ (11). There is then narrated the transference of the charge of the vineyard from the Jews, who rendered not its fruits, to the Gentile Church, which undertakes to yield its full revenue to the Lord, along with suitable provision for the vine-dressers (12). Christ then accosts the Church, yet no longer visibly as before, but merely with his voice, desiring her voice in return (13). The Song concludes, not with a season of rest as in all the previous Canticles, but with an earnest cry for the Lord's own appearing—exactly as in the close of Revelation, which is the historical point we have now reached; the whole book commencing with prayer for the first advent, and concluding with a corresponding prayer for the second (14).

Let us now briefly remind our readers of the authority by which the preceding historical illustration is supported. Theodoret, one of the best interpreters of the Song among the Greek fathers, warns his readers that if they find some of his explanations in previous commentators, they are not to regard it as 'theft,' but as 'paternal inheritance'; nor is the intimation superfluous, for not a little of what is most valuable in his commentary is found further up the stream, and nearly two centuries earlier. It is obvious that in the midst of much exposition of a desultory and fanciful kind in long treatises, certain remarkable expressions in such a book as the Song of Solomon might have a current interpretation in the Church, and be easily transferred from one writer to another. Where we cannot arrive at certainty, received opinion is not to be slighted, especially when derived from an early source; and some of the interpretations on which we have founded can be traced to within little more than a hundred years from the last of the Apostles.

In the **FIRST** Canticle we have at its commencement 'Let him kiss me,' universally interpreted of prayer for the first advent of Christ; and at its close the Rose of Sharon by the earliest authors, and the Apple-tree by all, interpreted of Christ come. In the **SECOND**, we have 'Winter past' generally or universally applied to the passing away of the legal dispensation, and the 'Voice of the turtle' interpreted by eminent Hebrews of Elias, and by early Christian fathers of John the Baptist; and if the modern critics are right in their divisions, we have thus received opinion for interpreting this whole second Song of the Baptist's ministry. In the **THIRD**, we have in the closing verse 'Eat O friends' interpreted by almost all our early English Bibles of the Last Supper, and the interpretation responded to by general consent; and if the book has been correctly divided, there is thus a great concurrence for applying this central Song to Christ's ministry on earth. In the **FOURTH**, our received waymarks are less distinct, but we have Wycliffe's Bible interpreting the 'Prince's daughter' of the Pentecostal Church, and we have early authority among

the Greek fathers for applying 'Let us go forth into the fields' to aggressive Christian labors for lost and outcast souls. But for this fourth Song there is less need of guiding tokens within itself; for if the third closes with the Last Supper, and the fifth has for its subject the calling of the Gentiles, the fourth must occupy the intervening period. In the fifth and final Song we have the 'Little Sister' interpreted by general consent of the calling of the Gentiles.

VII.

THE SONG COMPARED WITH TEXTS, CHIEFLY FROM THE
GOSPELS AND ACTS, IN PARALLEL PAGES.

To understand a parable and the interpretation, the words of the wise and their darke sayings.—Prov. i. 6. (Old Bible.)

In the following transcription of the Song it is no part of our design to present a new translation, but as the book is acknowledged by all to be metrical, we have written it in its natural lines according to the method of most translators for the last seventy years, and have partially altered the arrangement of the words, but never except to preserve the exact order of the Hebrew. We have also occasionally, but rarely, inserted words within brackets, not as any part of the translation, but as the briefest method of indicating what we take to be the sense or the connexion.

The few slight deviations we have made from the authorized version are all marked by *Italics*; and the reasons for these will be found in the Notes at the end of the volume, as well as for the words assigned to the respective speakers where there is any obscurity. Some of the *Italic* words of the common translation are also omitted, especially when not found in the older English Bibles.

In the annexed historic illustration, for want of space in the parallel lines, many words in the texts quoted have necessarily been omitted, and the words of two verses in the same chapter, and of the narratives in two or more Gospels, have sometimes been combined. For the same reason the chapters only have been marked without the verses, and even for these there has sometimes not been room.

Some texts, not historical, but figurative or typical, have been introduced to throw light on the allegory.

CANTICLE I.—CHAP. i. 2—CHAP. ii. 7.

SUBJECT.—*The Bride Seeking and Finding the King.*

PART I. CHAP. I. 2-8.—THE SEARCH FOR THE KING.

THE BRIDE.

- 2 Let Him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,
For better is thy love than wine.
- 3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments,
(Ointment poured forth is thy Name)
Therefore do the virgins love thee.
- 4 Draw me, after thee will we run ;
The King hath brought me [in times past] into his chambers,
We will [yet] be glad and rejoice in thee,
We will remember thy love more than wine ;
The upright love thee.
- 5 Black am I, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.
- 6 Look not upon me, because I am black,
Because the sun hath looked upon me.
My mother's children were angry with me,
They made me keeper of the vineyards:
Mine own vineyard have I not kept.
- 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 turneth aside,
By the flocks of thy companions?

THE KING (*by his messengers*).

- 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.

PART II. CHAP. I. 9—II. 7.—THE KING FOUND.

THE KING (*in person*).

- 9 I have compared thee, O my love,
To a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

CANTICLE I.—CHAP. i. 2—CHAP. ii. 7.

TIME.—*Immediately before and after the Birth of Christ.*

PART I. CHAP. I. 2-8.—THE CRY FOR THE ADVENT.

SIMEON, ZACHARIAS, WISE MEN, ANNA, ETC.

- 2 Hope of Israel, why shouldest thou be a stranger in the land? Jer. xiv.
Gladness in my heart, more than when their wine increased. Ps. iv.
- 3 It was revealed by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death,
Before he had seen the Lord's Christ (or Anointed). Luke ii.
Anna, spake to all them that looked for redemption. Luke ii.
- 4 She departed not from the temple night and day. Luke ii.
The glory filled the house. So as I have seen thee. 2 Chr.; Ps. lxiii.
Thou hast been my help, under thy wings will I rejoice. Ps. lxiii.
When I remember thee upon my bed. Ps. lxiii.
Just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. Luke ii.
- 5 Wise men came from the East to Jerusalem. Ethiopia shall stretch
her hands to God. The best robe on him. Matt.; Ps.; Luke. xv.
- 6 Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Jer. xiii.
The younger son took his journey into a far country. Luke xv.
And he joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him
into his fields to feed swine. Luke xv.
He wasted his substance with riotous living. Luke xv.
- 7 Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star
in the East, and are come to worship him. When they heard the
king they departed; and lo, the star which they saw in the East
went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child
was. Matt. ii.

CHRIST BY THE PROPHETS.

- 8 Remember the law—before the day of the Lord. They were walking
in all the ordinances blameless. Mal. iv.; Luke i.
He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children. Mal. iv.

PART II. CHAP. I. 9—II. 7.—CHRIST BORN IN BETHLEHEM.

THE HOLY CHILD JESUS.

- 9 We have seen his star and have come. The shepherds came with
haste. Anna served with fastings and prayers. Matt. ii.; Luke ii.

- 10 Comely are thy cheeks with rows of jewels,
 Thy neck with chains of gold.
 11 Borders of gold will we make thee,
 With studs of silver.

THE BRIDE.

- 12 While the King sitteth at his table,
 My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.
 13 A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved unto me ;
 Between my breasts shall *it always lodge*. (Portug. Bib.)
 14 A cluster of camphire is my Beloved unto me,
 In the vineyards of En-gedi.

THE KING.

- 15 Behold thou art fair, my love ;
 Behold thou art fair ; thou hast doves' eyes.

THE BRIDE.

- 16 Behold thou art fair, my Beloved ;
 Yea pleasant, also our *couch* is green :
 17 The beams of our house are cedar,
 And our rafters of fir.

THE KING.

- II. I am the Rose [or Rosebud] of Sharon,
 The Lily of the Valleys.
 2 As the lily among thorns,
 So is my Love among the daughters.

THE BRIDE.

- 3 As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood,
 So is my Beloved among the sons.
 Under his shadow I sat down with great delight,
 And his fruit was sweet to my taste.
 4 He brought me to the banqueting house,
 And his banner over me was love.
 5 Stay me with flagons,
 Comfort me with [citron-] apples,
 For I am sick of love.
 6 His left hand is under my head,
 And his right hand doth embrace me.
 7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
 By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
 That ye stir not up, or awake
 My Love till he please.

- 10 They presented gold. Had gold ear-rings because Ishmaelites. I put a chain on thy neck. Matt. ii.; Judges viii.; Ezek. xvi.
 11 We will come unto him. Buy of me gold. I put a crown on thy head. Let no man take thy crown. John xiv.; Ez. xvi.; Rev. iii.

SAGES, SIMEON, ETC.

- 12 When they were come into the house, they saw the young Child, and presented unto him frankincense and myrrh. Matt. ii.
 13 All thy garments smell of myrrh. Simeon took him up in his arms and blessed God. Ps. xlv.; Luke ii.
 14 He dwelt in the bush. The new wine in the cluster—destroy it not [with the babes] for a blessing is in it. Deut.; Isa. lxx.

THE HOLY CHILD JESUS.

- 15 The King shall desire thy beauty. They brought him to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice of two young pigeons. Luke ii.

JOSEPH, MARY, SIMEON, ANNA.

- 16 That Holy Thing—the Son of God—fairer than sons of men. They laid him in a manger—he maketh grass for the cattle.
 He came into the temple when the parents brought in the Child Jesus. Anna coming in that instant gave thanks. Luke ii.

THE CHILD JESUS (*in Spirit*).

- II. The desert blossom as the rose—the excellency of Sharon.
 I am meek and lowly—found in fashion as a man. Matt.; Philip.
 2 Consider the lilies—if God so clothe grass, shall he not clothe you?
 I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Matt. x. 16.

SAGES, SHEPHERDS, MARY, SIMEON.

- 3 If these things in a green tree, what in the dry? Luke xxiii.
 Thy God hath anointed thee above thy fellows. Ps. xlv.
 They rejoiced with great joy and worshipped the Child. Matt. ii.
 The shepherds praised. My spirit hath rejoiced in my Saviour. Lu.
 4 He hath filled the hungry with good things. The glory of the Lord shone about them; the angel said, Fear not. Luke ii.
 5 They shall drink and make a noise as through wine, and be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. Zech. ix. 15.
 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Luke ii.
 6 Then took he him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. Luke ii.
 7 I bring good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day a Saviour, Christ the Lord. And there was a multitude of the heavenly host saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. Luke ii.

CANTICLE II.—CHAP. ii. 8—CHAP. iii. 5.

SUBJECT.—*The Sleeping Bride awakened.*

PART I. CHAP. II. 8-15.—CALL TO MEET THE BRIDEGROOM.

THE BRIDE (*narrating the Bridegroom's words*).

- 8 The voice of my beloved!
Behold He cometh! [*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, the coming One]
Leaping upon the mountains:
Skipping upon the hills,
- 9 My Beloved is like a roe, or a young hart.
Behold he standeth behind our wall,
He looketh in at the windows,
Showing himself through the lattice.
- 10 My Beloved spake and said unto me,
'Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away
- 11 'For lo the winter is past,
'The rain is over and gone;
- 12 'The flowers appear on the earth;
'The time of the singing of birds is come,
'[The tyme of cutting is come.—Old Bible].
'And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.
- 13 'The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs,
'And the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell.
'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
- 14 'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock,
'In the secret places of the stairs [or crags];
'Let me see thy countenance,
'Let me hear thy voice;
'For sweet is thy voice,
'And thy countenance is comely.
- 15 'Take for us the foxes,
'The little foxes, that spoil the vines;
'For our vines have tender grapes.'

PART II. CHAP. II. 16-III. 5.—RESPONSE TO THE CALL.

THE BRIDE.

- 16 My Beloved is mine, and I am his:
He feedeth among the lilies,
- 17 Until the day break [or while the day breaks],

CANTICLE II.—CHAP. ii. 8—CHAP. iii. 5.

TIME.—*From the appearance of John till the Baptism of Jesus.*

PART I. CHAP. II. 8—15.—PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

HEBREW CHURCH (*hearing Christ's voice through John*).

- 8 The friend rejoiceth because of the Bridegroom's voice. John iii.
Behold there cometh One after me. John i.; Acts xiii., xix.
Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain
And hill shall be brought low. Luke iii.
- 9 The Hind of the morning—feet like hinds'. Ps. xviii. xxii. (marg.)
There standeth One among you whom ye know not. He shall not
fail—[till he shall have] broken down the middle wall of partition.
John i.; Is. xlii.; Eph. ii.
- 10 The friend of the Bridegroom standeth and heareth him.
Arise, shine, for thy light is come. John iii.; Is. lx.
- 11 The people which sat in darkness saw great light. Matt. iv.
A man shall be a covert from the tempest. Is. xxxii.
- 12 The law until John, since that time the kingdom of God. Luke.
Sing ye that dwell in dust. The kingdom is at hand. Is.; Matt.
[Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Matt. iii.]
The turtle knoweth her time—olive-leaf in dove's mouth.
- 13 When the fig-tree putteth forth leaves, summer is nigh. Luke.
I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. Hos. ix.
Shake thyself from dust—put on thy beautiful garments. Is. lii.
- 14 Say to the prisoners, Go forth. Then went out to him all Judea,
and were baptized of him in Jordan. Is. xlix.; Matt. iii.
Say to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. Is. xlix.
The people asked, What shall we do?—the publicans, What shall
we do?—the soldiers, What shall we do? Luke iii.
Ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver. Ps. lxxviii.
- 15 When he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees come, he said, O genera-
tion of vipers, bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Herod—
that fox—being reproved by John. Matt.; Luke.

PART II. CHAP. II. 16—III. 5.—JOHN'S DISCIPLES SEEK CHRIST.

DISCIPLES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

- 16 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He shall feed his flock
like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs. Ps.; Is.
- 17 Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high

- And the shadows flee away,
 Turn, my Beloved;
 And be thou like a roe or a young hart,
 Upon the mountains of Bether.
- III. By night on my bed,
 I sought him whom my soul loveth;
 I sought him, but I found him not.
- 2 I will rise now, and go about the city;
 In the streets and in the broadways,
 Will I seek him whom my soul loveth:
 I sought him, but I found him not.
- 3 The watchmen that go about the city found me:
 'Saw ye him,' I said, 'whom my soul loveth?'
- 4 It was but a little that I passed from them,
 But 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.
- 5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
 By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
 That ye stir not up, nor awake
 My Love, till he please.

CANTICLE III.—CHAP. iii. 6—CHAP. v. 1.

SUBJECT.—*The Bridegroom with the Bride.*

PART I. CHAP. III. 6—11.—THE KING IN HIS BRIDAL CHARIOT.

FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

- 6 Who (or what) is this that cometh out of the wilderness,
 Like pillars of smoke;
 Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
 With all powders of the merchant?
- 7 Behold his *litter*, which is Solomon's,
 Threescore valiant men are about it,
 Of the valiant of Israel.
- 8 They all hold swords, expert in war,
 Every man his sword upon his thigh,
 Because of fear in the night.
- 9 A chariot King Solomon made himself,
 Of the wood of Lebanon:
- 10 The pillars thereof he made of silver,
 The bottom (or the seat) thereof gold,

hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Luke i.

The Lord God will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon my high places. Hab. iii.

III. The people sat in darkness. All men mused in their hearts whether he were Christ. The Lord whom ye seek. Luke iii.

As they were in expectation he said, One mightier cometh. Luke.

2 And the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? Art thou Elias? Art thou that prophet? John i.

And he confessed, I am not the Christ. John i.

3 Why baptizest thou, if not that Christ? There standeth One among you whom ye know not, and I knew him not. John i.

4 When all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized of John; and lo! a voice—This is my beloved Son. Matt. iii.

He came unto his own. They followed Jesus and said, Rabbi, Where dwellest thou? Come and see; and they abode with him that day. The Word dwelt among us. John i.

5 John bare record, I saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and it abode upon him: the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost—this is the Son of God. Looking upon Jesus, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! John i.

CANTICLE III.—CHAP. iii. 6—CHAP. v. 1.

TIME.—*Christ's Return from the Wilderness till the Last Supper.*

PART I. CHAP. III. 6—11.—THE WORD TABERNACLING WITH MEN.

THE DISCIPLES.

6 Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, returned (from the wilderness).

The city was moved, saying, Who is this? Luke iv.; Matt. xxi.

All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, cassia. The Spirit is upon me, tho Lord hath anointed me. Ps. xlv.; Luke iv.

7 This temple—he spake of the temple of his body—a body prepared. He was in the wilderness with wild beasts, and behold angels ministered. They shall bear thee up in their hands. Put

8 up thy sword; my Father would give me legions of angels; an angel strengthening him; at the sepulchre—two men in shining garments. John; Heb.; Mark i.

9 The ark and tabernacle of shittim-wood. Children partakers of flesh and blood, himself took part of the same. Ex.; Heb. ii.

10 Pillars of wood, upon the four sockets of silver. Ex. xxvi.

Thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold. Ex. xxv. 17.

- The covering of it purple;
 The midst thereof being paved with love,
 For the daughters of Jerusalem.
- 11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion,
 And behold King Solomon,
 With the crown wherewith his mother crowned him,
 In the day of his espousals,
 And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

PART II. CHAP. IV. 1-7.—BEAUTY OF THE BRIDE.

THE KING.

- IV. Behold thou art fair, my love,
 Behold thou art fair;
 Doves' eyes hast thou within thy locks.
 Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
 That appear from Mount Gilead.
- 2 Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn,
 Which came up from the washing,
 Whereof every one bear twins,
 And barren is none among them.
- 3 Like a thread of scarlet are thy lips,
 And thy speech is comely.
 Like a piece of pomegranate,
 Are thy temples within thy locks.
- 4 Thy neck is like the tower of David,
 Buildd for an armoury;
 A thousand bucklers hang thereon,
 All shields of mighty men.
- 5 Thy two breasts are like two young roes,
 That are twins, which feed among the lilies.
- 6 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,
 I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
 And to the hill of frankincense.
- 7 All fair art thou, my love,
 There is no spot in thee.

PART III. CHAP. IV. 8-V. 1.—GARDEN OF SPICES.

THE KING.

- 8 With me from Lebanon, my Spouse,
 With me from Lebanon come.
 Look from the top of Amana,
 From the top of Shenir and Hermon;

- A veil of purple; the covering veil. The purple robe. Ex.; John.
 In the ark two tables of stone. Thy law within my heart. Ps
 The ark of testament—the new testament in my blood. Rev.
- 11 Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King! Jesus in Solomon's porch. Behold a greater than Solomon. Say, Peace.
 I am an alien to my mother's children. Jesus came forth, wearing the crown of thorns—Behold your King. With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you. Luke. xxii.

PART II. CHAP. IV. 1-7.—SPOTLESSNESS OF THE CHURCH.

CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES.

- IV. As the Father loved me, so have I loved you. John xv.
 Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken. John xv.
 The pure in heart shall see God. Harmless as doves. Matt.
 If a woman have long hair, it is a glory—Mary wiped his feet with her hair—ye call me Lord. 1 Cor.; John; Luke.
- 2 Blessed are ye that hunger—believe in me—he that eateth me shall live by me. I am the good shepherd! by me if any man enter, he shall go in and out, and find pasture. Thy words were found, and I did eat them. Luke; John; Jer.
- 3 He said to the lepers, Go—and they were cleansed. Luke xvii.
 His tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. Mark vii. 35.
 Sit in the lowest room, that he may say, Go up higher. Luke.
 Seest thou this woman—she hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Luke.
- 4 Take my yoke, for it is easy. A woman bowed together, who could in no wise lift up herself, immediately was made straight. On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matt. xi.; Luke xiii.; Matt. xvi.
- 5 Blessed are the paps thou hast sucked; yea rather they that hear the word and keep it. The breastplate of faith and love.
- 6 Jesus answered, The night cometh. I go my way to him that sent me. Jesus began to show that he must go to Jerusalem, be killed, and be raised again the third day. John; Matt.
- 7 Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life. John.
 The glory thou gavest me I have given them. John xvii.

PART III. CHAP. IV. 8-V. 1.—CLOSING SCENES IN LIFE OF CHRIST.

CHRIST BEFORE HIS DEATH.

- 8 Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John unto a high mountain apart, and was transfigured, and they saw his glory; Jesus charged them, Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen. Matt. xvii.; Luke ix.

- From the lions' dens,
 From the mountains of the leopards.
 9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my Sister, my Spouse;
 Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,
 With one chain of thy neck.
 10 How fair is thy love, my Sister, my Spouse,
 How much better is thy love than wine,
 And the smell of thine ointments than all spices!
 11 Thy lips, O my Spouse, drop as the honey-comb.
 Honey and milk are under thy tongue;
 And the smell of thy garments
 Is like the smell of Lebanon.
 12 A garden enclosed, my Sister, my Spouse; (Old Bib.)
 A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
 13 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates,
 With pleasant fruits; camphire and spikenard;
 14 Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
 With all trees of frankincense;
 Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.
 15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,
 And streams from Lebanon.
 16 Awake, O North wind, and come thou South;
 Blow upon my garden,
 That the spices thereof may flow out.

THE BRIDE.

Let my Beloved come into his garden,
 And eat his pleasant fruits.

THE KING.

- V. I am come into my garden,
 My Sister, my Spouse;
 I have gathered my myrrh,
 With my spice;
 I have eaten my honey-comb,
 With my honey;
 I have drunk my wine,
 With my milk;
 Eat, O friends;
 Drink, yea drink abundantly,
 O Beloved.

- Save me from the lion's mouth, my darling from the power of the dog. Moses and Elias spake of his decease. Ps. xxii.; Luke.
- 9 They crucified him and two others with him. One railed on him, but the other said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Luke xxiii.
- 10 The Father loveth you, because ye have loved me. John xvi.
No more this fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you.
She hath wrought a good work—to anoint my body. Mark xiv.
- 11 They gave me gall for my meat, vinegar to drink. The other answered, This man hath done nothing amiss. Ps. xxii.; Luke.
Joseph bought fine linen. They took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices. Mark xv.; John xix.
- 12 With me in Paradise. Where they crucified him, was a garden.
Come unto me and drink. The sepulchre sure, sealing the stone.
- 13 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. John xv.
Mary took ointment of spikenard, very costly. John xii.
- 14 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the myrtle, and the oil-tree.
Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight; Salomè, sweet spices. Is. xli.; John xix.
- 15 The water I shall give, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. My blood is drink indeed. John iv., vi.
- 16 I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine and show unto you. Now O Father, glorify thou me. John xvii.

THE APOSTLES TO CHRIST.

They said, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee the passover? and they made ready. This fruit of the vine. Matt. xxvi.

CHRIST TO THE APOSTLES.

- V. When the hour was come he sat down with the twelve. Matt.
The children of the bride-chamber, the Bridegroom with them.
I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. John xvii.
She hath anointed my body beforehand to the burying. Matt.
Immanuel—butter and honey shall he eat—to refuse the evil and choose the good. Word sweeter than honey. Is. vii.; Ps. xix.
The cup my Father hath given me, shall I not drink? John.
Me to hope on my mother's breasts. Milk of the word. Ps. xxii.
Ye are my friends. Take, eat; this is my body broken for you.
This cup is the new testament in my blood, drink ye all of it.
Having loved his own, he loved them to the end. John xiii.

CANTICLE IV.—CHAP. V. 2—CHAP. viii. 4.

SUBJECT.—*The Bridegroom's Withdrawal and Reappearance, and the Bride's Glory.*

PART I. CHAP. V. 2—VI. 3.—SLEEP AND SORROW.

THE BRIDE.

- 2 I sleep, but my heart waketh.
 The voice of my Beloved that knocketh:
 'Open to me, my sister,
 'My love, my dove, my undefiled;
 'For my head is filled with dew,
 'My locks with the drops of the night.'
- 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 bowels were moved for him.
- 5 I rose up to open to my Beloved;
 And my hands dropped myrrh,
 And my fingers sweet-smelling myrrh,
 Upon the handles of the flock.
- 6 I opened to my Beloved;
 But my Beloved had withdrawn himself,
 And was gone.
 My soul failed, when [or till] he spake;
 I sought him, but I could not find him,
 I called him, but he gave me no answer.
- 7 The watchmen that went about the city found me,
 They smote me, they wounded me;
 The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.
- 8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 If ye find my Beloved,
 That ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

- 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 charge us?

CANTICLE IV.—CHAP. v. 2—CHAP. viii. 4.

TIME.—*From the Agony in the Garden till the Evangelizing of the Samaritans.*

PART I. CHAP. v. 2—VI. 3.—GETHSEMANE AND THE SEPULCHRE.

PETER, JAMES, JOHN, MARY, SALOME, AND OTHERS.

- 2 Jesus findeth them asleep—the spirit willing but the flesh weak. Jesus saith unto Peter, Watch and pray. Matt. xxvi.
Simon, sleepest thou? Coudest thou not watch one hour?
He took Peter, James, and John—whom Jesus loved. Matt.
He saith to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.
His sweat was as great drops of blood, falling to the ground.
- 3 When he rose up from prayer, he found them sleeping. Luke xxii.
Neither wist they what to answer him. Mark xiv.
When he returned, he found them asleep again. Mark xiv.
Peter said, I know not the man. Matt. xxvi.
- 4 The cock crew, and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.
And Peter went out and wept bitterly. Luke xxii.
- 5 The first of the week, when yet dark, they came to the sepulchre.
They prepared spices and ointments. Luke xxiii.
They came, bringing the spices which they had prepared. Luke.
And said, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door?
- 6 When they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.
They entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.
I go my way. Certain of us went—but him they saw not.
They were much perplexed thereabout. The bridegroom—away.
Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me. They have taken away
my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.
- 7 A young man, having a linen cloth about his naked body—the
young men laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth, and
fled naked. Did I not see thee in the garden? Mark xiv.
- 8 If thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him.
A woman in travail hath sorrow. Ye shall weep and lament.
They that had been with him mourned and wept. John.

A STRANGER IN JERUSALEM.

- 9 What manner of communications are these that ye have, as ye
walk and are sad? Art thou a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast
not known the things which are come to pass in these days? What
things? Concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Luke.

THE SORROWING BRIDE.

- 10 My Beloved is white and ruddy,
The chiefest among ten thousand.
- 11 His head is the most fine gold;
His locks are bushy,
Black as a raven.
- 12 His eyes as of doves by the rivers of waters
Washed with milk, and fitly set.
- 13 His cheeks as a bed of spices,
As sweet flowers;
His lips like [red] lilies,
Dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.
- 14 His hands, gold rings
Set with the beryl;
His *body*, bright ivory (Old Bible)
Overlaid with sapphires.
- 15 His legs, pillars of marble
Set upon sockets of fine gold;
His countenance as Lebanon,
[His appearance] Excellent as the cedars.
- 16 His mouth is most sweet;
Yea, he is altogether lovely.
This is my Beloved, and this my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

- VI. Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?
Whither is thy beloved turned aside?
That we may seek him with thee.

THE BRIDE.

- 2 My Beloved is gone down into his garden,
To the beds of spices,
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.
- 3 I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine;
He feedeth among the lilies.

PART II. CHAP. VI. 4-10.—THE BRIDEGROOM'S RETURN.

THE KING.

- 4 Beautiful art thou, O my love, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem,

THE WIDOWED CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

- 10 The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot. 1 Pet. i.
Will ye also go away? Lord, to whom shall we go? John vi.
- 11 Christ, the Son of God. The head of Christ, God. Matt.; 1 Cor.
Jesus about thirty years of age. Thou hast the dew of thy youth.
The days of his youth hast thou shortened. Luke.
- 12 Jesus wept—behold how he loved him! Jesus, beholding the
young man, loved him. The Lord looked upon Peter.
- 13 I gave my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. The glory
of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Is. ; 2 Cor.
Grace is poured into thy lips. Neither was guile found in his
mouth. Never man spake like this man. Psalm; 2 Peter.
- 14 The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son. Pharaoh
put his ring on Joseph's hand, and made him ruler.
A body prepared. A Lamb without blemish. Joseph begged the
body of Jesus. The Son of man girt with a golden girdle.
- 15 Upholding all things. They brake not his legs. Heb. i.; John.
His feet like unto fine brass. They pierced my feet. Rev.; Ps.
The snow of Lebanon. His face did shine as the sun. If they do
these things in a green tree. Matt. xvii.; Luke xxiii.
- 16 He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.
He hath done nothing amiss. I find in him no fault. Luke xxiii.
Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet mighty in deed and word; we
trusted that he should have redeemed Israel. Luke xxiv.

SECRET DISCIPLES.

- VI. Joseph, a disciple, but secretly, came and took the body of Jesus;
also Nicodemus, who came by night. They came unto the
sepulchre, and certain others with them. John; Luke.

MARY, SALOME, PETER, JOHN, ETC.

- 2 In the place there was a garden, there laid they Jesus. John.
They wound the body of Jesus in the clothes with the spices.
To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. Luke xxiii.
- 3 Then went in also that other disciple, and saw and believed.
He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him. Matt.

PART II. CHAP. VI. 4-10.—RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

- 4 Jesus met them, All hail. Ye are a city set on a hill. Matt.
Seen of five hundred. New Jerusalem, as a bride adorned.

- Terrible as an army with banners.
 5 Turn away thine eyes from me,
 For they have overcome me:
 Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
 That appear from Gilead:
 6 Thy teeth as a flock of sheep,
 Which go up from the washing,
 Whereof every one beareth twins,
 And barren is not one among them.
 7 As a piece of a pomegranate,
 Are thy temples within thy locks.
 8 Threescore are *those* queens, and fourscore concubines,
 And virgins without number.
 9 My dove, my undefiled, is but one;
 She is the only one of her mother,
 She is the choice one of her that bare her.
 The daughters saw her, and blessed her;
 The queens and the concubines, and they praised her,
 10 'Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
 'Fair as the moon, clear as the sun,
 'Terrible as an army with banners?'

PART III. CHAP. VI. 11.—VII. 10.—GLORY OF THE BRIDE.

THE BRIDE.

- 11 Into the garden of nuts I went down,
 To see the fruits of the valley,
 To see whether the vine flourished, the pomegranates budded.
 12 Or ever I was aware, my soul made me
 Like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

- 13 Return, return, O Shulamite (or Solomonite);
 Return, return, that we may look upon thee.

THE BRIDE.

What will ye see in the Shulamite?
 As it were the company of two armies.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

- VII. How beautiful are thy feet with shoes,
 O Prince's Daughter!

Ye shall receive power; in my name cast out devils. Acts.

- 5 Their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight. Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended. The Comforter shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. John xiv. Cant. v. 2.
- 6 Jesus saith to Peter, Feed my lambs—feed my sheep. Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed that thy faith fail not. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. John xx., xxi.; Luke xxii.
- 7 None durst ask him, Who art thou? Peter was grieved because he said the third time, Lovest thou me? John xxi.
- 8 The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship, their princes exercise dominion, their great ones exercise authority. Luke.
- 9 But not so among you, for one is your Master, and all ye are brethren. That they all may be one. My only one. Jerusalem, the mother of us all. Matt.; Ps. xxii. (marg.); John; Gal. Their rulers, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, marvelled and could say nothing against it. Acts iv.
- 10 The chief priests doubted whereunto this would grow. Acts v. All in the council saw his face as the face of an angel. Acts vi. As he reasoned of judgment to come, Felix trembled. Acts xxiv.

PART III. CHAP. VI. 11—VII. 10.—THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE DISCIPLES RETURNING FROM MOUNT OLIVET.

- 11 They returned to Jerusalem—from the mount into an upper room. He commanded them to wait for the promise of the Father. Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.
- 12 Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Acts ii.

THE DEVOUT JEWS.

- 13 They were in Solomon's porch. As the lame man held them, the people ran to them in the porch called Solomon's, wondering.

PETER AND THE APOSTLES.

Peter answered, Why look ye so earnestly on us? Acts iii.
As though by our own holiness we had made this man walk, *ib.*

DEVOUT INQUIRERS.

- VII. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings. O Zion, that publisheth peace.

- The joints of thy thighs are like jewels,
 The work of the hands of a cunning workman.
- 2 Thy *girdle-clasp* is like a round goblet,
 Which wanteth not mingled wine (marg.);
 Thy *vesture* like a heap of wheat,
 Set about with lilies.
- 3 Thy two breasts like two young roes that are twins.
- 4 Thy neck is as a tower of ivory;
 Thine eyes like the fish-pools of Heshbon,
 By the gate of Bath-rabbim;
 Thy nose (or face) as the tower of Lebanon,
 Which looketh toward Damascus.
- 5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,
 And the hair of thine head like purple—
 The King is held in the galleries.
- 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 its clusters. (Old Bible).
- 8 I said I will go up to the palm-tree,
 I will take hold of the boughs thereof.
 Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,
 And the smell of thy breath like [citron-] apples.
- 9 And the *words* of thy mouth like the best wine
 For my Beloved, that goeth down sweetly.
 Causing to speak the lips of those that are asleep.
- 10 I am my Beloved's, and his desire is towards me.

PART IV. CHAP. VII. 11—VIII. 4.—GARDEN IN THE FIELDS.

THE BRIDE.

- 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 if the vine flourish,
 The tender grape appear, the pomegranates bud forth.
 There will I give thee my loves.
- 13 The mandrakes give a smell;
 And at our gates, all manner of pleasant fruits,
 New and old, I have laid up for thee, O my Beloved.
- VIII. O that thou wert as my brother.
 That sucked the breasts of my mother!
 When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee;
 Yea, I should not be despised.

- The whole body fitly joined and compacted. The multitude of one heart and one soul. His workmanship. Eph. iv.; Acts iv.
- 2 They shall be as the [ruby] stones of a crown; as through wine filled like bowls. These men are full of new wine. Zech.; Acts ii. Her clothing wrought gold. They continued in breaking bread. Raiment of needlework. No man durst join himself to them.
- 3 Your faith groweth and the charity of all aboundeth. 2 Thess. i.
- 4 A yoke upon the neck. Stand fast in the liberty. Acts; Gal. Great grace was upon them all. And believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. Acts iv., v. Ananias kept part of the price. Peter said, Satan hath filled thy heart to lie. The boldness of Peter and John, Acts. v.
- 5 A crown that fadeth not away—a crown of righteousness. They stoned Stephen. He killed James with the sword. Acts. When they prayed, the place shook—hand of Lord with them.
- 6 Having favor with all the people. The people magnified them. Rejoice with Jerusalem, all ye that love her. Acts; Is.
- 7 The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree. Ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations. Ps.; Is.
- 8 Ye shall receive the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you. Then they gladly received the word. Acts ii. These are not drunken—but I will pour out of my Spirit. The savor of his knowledge, for we are a sweet savor of Christ.
- 9 They that received the word were baptized; the same day were added unto them three thousand souls; they continued in fellow-
- 10 ship, praising God, rejoicing they were counted worthy to suffer for his name. Acts ii., v.

PART IV. CHAP. VII. 11—VIII. 4.—CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITANS.

THE DISCIPLES PREACHING THROUGH JUDEA AND SAMARIA.

- 11 Scattered abroad they went everywhere preaching the word. And they preached in many villages of the Samaritans. Acts.
- 12 Now, when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Acts viii. And there was great joy in that city. Acts viii.
- 13 Many of the Samaritans believed for the saying of the woman; and many more believed because of His own word. The people with one accord gave heed unto what Philip spake.
- VIII. Whom having not seen, ye love. This same Jesus shall so come as ye have seen him go. 1 Peter; Acts i. Whosoever ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed. Grant that with boldness thy servants may speak.

- 2 I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house;
Thou wouldst instruct me; I would cause thee to drink
 Of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate.
- 3 His left hand should be under my head,
 And his right hand should embrace me,
- 4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 That ye stir not up, nor awake
 My Love, until he please.

CANTICLE V.—CHAP. viii. 5—14.

SUBJECT.—*The Little Sister.*

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

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

THE KING.

Under the apple-tree I raised thee up;
 There thy mother brought thee forth:
 There she brought thee forth that bare thee.

THE BRIDE.

- 6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
 As a seal upon thine arm:
 For love is strong as death;
 Jealousy cruel as the grave;
 The coals thereof are coals of fire,
 Which hath a most vehement flame.
- 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,
 It would utterly be contemned.

THE BRIDAL VIRGINS SPEAKING OF A SISTER.

- 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?
- 9 If she be a wall,
 We will build upon her a palace of silver;
 And if she be a door,
 We will inclose her with boards of cedar.

- 2 And they, when they had testified and preached returned to Jerusalem. This fruit of the vine—the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. Acts; Matt.
- 3, 4 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Acts ix.; Eph. iv.

CANTICLE V.—CHAP. viii. 5–14.

TIME.—*Calling of the Gentiles till the Close of Revelation.*

CHURCHES IN JUDEA.

- 5 I went into Arabia—afterwards I came, and was unknown by face to the churches of Judea—they glorified God in me. Gal.

CHRIST FROM HEAVEN.

Saul fell to the earth. Arise, stand upon thy feet. Acts ix.
Last of all he was seen of me, as of one born out of due time—that in me Christ might show all long-suffering. Cor.; Tim.

THE CHURCH.

- 6 Barnabas exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord. Acts xi.
Neither count I my life dear. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha. Acts; 1 Cor.
He maketh his ministers a flame of fire. Heb. i.
Fervent in spirit—quench not the Spirit. Rom. xii.; 1 Thess. v.
- 7 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death, nor life, nor any other creature, shall be able. Rom. viii.
Though I bestow my goods, and not love, it profiteth nothing. I count all things loss—but dung, that I may win Christ. 1 Cor. Phil.

THE HEBREW CHURCH SPEAKING OF THE GENTILES.

- 8 God gave them the like gift as he did unto us. Acts xi.
Rejoice thou barren that bearest not. Gal. iv.
The apostles and elders came to consider this matter. Paul and Barnabas declared the conversion of the Gentiles.
- 9 God visited the Gentiles. I will build the ruins. Acts xv.
I laid the foundation, another buildeth thereon—silver. 1 Cor.
God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. Acts xiv.
My sentence is, that we trouble not the Gentiles. Acts xv.

THE LITTLE SISTER.

- 10 I am a wall, and my breasts like towers:
Then was I in his eyes as one that found favor.
- 11 A vineyard had Solomon 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, must have a thousand,
And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

THE KING.

- 13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions hearken to thy voice;
Cause me to hear it.

THE BRIDE.

- 14 Make haste, my Beloved,
And be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart,
Upon the mountains of spices.

THE GENTILE CHURCH.

- 10 No more strangers—built on foundation—milk of Gentiles.
They (Gentiles) rejoiced—to the Gentiles repentance unto life.
- 11 The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel. A householder
planted a vineyard, let it out to husbandmen, sent his servants
that they might receive the fruits thereof, but the husbandmen
sent them away empty. Matt. xxi.
- 12 He will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen;
Which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Matt. xxi.
They which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. 1. Cor.

CHRIST BY THE APOSTLES.

- 13 I have sent mine angel to testify. The Lord spake to Paul by a
vision. Hold not thy peace. We will give ourselves to prayer
and the word. Let him that heareth say, Come.

THE CHURCH.

- 14 All that love his appearing. Looking for and hasting unto the
coming of the day of God. Surely I come quickly; Amen.
Even so, come, Lord Jesus; Amen. 2 Tim.; 2 Pet.; Rev.

PART II.

PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF THE SONG.

Oh heavenly Spirit of especial power,
That in thy hand this Praise of Praises holdest;
And from the top of truth's triumphant tower,
The hidden sense of fairest thoughts unfoldest;
Inspire this heart and humble soule of mine,
With some sweet sparkle of thy power divine.

R. Vennard.

I.

THE ANOINTED KING.

HIS KISS—HIS LOVE—HIS NAME—HIS CHAMBERS.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love *is* better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments (thy Name *is as* Ointment poured forth), therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw me, we will run after thee. The King hath brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.—CHAP. i. 2, 3, 4.

THE KISS OF THE ANOINTED KING.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.—A kiss is the pledge of peace, and the prayer for such a token forms a most fit commencement for these communications between Solomon the Prince of Peace, and the Shulamite the daughter of Peace. It is the voice of the Ancient Church praying for the personal appearing of the Messiah promised to the fathers, the long-cherished Desire of all nations, the Hope of Israel deferred till the heart is sick. Types have come, Moses and the prophets have come, Aaron and the priests have come, and last of all, David and the kings have come; but let Him now come himself, the true prophet, priest, and king, of all his people. ‘I hear not Moses for he is slow of speech, the lips of Isaiah are unclean, Jeremiah cannot speak because he is a child, and all the prophets are dumb; Himself, himself of whom they speak, let him speak.’ (Bernard). His messengers betrothed me not to themselves but to Him, and with the kisses of his own mouth let him therefore kiss me. The law came to our fathers in fire and thunder and earthquake, but let there come now the still small voice of the Prince of peace; let it be no longer the command and the curse, but the free grace of him in whom righteousness and peace kiss each other. Ceremonies and

sacrifices have been granted, and such communion as might be had through these we have enjoyed; but we have heard the voice of One who said ‘sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, lo I come;’ and let him therefore come, let me see himself, and let him kiss me no longer by the lips of messengers standing in his room, but with the kisses of his own mouth let him kiss me now.

The Bride names him not, because, like Mary at the sepulchre, her heart is too full of him at once to utter his name; she names him not, because he is the First and the Last, none along with him, or like to him, or next to him, from whom he needs be distinguished; she names him not, because she speaks not to him as present, yet cannot speak of him as absent, for he is neither—never absent can he be, yet not present as she would have him; and she names him not, herself immediately assigning the reason, because ‘his name is as ointment poured forth,’ which hath filled all the house of God on earth; all the virgins know it, and there is no need to utter it. But nay, rather she does name him, immediately supplying the omission; for in the next verse she employs no mark of comparison as we do, but simply announces, ‘Ointment poured forth is thy Name,’ the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, thee I address, that is thy name.

But it is the prayer equally of the Church in all ages; for indeed He has come, and she has seen him, but he has gone again, and save with the eye of faith she sees him no more till he shall return to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Then indeed shall we know that ‘his mouth is most sweet and that he is altogether lovely.’ But meanwhile the believing soul entreats first the kiss of *reconciliation*—like that with which the father embraced his prodigal son when he fell on his neck and kissed him, or that of Joseph embracing his amazed brethren when he kissed them one by one and wept upon them. Bride though she be, she is bride to the slain Lamb of God, from whom she has been wholly estranged, who has redeemed her with his own blood and forgiven her all trespasses; from whom she daily estranges herself, and who day by day forgives her debts, and daily says to her, ‘except I

wash thee thou hast no part with me.' The first kiss of reconciled love to her as a sinner was inconceivably sweet; and if after relapse the repeated token of favor loses its preciousness, it is time for her to enquire if she is numbering herself now with the ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance and find no forgiveness.

The reconciled soul entreats next the kiss of solemn *nuptial contract*, not unused by men in the marriage covenant, and in figure condescendingly vouchsafed by the great Bridegroom of the Church. In redemption He grants not deliverance only, but freedom; not freedom only, but adoption; not adoption only as a son, but espousal as a Bride (Theodoret). The contract, indeed, has been already sealed on the day of first believing, 'I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness;' the marriage itself concluded, 'Behold I am married unto you, and thou shalt no more call me Baali, my Lord, but Ishi, my Husband.' Yet meanwhile and until the final supper of the Lamb, it is a contract permitting and requiring the renewal of its seals; an espousal demanding frequent repetition of its solemn pledges. And, trembling soul, lest thou fear to have no portion in His grace, listen to the manner in which he invites thee to enter this closest covenant, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take up my yoke and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden light.' It is the marriage bond which he invites thee to share along with him, in reference to the emblematic yoke said to have been placed upon the necks of bridegroom and bride. Thy marriage union with the law has been an unjust yoke, for through thy guilty weakness the holy, just, and good commandment has become to thee as a hard taskmaster; righteously requiring thee to run its heavenward race when thou hast fallen, and canst not move—to bear its weighty burden when thou art already sick unto death. But Jesus interposes,—Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, take up my yoke, for my yoke is easy. Great as the disparity may appear, His is no unjust yoke, for he is thy glorious and perfect counterpart; all sin, all weakness, all death in thee—all righteousness, all strength, all life in Him.

Leave thou, then, both the covenant command and the covenant curse of the law, and say thou, 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.'

Yea as of old a wayworn exiled man,
 Meeting the daughter of his mother's house,
 Owned her at once his heaven-affianced bride
 (Though to be won by servitude and toil),
 And Rachel kissed, and as he kissed her wept,
 And years were days when measured by his love.
 So meeting in Thine own appointed hour
 Mercy's long-chosen ones, with yearning heart
 Rejoicing over them with kind delight,
 Betroth them to Thyself in faith and truth.

Met. Meditations.

But further, the believer asks the kiss of divine *friendship* and fellowship, in constant tokens of that love like to which the soul has no joy on earth, and in the hastening of the actual sight face to face of him whom having not seen he loves. But this will recur again in considering the concluding feature in the description of the glorious Redeemer's person. Meanwhile we have only to add that the kiss of the *mouth* is not merely expletive, but is descriptive of closest fellowship, in contrast with more distant salutation. In reference to this the patriarch Job portraying the process by which the idolater is secretly enticed to adore the moon walking in brightness, speaks of 'the hand kissing the mouth' (xxxix. 27, marg.); and an excellent old translator renders this commencement of the Song 'O with the kisses of his mouth let him kisse mine' (Fenner). Let us now hear the whole substance of the words:

His mouth the joy of heaven reveals;
 His kisses from above,
 Are pardons, promises, and seals
 Of everlasting love.

Erskine.

BETTER THAN WINE HIS LOVE.

For thy love is better than wine.—Wine is the highest of the luxuries of earth, and is here used to comprehend them all; even as the 'banquet of wine' at which Esther entertained

her consort and king was obviously a feast of the choicest delicacies, 'the banquet which she had prepared,' though wine alone is expressed. The love referred to is not simply the everlasting love of the Lord Jesus Christ to his Church, but is rather the enjoyment of that love in its free communication, when the soul tastes and sees that the Lord is good; for it is the experience of the love that is characterized as excellent above all earthly delights. 'In whom though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Neither is it the future enjoyment of Christ's love in heaven, but the present enjoyment of His love on earth, that is better than all the joys of earth together—'thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.' Without corn and without wine, the bride of Christ rejoices more in His love than in all abundance: 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither fruit shall be in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation' (Hab. iii. 17, 18). Nor is it simply that the love is purer and more lasting, and therefore better; but at the moment, and in reference to mere delight, divine love is better far than wine. More cheering and reviving to the sorrowful or the fainting soul than strong drink to him that is ready to perish, or wine to him that is of a heavy heart, is the love of Christ in the believer, when he drinks and forgets his poverty and remembers his misery no more. More also in the season of gladness than wine to the animal spirits, is the love of Christ exhilarating to the spiritual man, and, through the inward spirit, to the entire person in mind and body; making men forget adversity, making them forget prosperity, by the overflowing of its joys. Yea, Bride of the Lamb, if thy Lord fills thine earthly cup, and thine eye is so fixed on the giver as to overlook the gift; if, captivated with His beauty, and 'counting all things loss for his excellence,' the wine is spilt in thy hand; the world will mock thee, for they see not Him who replenished the cup, but the King will never forget the devotion of thy heart, when deed rather than word declared, 'Thy love is better than wine.'

The love here commended is specially the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given to us; and when the Holy Ghost was thus given of old to the afflicted Bride of Christ, their enemies saw it and said, 'These men are full of new wine;' yet wine of earth it was not, but 'love better than wine.' To the believer the command is issued, 'Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit,' because the Spirit inebriates not, yet exhilarates and overcomes the soul. One single luxury alone did Christ create during his whole sojourn on earth, it was in the first of all his miracles, and that luxury was wine—better wine doubtless than earth had ever tasted. At the marriage in Cana of Galilee, he thus manifested forth His glory as the Bridegroom of the Church; and while the governor of the feast, arrested with its surpassing excellence, exclaimed, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now,' his disciples through the miracle believed on the Lord, and the inward language of their hearts was, 'Thy love is better than wine.' At his first marriage supper on earth, the Bridegroom made the wine for the children of the bridechamber; at his last supper he opened the emblem, by explaining that the true vine is Himself, and the juice of its grapes his own most precious blood; that love cannot go beyond laying down the life, and that his life-blood is the good wine kept until now, the love better than wine.—How sad thy case, O reader, if thy highest joy transcend not the wine of earth; because when that is drunk with all its poisoned sweets, then 'in the hand of the Lord there is a cup full of mixture, its wine red, and the dregs thereof shalt thou wring out and drink for ever.'

OINTMENT POURED FORTH HIS NAME.

Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.—Jesus is the Lord's anointed, the Messiah, the Christ, all whose garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. The bride when he is born in Bethlehem brings him sweet spices from a far country, and presents to him 'gold, and frankincense, and myrrh;' so that of the lowly child Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes, even with myrrh, and aloes, and cassia all the gar-

ments are fragrant. In the course of his ministry while the Bridegroom is with her, the bride weeping much and loving much, because much has been forgiven her, breaks her alabaster box, and anoints his feet with precious ointment. When the Bridegroom is about to be taken away, the Bride, in preparation for the day of his burying, takes a pound of ointment of spikenard very costly, and anoints the feet of Jesus till the house is filled with the odour of the ointment; while the traitor murmurs alike at its quantity and costliness. After his death the Bride, bolder than during his life, 'brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about an hundred pound weight, and took the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes with the spices'—enough, say modern murmurers, to have embalmed many bodies; but not enough, said the Bride of Jesus, for the one body of him who is Chief among ten thousand, for she still 'prepares spices and ointments' wherewith to embalm him afresh after the rest of the Sabbath is over.

All those acts were typical, and like the 'savour of the good ointments, and the name as ointment poured forth,' point to Christ not as anointed by men, but as himself the box of purest alabaster full of precious perfume; which when broken fills with its fragrance all the house of God, wherein is congregated the general assembly of the first-born. The savour of the good ointments includes both the anointing Spirit and the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. The Spirit is 'given not by measure' unto him; and being full of the Holy Ghost he preaches, 'The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' Therefore do the virgins love him—chiefly for the attractive fragrance of the anointing that rests and abides upon himself; yet also because the precious ointment on the head of Aaron 'goes down to the skirt of his garments,' and in him God hath anointed us, hath given us an unction from the Holy One, and hath called us 'Christians' even as he is 'the Christ' (2 Cor. i. 21). But further, the savour of the ointments is the fragrance of the sacrifice of Christ. The first mention of fragrance in the word of God is the sweet savour of bloody sacrifice. Each of the other senses has had its notice; the voice entering the ear, the pleasantness attract-

ing the eye, the goodness for food alluring the taste, and the 'touch it not lest ye die,' have all had their record; but there is no mention of fragrance till Noah has built an altar and offered burnt offerings, and hence 'the Lord smelled a sweet savour'—not indeed from the first of all sacrifices, but from sacrifice the first of all savours unto Jehovah. Throughout the old economy, fragrance is to a great extent appropriated to the same object, as in the holy incense around which ran the jealous words that 'whosoever should make like unto that, to smell thereto, should even be cut off from his people.' In like manner in the new dispensation Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. v. 2). The Anointed One indeed he is, apart from his sacrifice, though not irrespective thereof, for 'against the day of his burying' he is anointed with the Holy Ghost; but without the sacrifice his name had never been called Ointment poured forth, for all the unction had then been his own, and not ours. But when he 'poureth out his soul unto death,' the ointment compounded of every precious ingredient that heaven and earth could supply, of all that was infinitely fragrant in the unseen God, and exquisitely fragrant in the work of his hands, is poured out to its last drop till heaven and earth are filled with the perfume. Ointment poured forth is his name; and sinners of whom the Lord says that we have been as 'smoke in his nostrils all the day,' need no other name to make them most sweet and acceptable, even a sweet savour of Christ unto God. Therefore the very name of Jesus, of Christ, of Lord, has such a power over his people, that the mere utterance of it fills them with joy and peace, scattering abroad the soul-reviving perfume: much more the full preaching of the everlasting gospel, which is the declaration of his name, fills the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

I love the name of Jesus,
 Immanuel, Christ the Lord,
 Like fragrance on the breezes,
 His name abroad is poured.—*Bonar.*

But if thou hast no part in his anointing, thy soul shall be

gathered with sinners and thy life with bloody men; thou shalt sink into that deep pit whither is flowing down continually the scum of all the universe, all that is noxious and offensive everywhere gathered into that seething lake; and thence also shall ascend the smoke of thy torment for ever and ever. Make haste to ask, 'Let my prayer come before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!'

Therefore do the virgins love thee.—By the apostle John these virgins are thus described: 'Lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads, and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth; these are they which were not defiled (along) with other women, for they are virgins; these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb' (Rev. xiv.) They bear such characters as these—redeemed from among men—taught of God that song which no earthly man can learn to sing, not unlike this Song of Songs into which carnal minds can never enter—willing first-fruits dedicated to God and the Lamb—constant followers of the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, as a wife never forsaking the guide of her youth. They form an exceeding great multitude 'which no man can number,' yet each is 'espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ.' Among those that seem to be virgins on earth five are wise and five are foolish; but these are virgins in the eye of the Lamb, for of them all the characteristic is, that 'they love thee.' David was one of them, and he sung, 'I love the Lord?' Peter was one, and he wrote of himself and of them all, 'Whom having not seen ye love;' John was one, and he testified, 'We love him because he first loved us;' Paul was one, and he imprecated, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.' The virgins love thee; all the virgins love thee. 'Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?'—Son of Adam, lovest thou Him?

THE CHAMBERS OF THE KING.

Draw me, we will run after thee. The King hath brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.—CHAP. I. 4.

The King, withdrawing into the glorious chambers of his majesty and grace, has left without, the soul that seeketh him; in approaching him the soul seems to itself to have lost rather than gained, but therefore stirs itself all the more to prayer, resolution, hope; and from remembrance describes the chambers of the King into which it ardently desires now to be admitted.

Draw me, we will run after thee.—‘Draw me’ in the fourth verse is expressive of the same desire as ‘Let him kiss me’ in the second, but is at once more earnest and more distant; exactly as ‘tell me’ in the seventh verse is again both more earnest and more distant, than ‘draw me’ in the fourth. ‘Let him kiss me,’ he has just left and is not far off, let him come to me; but he comes not, he kisses not, and therefore the soul rises to follow and to find him, or rather to follow and overtake, for he is not lost and is not far before. But when the spirit girds itself for such an exercise, presently it feels its helplessness. ‘Let him come to me’ if he will, and when he willeth he can come; but since he cometh not, I cannot go to him ‘except the Father which hath sent him draw me,’ or he draw me himself for he is one with the Father. Draw me, thou whose name is ointment poured forth; draw me, for I would come but I am weak; I would come to thee, but a thousand cords draw me from thee; sin draws, the flesh draws, Satan draws, the world draws, the fair earth itself, with its things seen and temporal, draws me from things unseen and eternal. Lord, draw me with cords of a man, with bands of love sweetly alluring me to thyself; draw me with cords so strong that they will not break in the strain, cords stronger than death and hell; draw me with cords so fast, that the oily subtlety of sin within me shall never wind my soul out of their bonds. Draw me, thou mighty One; with power irresistible, irresistible by

me, irresistible by all the powers of darkness, draw me to thyself.

But like a block beneath whose burthen lies
 That undiscovered worm that never dies,
 I have no will to rouse, I have no power to rise.—
 For can the water-buried axe implore
 A hand to raise it, or itself restore,
 And from her sandy deeps approach the dry-foot shore?

So hard's the task for sinful flesh and blood,
 To lend the smallest help to what is good;
 My God, I cannot move the least degree.
 Ah! if but only those who active be,
 None should thy glory see, thy glory none should see.
 Lord, as I am, I have no power at all
 To hear thy voice, or echo to thy call.

Give me the power to will, the will to do;
 O raise me up, and I will strive to go:
 Draw me, O draw me with thy treble-twist;
 That have no power, but merely to resist;
 O lend me strength to do, and then command thy list.
Quarles.

We will run after thee.—For the desire to be drawn is not in indolence, but in helplessness. Those words in the lips of many are only the creaking of the door upon its hinges; the prayer of the slothful not really desiring to run. But in the true Bride of Christ, combined with the cry for help there is the attitude of earnestness and energy. ‘We will run after thee;’ being drawn and enabled, we will hasten toward thee meeting us, we will follow after thee departing from us. My soul followeth thee hard, and thy right hand upholdeth me; thy hand upholdeth me that I may run, and I run after thee that I may be upheld by thy hand. Being so drawn and so supported, the feet are made swift as the hind’s, following the Lord and overtaking him, then running along with him in the way of his commandments. Draw me, for the Church is one, and he loved the Church and gave himself for it; and we will run, for the Church consists of many, even of all whom the Father hath given to the Son. It is a lowly individuality, every one recognising his own special helplessness; it is a noble union, all agreeing in one divine resolution. Jesus

‘lifted up draws all men unto him;’ all the given ones are drawn, all the drawn ones come, all the comers run, all the runners desire that every man on earth should enter the race, all the racers that through the course hinder not but help the progress of each, and every winner of the prize of eternal life cheers on all that follow, till their heads also are encircled with the crown of glory that fadeth not away. ‘Lift up then thy hands that hang down, and strengthen thy feeble knees,’ fainting soul and lame; arise and ‘run the race set before thee looking unto Jesus;’ and ‘thou shalt mount up with wings as eagles, thou shalt run and be not weary, shalt walk and not faint.’

The king hath brought me.—The king is the same spoken of in the second Psalm as ‘the Son whom we are to kiss, the Lord’s anointed, the king whom he hath set upon his holy hill of Zion;’ and in the forty-fifth, in ‘the things made by David touching the king;’ and everywhere throughout the Psalms and the Prophets. The Jews acknowledge that the king in those Psalms and throughout this Song is Messiah. In the New Testament he is king of kings and king of saints; and asserting his own sovereignty he saith, ‘Ye call me Lord and Master and ye say well for so I am; and ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.’ He is never prophet, priest, redeemer, husband, except he is also king; king over ourselves, our bodies presented to him a living sacrifice; king over our substance, for to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; king over our lips, for we shall give account unto him of every idle word in the day of judgment; and king over our hearts, bringing every thought into subjection unto Christ. He is the king that hath conquered us, whose arrows were sharp in our hostile hearts, who also made us willing in the day of his power; but he is the king, likewise, who hath conquered for us, triumphing over sin, over Satan, over death, over hell. This King, saith the bride, hath brought me into his chambers. To her it had been foretold, or rather promised, that ‘she should be brought unto the king’ (Ps. xlv.); and gratefully she owns the fulfilment in part of the sure word of God. Nay more, the King himself had brought her; for He it is who brings all, as well as to whom all are brought, lay-

ing on himself a blessed necessity and saying 'them also must I bring.' In the lips of the believer it is a powerful plea, that he has not rushed either unbidden or unaided into the king's presence, but that the king himself has both called and brought forward his guests. A mighty argument it is, and as such is here employed, for being drawn anew, received again, and admitted into yet inner chambers of royalty.

Understood of the Church collective, the reference applies to the recorded manifestations of the divine glory in earlier ages. The bride in the time of Solomon remembers the day when the migratory temple was reared in the desert, and the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle; and prays for a similar, yet greater blessing on the temple of Solomon. The bride in the days of Simeon remembers the dedication of Solomon's temple, when Jehovah owned its courts as 'the chambers of the king;' so that the priests could not stand to minister, because the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God; and desires that the glory of the latter house may be greater than of the former, by the manifestation within it of Immanuel God with us. The Bride in our own day recalls the Pentecostal rushing of the mighty wind from heaven that filled the house, when the upper room formed the chambers of the great King; and prays that the glory of the Lord may fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, and that the Lord may hasten the great day of his appearing.

Into his chambers he hath brought me—which chambers the man after God's own heart calls 'the secret of his presence, his pavilion, and the secret of his tabernacle.' It is the sanctuary of Jehovah, the secret place where the stranger intermeddleth not, where the noise of tongues intrudeth not,—'the place by him' in the cleft of the rock, where he covers with his hand and communes with his chosen. It is the same of which Jesus said, 'Knock and it shall be opened unto you,' and concerning which it had been promised, 'They shall enter into the king's palace.' What awe, what trembling, what joy, what peace and holiness are there! What desire to enter, what gratitude for admission, what admiration of the divine beauty, what

gladness within the holy place; yet what shrinking, yea almost withdrawing—‘woe is me for I am of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of hosts.’ But because they are the king’s chambers, they are also ours, for ‘my Beloved is mine and I am his;’ and while the Bride calls them his chambers he calls them hers, saying ‘Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee.’ It has much to do with ‘entering into thy closet and shutting to thy door and praying to thy Father in secret;’ yet it is not the closet of the house but of the heart, or rather of the heart of thy Lord, where ‘thy life is hid with Christ in God.’ It is the inmost sanctuary of Jehovah, chambers not one but several; the soul led into chamber after chamber, one chamber within another, and still one further within; the outer court with its altar of burnt-offering, the holy place with its golden altar of incense, the holiest of all with the cloud of divine glory between the cherubim. Brought by the king, yet knocking at each successive door; the king himself opening, admitting the soul within, and leading it onward and inward till the whole spirit says, ‘How fearful is this place, this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.’

We will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine.—The Bride of the Lamb is full both of gratitude and hope; present fellowship alone she wants. Yet she has not lost it by negligence; the king is withdrawn, and she scarcely knows that he is gone. She first asks some renewed token of his love; then she refreshes herself with the holy fragrance which his presence had diffused and left; then she asks to be drawn, and girds herself to run to overtake him; then she considers, and makes herself certain that He had vouchsafed his fellowship; then she comforts herself with the assured hope of its renewal, ‘We will be glad and rejoice in thee,’ and with fixing fast in her memory all the grace and truth that she had tasted, ‘We will remember thy love more than wine.’ More than royal banquets we will remember thy love; yea more than the sacramental wine itself and all the accompaniments of the feast at which that love was revealed. The sixty-third Psalm describes a similar spiritual condition, not

of present satisfying communion with God, but of earnest longing after it, and with such remembrance of past, and such hope of future, as almost or altogether forms present fellowship. Let us compare the Psalm of David with the Song of Solomon:—

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. (Chap. i. 2.)	My soul thirsteth—my flesh longeth to see thy glory. Ps. lxxiii. (1, 2.)
For thy love is better than wine. (2.)	Because thy loving-kindness is better than life. (3.)
Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth. (3.)	My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee. (5.)
Therefore do the virgins love thee. (3.)	O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; every one that sweareth by him shall glory, but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped. (1, 11.)
The upright love thee. (4.)	My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me. (8.)
Draw me, we will run after thee. (4.)	So as I have seen thee in the sanctuary; because thou hast been my help. (2, 7.)
The king hath brought me into his chambers. (4.)	Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. (7.)
We will be glad and rejoice in thee. (4.)	My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed. (5, 6.)
We will remember thy love more than wine. (4.)	O God, thou art my God, my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry land. (1.)
Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon. (7.)	

The upright love thee.—The upright men of the fourth verse and the virgins of the third are the same; for the distinction of both is that they love the Lord Jesus Christ, and virginity of soul and uprightness of heart are one. Nathanael is of their number, and of him Jesus witnesses, ‘Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile’—not in whom no guilt, but in whom no guile; and David had already sung, ‘Blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven, and in whose spirit there is no guile.’ The natural deceit and self-covering, that are in and over all men, have been removed by the Holy Spirit; and he has become honest and upright so as to confess sin, to condemn himself, to justify God. Every such man admires and loves

the Lord Jesus Christ, like Simeon just and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel; he loves him both as the living righteous One, and as the just One dying for the unjust. But as, through grace inworking, there is now no guile, so also, through grace forgiving, there is now no guilt; the upright is also the justified and righteous. The mark of all such men is that they own Jesus, come to Jesus, believe in Jesus, love Jesus, follow Jesus. 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.' He is the great test and trial of the sons of men, set for the rising and falling of many; the foundation-stone of their building, or their stone of stumbling and rock of offence. How many who are proud of their righteousness will be confounded with sore amazement in the great day, when all the redeemed shall testify to Jesus, 'The upright love thee;' but to themselves in awful contrast Jesus will announce, 'Depart from me, I never knew you, all ye workers of iniquity.'

II.

THE BRIDE'S PORTRAIT OF HERSELF.

THE TENTS OF KEDAR, AND CURTAINS OF SOLOMON—
THE SUNBURNT SLAVE-GIRL.

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me. My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.—CHAP. i. 5, 6.

THE TENTS OF KEDAR, AND THE CURTAINS OF SOLOMON.

O ye daughters of Jerusalem.—But who is this that claims the rank of Bride to the King of kings; that asserts that she has been led by himself into his pavilion and entreats to be admitted again? She looks unbecoming so high a station, unworthy of so great a privilege. The unfitness is felt by herself, and knowing that it is too manifest to others, she addresses them to obviate the objection, 'O ye daughters of Jerusalem.' The parties whom she thus accosts are not the virgins, for these are one with herself—draw me, we will run; nor are they foes, for she speaks to them of her mother's children who had become her enemies; nor are they captious onlookers, for while strictly charged not to disturb the rest of the Beloved they are not driven away as intruders (ii. 7). The riches of divine grace are ready for them in the gospel (iii. 10); and they are invited to behold king Solomon with his nuptial crown (iii. 11). Their subsequent history is intensely interesting. The Bride's Beloved is confessedly not their Beloved, yet are some of them so near to Christ that she counts it possible for them to find him even before he is recovered by herself (v. 8); they next express their desire to seek him along with her (vi. 1); when he has been found by her but not by them they most earnestly contemplate the Bride (vi.

13), and describe her from head to foot, or rather from foot to head, for what first attracts them is her 'feet beautiful with shoes,' publishing peace to Jerusalem (vii. 1); then advancing further they speak, though not *to* the King, yet *of* him, as held in the galleries (vii. 5); another step leads them, or some at least of their number, one by one to ascend the palm-tree with its clusters of exceeding great and precious promises, and to pluck its treasures for themselves (vii. 8); and, lastly, they exchange the title of 'thy Beloved' for 'my Beloved,' and become one with the bride of the Lamb (vii. 9)—not all of them however, for there still remain those who are called the daughters of Jerusalem. Their character thus traced is fitly represented by that company of sorrowing women whom our Lord on his way to Calvary addressed as the 'daughters of Jerusalem,' comprehending souls in various present conditions, and subjects of vastly different eternal results. Enemies they were not, for they were wailing loudly for his sufferings; tried friends they cannot on this account be reckoned, for the expression of their sympathy exposed them to no peril. Christ does not own them as disciples, because he bids them weep for themselves and their children; but he does not leave them alone as if hardened, and it is probable that many of them afterwards asked, 'What shall we do?' and 'gladly receiving the word were baptized in the name of Jesus.' If thou art numbered among those inquiring daughters of Jerusalem, thy condition is full of hope, because the kingdom of heaven with its free righteousness and its saving power is nigh thee, is offered thee, is given thee if thou wilt have it; but it is also full of danger, because thousands like thee are daily 'perishing from the way.' 'Then shalt thou know if thou follow on to know the Lord;' but if thou tarry in the plain thou wilt be tempted to look behind thee, then haply to turn again to thy people and to thy gods, and finally to have thy portion with them that draw back unto perdition.

I am black.—Blackness of visage is in Scripture a frequent image of affliction—'For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am black, astonishment hath taken hold on me.' It is enough for thee, disciple, to be as thy master, and if in the

man of sorrows 'his visage was so marred more than any man's, and his countenance more than the sons of men,' thy countenance likewise will oft be clouded by affliction, necessities, distresses, infirmities, reproaches. Yet never art thou more comely than when for thy master's sake thy mother's children are angry with thee, and being driven forth from among them the sun scorcheth thee, for then most of all resteth on thee 'the spirit of glory and of God.'

But it is a still more lively emblem of the defiling and deforming power of iniquity, 'though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver' (Ps. lxxviii. 13). The face and raiment blackened with smoke and soot are here emblematic of sin, for the same persons are depicted as rebels,—'Thou hast received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also' (18). In the image of God made he man, very good, and very fair—'a Nazarite whiter than snow;' but by transgression the 'visage has become blacker than a coal,' so that he could not now be recognised. The dark-staining effect of sin on the soul is set forth in Jeremiah by the very same figure, as here in the Song, when he makes the inquiry, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin?' and returns the reply, 'Then may ye also that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.'

It is now universally admitted that the darkness is illustrated by the tents of Kedar (the word Kedar itself denoting what is dark), and the comeliness by the curtains of Solomon. But this was at one time overlooked by the best interpreters, and they have consequently given most attractive and beautiful descriptions of the interior of the tent of the Arab chief, as contrasted with the black skins that cover it externally. This oversight is the more remarkable as the interpretation now received is brought out by Origen as clearly as by any of his modern successors. *Black as the tents of Kedar* denotes the deepest blackness as of the Ethiopian's skin, whether we take it of the dark felt with which sometimes, or rather of the dark goatskins with which more frequently, the tent of the wild Arab is described as covered. The inmate of that tent was also black like its covering; and the contrast most marked

between him and the Nazarite whiter than snow, who ministered in the holy place before the curtains of Solomon. A wild wanderer likewise he was, an Ishmaelite, the child of Hagar, the son of the bondwoman—a lively image of the unsubdued rebel, who promises himself liberty and is the servant of corruption. 'Woe is me,' said one of the virgins that love the Lord Jesus, 'that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!' Of old he had lodged there when 'his moisture was turned into the drought of summer,' but it was all the more sad to return thither again for his habitation. 'O wretched man that I am,' is the voice of another from those tents of Kedar, 'who shall deliver me?' The Bride of Christ had been a child of the bondwoman, and as black as the Arab's tent had her skin become. No beauty, no comeliness, no fairness, no loveliness was in her; and she owns that she still retains the odious brand. It is not all that marks her now, but sin deforms her still; and she confesses, not *I was* black, but '*I am* black, O daughters of Jerusalem.'

It is the soul's turning-point between death and life, when first brought to this confession—'I am black.' Nature acknowledges both spot and defect, for these it cannot disown, and even its dull eye sees them. But the whole person deformed and disfigured, the whole visage marred, it will not confess. *I am not black*, is the plea of nature; *I have walked through the muddy paths of sin and bespattered my raiment*, or even, *I have stumbled into the ditch and bemired myself all over*; but *I shall wash the defilement away, and walk heedfully the rest of my course*. But the Almighty Spirit alone can drive in the conviction and draw forth the confession, *I have done evil and cannot cease from sin, I have done evil and cannot learn to do well, I have done evil and cannot efface one stain—for mine is the Ethiopian's skin—I am black with no contrasted comeliness*. How humbling, how saddening, yet how hopeful, yea how relieving, when the uneasy spirit ceases the vain strife to bring a clean thing out of an unclean—the endless effort to wash the Ethiopian white—and owns *I am black!* A sad and lowly rest it is, yet a rest from laboring in the fire. So is it likewise with the believer daily; '*I am*

black'—would save him a world of inward labor, and hours of cheerless distance from his God.

But comely—as the curtains of Solomon.—In her own outcast condition the Bride of Christ is black like the tents of Kedar in the wilderness. But through grace she is comely like the curtains of fine twined linen, which adorned the tent of the Prince of peace when he also journeyed through the desert with his people; and like the veil of fine linen which alike in the tabernacle and the temple enclosed the holiest of all, being seen by God from within, and by man from without. 'Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness put upon thee.' To nature it seems excessive humiliation to confess, 'I am black;' to nature it equally seems excessive presumption to declare, 'I am comely.' Neither black nor comely, is her confession; not altogether black, not altogether comely. Both black and comely is the language of the Bride; altogether black in myself, altogether comely in the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ of God 'is made unto her wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption;' and being accepted in the Beloved, and found in him, she confesses, I am comely. She denies not but confesses, I am comely as the curtains of Solomon. No self-exaltation is it, nor boasting in aught of her own; but 'glorying only in the Lord,—to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made her accepted in the Beloved.' Black like Kedar's tents without any beauty in herself, comely like Solomon's curtains without any flaw in Christ Jesus; ever learning each of these more and more, ever becoming more vile in herself and in her own eyes, ever becoming more comely in Christ Jesus; that is, growing daily in the conscious need of his comeliness, depending more entirely on it, accepting more cordially of it, and rejoicing more triumphantly in it.

THE SUNBURNT SLAVE-GIRL.

Before entering on a more detailed account of her history, the Bride thus deprecates the searching examination of Jerusalem's daughters:

Look not upon me, because I am black.—Fix not your eyes

on me, examine me not, for I cannot stand it. You look for spots, I own them all, and am blacker than you account me; yet for my Redeemer's sake overlook not *his* comeliness, wherewith he hath invested me. 'My sins have taken such hold on me that I am unable to look up;' look not upon me, daughters of Jerusalem, look not upon me, Lord of all, but 'hide thy face from my sins.' The soul convinced of its own guilt cannot bear to be looked on by God's eye above, cannot bear to be looked on by human eyes around, cannot bear to be looked on by its own eye within. It feels as if its exceeding sinfulness were evident to the whole universe, written and seen on the very countenance.

Look not on me, she cries, for I am black;
 Beams from above with penetrating force,
 Revealed my dark condition to myself;
 The true light shone, and showed me all my guilt.

Met. Meditations.

Because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.—This parable bears a striking resemblance to the parable of the penitent prodigal, with this distinction, that the images in the one are adapted to a son, in the other to a bride. In the one, it is the younger of two sons whom the father had; in the other, it is 'the daughter of Zion likened to a comely and delicate woman,' the virgin daughter of the great King. Both were once in a father's house, enough and to spare they both enjoyed, servile labor neither of them knew, and a father's kind and watchful eye preserved them both from temptation, from suffering, and from all the evils that wasted without. The son renounces a daily dependence on a father's bounty, and departs from his father's house; the daughter wearies of constant watching, and goes forth into the world to see the daughters of the land. To him, the speedy consequence is that all his abundance in which he gloried is exchanged for penury, and he is starving; and to her, that all her comeliness in which she trusted withers under the sun's scorching rays, she has burning instead of beauty, and for snowy whiteness the skin of Ethiopia. In each case

the evil is aggravated by the treatment received from others. The son is despised and ill used by the man to whom he joins himself in friendship, and is sent into his fields to feed his swine. The daughter is hardly dealt with by her mother's children, is treated by them not as a sister but a slave, and is set to the degrading and servile employment of keeping their vineyards, and driving thence the foxes that spoil their vines. The son, while giving food to the grovelling herd is himself famished more and more, for the husks which they devour are neither meat for him nor his to eat, and he is left to starve. The daughter, scorched without and parched within by the fire of the noon-day sun, dares not to stretch her hand and pluck the rich clusters that hang around her, or dip her cup in the flowing wine-vat when ready to faint; for the vineyard is 'not her own,' but she is a mere drudge and slave to cruel task-masters. No marvel that she should afterwards compare the refreshing of Christ's love to the excellence of wine; because when she had needed it most, and when she saw it in abundance no man gave unto her; no cheering wine-cup had been presented to her parched lips.

The mother's children in the Old Testament parable, and the citizen of the far county in the New, are the same parties under different designations. Both were seeming friends, both proved to be cruel foes, and the relation to both was not of first origin but of subsequent adoption; the union in each case having been formed by the wayward child, who had forsaken a heavenly Father's house. This is evident in the prodigal son, and a careful examination makes it equally clear in the wandering daughter. That Psalm of David which forms the compact model for the Song of Solomon, in one of the most marked of all its passages, introduces the Eternal Father addressing the bride of his Son, 'Hearken O daughter and consider, forget thine own people and thy father's house.' The heavenly Father calls her his own daughter, his daughter now by adoption, his daughter now by marriage to his Only Son; but his daughter likewise by recovery, his daughter by regeneration, his own apostate daughter restored, his daughter found that had been lost, his daughter that was dead alive

again. The great charge he lays upon her is to 'forget her own people and her father's house;' and why forget them, except because they ought never to have been her own, and had become hers only by her forsaking her heavenly Father's house. Now, these 'own people and father's house' of the Psalm, can be none other than 'the mother's children' of the Song.

But further, the unkind mother's children, and the foreign citizen hospitable at first but cruel in the end, are introduced at the very same crisis in the respective parables. His fellow-citizen's cruelty was not that which really reduced the prodigal to want, for in want he was already, but was merely the scourge that drove home the discovery of his desperate condition. So, likewise, it was not the vine-dressing that first marred the beauty of the bride, for she narrates that the sun had looked on her and blackened her already, before her mother's children sent her into the vineyard. She had forsaken the home of her Father and her God, and roamed in lawless liberty, till by exposure to the sun all her beauty had departed. In her wretchedness she joins herself to a citizen of the country whom she calls her father, and his household her mother's children; and they send her to what was accounted a degrading employment for a man, and would be for a female the work only of a slave. This completes what she had much more than commenced, and burns up every fancied remnant of beauty in the once comely and tender daughter of the Great King, till her 'skin is black like an oven.'

But thou sad slave-girl, a welcome and wondrous message sounds in thine ears all unused to the notes of joy. Thy First-born Brother has ransomed thee at a great price, and has made over unto thee a vineyard all thine own; its fruit is excellent and comely, its wine without money and without price; and thy heavenly Father calls thee to be Bride to his Only Son. Not more sweet to the prodigal son when he came to himself was the new-born thought arising within his heart, 'there is bread enough in my Father's house; than is to thee the heavenly summons, 'Hearken O daughter, and forget thine own people, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty'—yes thy beauty, for in that hour he clothes thee with his own divine

comeliness. 'Arise, O captive daughter of Zion, loose the bands of thy neck, shake thyself from the dust,' cast away the mattock with which thou hast wrought in a vineyard that yields thee only labor and sorrow, 'put on thy beautiful garments, for thy King cometh unto thee, just and having salvation—He is thy Lord and worship thou him. Thus shalt thou be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework, with gladness and rejoicing shalt thou be brought, and thou shalt enter into the King's Palace.'

But while the chief neglect of the 'own vineyard' was in bondage to sin, to the world, to Satan, in whose service the 'own soul' is forgot and cast away, and in bondage to the law which gives soul-labor in that which is now a fruitless field; yet we cannot leave this passage without remembering, that in God's own children there is often sad neglect of the vineyard of their own souls, which also the confession includes. Ministers, parents, teachers, members of churches, are tempted so to attend to the interests of other souls as to forget their own. Abroad the Heathen, the Jew, the Papist, the Greek, the Mohammedan; at home the Ishmaelite in the tents of Kedar joining hard by the curtains of Solomon; are all sought out though not sufficiently, and their vineyards cared for, while the vineyard of our own souls lies neglected, its stone wall broken down, the fence thereof covered with nettles. But let us all remember, that in the great day no keeping of other men's vineyards will compensate for the neglect of our own; and that, how good or how urgent soever may seem the cause that induces the evil, the ground that beareth briars and thorns is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned. To fill the heart with grace is not indeed within our own power, yet the empty and earthly heart is the product as well as the source of our own sin.

Against myself I bear record,
That hence my bondage flows;
While I neglect to serve my Lord,
I'm left to serve my foes.

Erskine.

'My own vineyard have I not kept,' is ever a painful and

humbling confession; if made lightly or without grief and shame, the evil owned is aggravated by the very acknowledgment; and so also if it is confessed without resolute purpose of immediate amendment. 'My own vineyard I have not kept' is neither atonement for the past, nor satisfaction for the future. If truth compels us to adopt the confession, let us through grace resolve and commence at once to effect and maintain a thorough ordering and diligent keeping of the vineyard of our own heart and life. Whatever is neglected let us attend to this, till in measure we are enabled to say to the praise of his grace, 'my own vineyard I have kept;' not only for the world, nor for the church, but for myself, 'I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course.' Having adopted this humbling acknowledgment of the Bride in the commencement of her Song, let us not rest till enabled to unite with her at its close in saying, my vineyard which is mine is before me (viii. 12). Let us ever also remember, that the utmost honor man can render to God on earth is the well-kept vineyard of his own heart and life; and that the greatest benefit he can bestow on his fellow-men is to set before them the example, the warning, the attraction, the encouragement, and the holy provocation of his own vineyard well kept—that is, well walled, well watched, well watered, well dug, well weeded, well planted, well pruned,—a vineyard bearing, through Christ Jesus by the Spirit, much fruit to the great husbandman, even the Father. Amen.

III.

THE SHEPHERD WHOM THE SOUL LOVETH.

HIS PASTURE AND NOONTIDE REST—THE FOOTSTEPS OF
THE FLOCK AND FEEDING-PLACE OF THE KIDS.

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest *thy flock* to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? 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.—CHAP. i, 7, 8.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD'S PASTURE AND NOONTIDE REST.

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, is the earnest address of the Bride whose holy desire for divine fellowship increases in proportion as it is deferred; the lost sheep returning to the Bishop of souls loves with all its strength the Shepherd who laid down his life. 'Lovest thou me?' the risen Bridegroom inquires of one of the virgins, and with reason—for how changed was thy visage, Bride of the Lamb, in the hour of trial! Thou wast first of the children of the bridechamber while the Bridegroom was with them, foremost of the lamp-bearing virgins, with swiftest foot and surest eye didst thou meet thy Lord and salute him, 'Thou art the Christ'—'ointment poured forth is thy name!' Thine was the most earnest prayer, 'Draw me, we will run after thee,' so that even the deep waters did not chill thy love—'If it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water;' and the King 'had brought thee into his chambers,' where not flesh and blood but the Father in heaven had unveiled and revealed his Beloved Son. But in thine own strength didst thou go forth, the watchmen found thee and took away thy veil, the sun of fiery trial looked on thee and smote thee with its rays, and ere thou knewest, thy beauty was 'burned as an hearth.' Thy mother's children were angry

with thee when they saw thee in the garden with him, their threats and reproaches brought thee into bondage, and of thine own vineyard in that hour thou didst prove an unfaithful guardian; its gate, even the door of thy lips, thou didst not keep, and its well of living waters the stranger stopped, Then thy Lord looked on thee in love, and no marvel if thy weeping face was hid, and thy sobs spake for thee, 'Look not upon me for I am black, for the sun hath looked upon me.' But, Bride of the Lamb, 'Lovest thou me?' asks thy Lord anew,—'Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;' 'Simon son of Jonas lovest thou me?'—'Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.'

So here the Bride having confessed her deformity, yet protests that she loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and protests it more earnestly than before. 'The virgins love thee,' she had said more distinctly at first; 'the upright love thee' next, confirming her first declaration; but now 'my soul loveth thee,' she ardently affirms, yea 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' The love of the redeemed to the Redeemer, of the saved to the Saviour, is the most real of all affections—is love not in word but in truth. Neither is it a surface affection, but the deepest in the heart; nor a partial attachment of some of the affections, but the devotion of the whole soul. 'Thou shalt love with all thy heart and soul and strength and mind,' is a devotion which no creature can demand, and which no creature can attract to itself. The creature may indeed be beloved more than the Creator who is blessed for evermore, but the fulness of the heart's desire that creature can never satisfy, and can never elicit. The attractive loveliness of things seen and temporal, consists mainly in the beauty with which the admiring mind invests them; but in himself, and not in thine imagination, the King is altogether lovely—sufficient to draw forth and to satisfy all thy affections. Flesh He is of thy flesh and bone of thy bone, but likewise thy Lord whom thou mayest, whom thou canst, whom thou must with all thy heart adore; 'the Lord thy God' whom lawfully thou mayest, whom attractively thou canst, and whom imperatively 'thou shalt love with all thy mind, and all thy soul, and all thy strength.'

Christ loved by the believer with his whole heart, is at the same time loved above all, alone of all, instead of all. Not merely is it 'my soul loveth' thee, but 'O thou whom my soul loveth.' Jesus claims such love, and will accept of nothing less, of nothing else. To the Bride, 'the little flock,' the constant followers of the Shepherd, he declares unequivocally, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me' (Matt. x. 37). To the daughters of Jerusalem, the people who crowd around him in multitudes, he turns and protests that if they desire to be numbered with 'the virgins that love him,' theirs also must be such an affection—'If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple' (Luke xiv. 26). The Bride also by the mouth of one of the virgins replies—'Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him' (Phil. iii. 8). Yet how rare this love is, how divided the hearts of most professed followers of the Lamb, how few can address him sincerely, 'Thou whom my soul loveth! It is not merely whom my soul honoreth but whom my soul *loveth*, not whom my soul obeyeth but whom my soul *loveth*, not whom my soul ought to love but whom my soul *doth love*.

Tell me where thou feedest is the cry of longing desire but also of earnest and baffled inquiry; yet different from the midnight search when the Bride has to ask the watchmen for her absent Lord, and still more different from the penitent inquiry in which she has recourse to the daughters of Jerusalem. Here Christ is not so far off, nor does she ask of others, 'Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' but directly accosts himself, 'O thou whom my soul loveth, tell me where thou feedest thy flock.' It is, however, no longer 'draw me we will run,' when the Lord is before, and she only requires to follow; he is now not merely distant and must be overtaken, but lost and must be found; yet she has recourse to none but himself,

‘O tell me where thou feedest.’ It is altogether a singular intercourse which Jesus holds with his bride through the misty veil that separates them. Through this mist he constantly addresses her, as if within hearing but not within sight. ‘Seek and ye shall find,’ is the word of one not far off—so near that he speaks and we hear his voice, we answer and he hears us—yet himself we cannot reach. ‘We go forward but he is not there, backward but we cannot perceive him, on the left hand where he worketh, but we cannot behold him, he hideth himself on the right hand that we cannot see him.’ Yet by the hearing of the ear do we hear him, and by the utterance of our lips our reply comes up into his ears. In a moment of grace he might unveil himself, yet himself he unveils not; in a moment of anger he might withdraw himself and be silent, yet he withdraws not, and he is not silent. But hiding himself he saith, ‘Seek and ye shall find;’ directing us to seek, and promising to reward our search; yet again when we have sought, answering us anew, ‘Then shall ye find me when ye search for me with all your heart.’ He answers his Bride but his reply is not, Behold me, but ‘go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.’ Strange, attractive, trying, fascinating intercourse for the soul; wondrous testing of patience, of submission, of love, of zeal, of perseverance; singular revelation of condescension, pity, love, grace, combined with holy sovereignty, highest dignity, and inscrutable majesty! ‘O the height and the depth and the length and the breadth of the love of God! O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!’

‘Tell me where thou feedest,’ is a confession not only of weakness requiring to be drawn, but of darkness requiring to be enlightened. ‘For judgment I am come into this world that they which see not might see: if ye were blind ye should have no sin.’ The inquiry implies ignorance felt and owned. Nor is it a general indication of the kind of pastures where the shepherd feeds his flock that will suffice his bride, but of the actual pastures into which he is leading them now; not of the places he is wont to frequent, but of the particular spot in

which she may at present find him. Such a general direction is all, indeed, that he appears to grant, but is obviously not all that she asks. The inquiry refers to the custom of shepherds guiding their flocks to fresh pastures when one spot has been eaten down, to return thither again when the herbage shall have grown anew. The green pastures of Christ's flock are the whole length and breadth of the Word of God, with all its doctrines, all its ordinances, and all its precepts. Throughout these wide ranges the Good Shepherd leads his flock from place to place, feeding them with food convenient for them. Many of the sheep and not a few of the shepherds overlook this important feature of divine leading; and having fallen on some green spot—it may be the first on which their souls found rest, and haply also the greenest in the wide field of the Word—there they remain, and thence they will not move, though there is now little herbage for them there, and they are feeding on the memory of pastures that once were green. Meanwhile the Shepherd hath gone elsewhere with his flocks, and, thou straying sheep whom he hath restored, it is thy wisdom to ask where he is feeding them now, and where thou mayest find fellowship with him; for 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God.' The inquiry may draw thee for a season to pastures less rich and luxuriant, but if it be only to pick the herbage from amongst the rocks, thou shalt find thy Shepherd there, and shalt not want; and ere long he will conduct and restore thy soul to its first resting-place, now growing fresh and green again, and thou shalt be satisfied as on Bashan and Gilead in the days of old.

And where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon, is not a mere repetition of 'where thou feedest it,' for the one is a season of comparative labor, the other of rest. The one object of both petitions is that the soul may be always with Christ—'Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge.' All times are alike to him, but not all alike to us; and the distinction may refer to periods of work and periods of rest, in both of which it is essential to have the presence and fellowship of Jesus. With the shepherdess bride the feeding of the flocks was her ordinary calling, to which she must attend, and

during which her intercourse with the Chief Shepherd must be of an interrupted character. To converse with him is not the duty in which we are engaged, although for him all our duty is discharged; but it is gain indeed if we tend our flock in the pasture where he tendeth his, so that throughout our daily toil He may seldom be out of our sight, or the reach of our voice; and that from time to time we may snatch passing converse with him; may hear him call 'look unto Me;' may apply to him, and by him be aided, in the hourly difficulties of our own vocation. Then the season when he maketh his flock to rest at noon, and ours rests with it side by side, is the hour when there is nothing requiring our earthly care, and the time may be expressly devoted to communion with himself. Blessed are they who find him at both these times; in the times of daily devotion to enter more fully into his heart and mind, and in the times of daily work to walk up and down in his name, 'two walking together being agreed.' If we miss him on either occasion, we are apt to lose him for both; if we forget to walk with him in the feeding of the flocks, there is danger of failing to find his resting-place at noon; and if we fail to converse with him in the noontide rest and thence to go forth along with him, there is little hope of finding him in the busy pasturing of the flocks while we move from place to place. Virgin daughter of Zion, if thou wouldst follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, see that thou fix thine eye on him continually.

For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?—is an appeal to the heart of Jesus. The companions must be the shepherds under him, for he is a Shepherd King,—yet friends admitted to his fellowship as well as his service; and not only pastors, though these specially, but all his faithful followers, the friends whom he invites to eat and drink along with him. With the society of these companions, honored as they might be, she pleads that it is not fit that the King's Bride should be satisfied, not fit that He should suffer it, nor that she should rest in it. Must she be turned aside from following him because she has failed to find him, and driven by his absence to this most inferior fellowship; must

she wander from one shepherd's tent to another because none of them can satisfy; must she even be counted by them as no faithful bride of the Lamb, but as having lords many and gods many, and idols after her own heart? 'O tell me where thou feedest thy flocks, for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?' Nor is the fear imaginary, for the wise virgin sees many of her lamp-bearing associates turning thus aside, and she is jealous lest she should be tempted to follow them; many ignorantly yet contentedly coming short of Christ, and resting in sermons, in sacraments, in ministers, in duties; preferring those to Christ because they cannot try the heart and reins, nor demand the single homage of the whole soul. Reader, hast thou for thyself discovered the green pastures of the good Shepherd; hast thou found his resting-place at noon and heard him say to thy soul, Come unto me and I will give thee rest? Or hast thou risen to seek him and afterward turned aside, not turned back to the world and sin, but turned aside to the flocks of the companions? Safer far if thou hadst found no rest at all, than rest so deceptive and ruinous. 'Arise for this is not thy rest, it will destroy thee with a sore destruction.' Pray thou, and rest thou never, till thou find the answer to thy prayer, 'O tell me where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.'

THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FLOCK, AND FEEDING-PLACE OF THE KIDS.

If thou know not, O thou fairest among women; the answer is kind and helpful, rather than cheering, far less satisfying. Yet the personal address is full of comfort—'O thou fairest among women.' 'Look not on me for the sun hath looked on me,' saith the Bride; 'Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee,' saith her Lord. Fairer than the sons of men is the character of Christ; the fairest among women, the character of the Church his Bride. Admiration is not in the first instance necessary, either as the seed or as the fruit of love; for God loved us with great love 'even when we were dead in trespasses and sins,' loving us because he loved us. Yet grace

is ever linked with God's eternal purpose to make the Church lovely, 'according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' 'Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.' Looking on the Church as washed in his own blood, 'He sees already no sin in Jacob, nor transgression in Israel;' and on his Church he never looks, without also regarding and admiring her as finally 'presented to himself—the fairest among women—without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.'

If thou know not, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.—In Moses, the chosen shepherd of Israel, these words had a remarkable fulfilment according to the letter. None of the sons of men ever prayed more earnestly 'let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,' or in his own language 'I beseech thee show me thy glory.' The kiss of the King of kings is bestowed on him, as scarcely on any other of the human family, for the Lord speaks to him 'face to face as a man talketh with his friend.' But these prayers from the shepherd of the people and these answers, were the fruit of earlier cries when he preferred the reproach of Christ to the treasures in Egypt, and, refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, became the pastor not of men but of sheep in the desert of Sinai. This Moses, outwardly exceeding fair, and morally a fit type of the Bride the 'fairest among women,' must oft in the midst of these solitary years, and amongst those few sheep in the wilderness, have raised the earnest cry, 'O thou whom my soul loveth, tell me where thou feedest thy flock.' The answer is, 'If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.' He goes forth, and following the flock he comes to the mountain of God, even to Horeb; the Angel of the Lord appears in the bush,—he turns aside to see this great sight—he learns that he has lighted on the very resting-place of the Lord's flock—he hears the great Shepherd declare, 'when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall worship God in this mountain.'

Ever since the Good Shepherd began to gather his lost sheep

around him, he has put great honor on 'the little flock,' and on every sheep belonging to it. The first of all the flock, that was slain by the evening wolf, being dead yet speaketh, and his steps have left their everlasting footprints for a guide to all the sheep that were to follow. While to the infallible Word is the first and the last appeal in all matters either of doctrine or of duty, our faith is confirmed by knowing that our reception of the Word is according to the 'faith of God's elect' in all ages of the world; for if we are members of Christ we are members of all his flock, standing in the way and seeking the old paths, and finding rest to our souls. In the practical also quite as much as in the doctrinal, the faithful find it helpful to become followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises; and especially in the daily recurring questions that are embraced in the description of 'all things lawful but all things not expedient.' In these cases it is important and incumbent to inquire what is of 'good report' in the Church, and to follow the footsteps of the flock, and not the wanderings of the children of this world. In such paths the true sheep of the fold will not select for imitation some straggler outside the flock, pertaining to it yet scarcely walking with it, but will cleave to the close-gathered and compact body of the little company that hear the Shepherd's voice and follow him, knowing not the voice of strangers; or, better still, will endeavor to tread in the footsteps of the very leaders of the flock, following Paul even as he followed Christ. In so doing, believer, thou hast no difficulty in leaving the theatre, the card-table, and the ball-room, where 'the footsteps of the flock' have never in any age been found; and so guiding thyself thou wilt, in cases of doubt, rather refrain and stand aloof, than associate and go forward when thou discoverest not his clear footprints before thee.

Keep thou the beaten good old path,
Yet new and living way;
Which all the saints have trod by faith,
With prayer night and day.—*Erskine*.

But to 'follow the footsteps of the flock' is likewise to associate

with the children of God, and to be 'companion to all them that fear him.' Thou shalt find it greatly for thy soul's benefit, and most conducive to the discovery of Christ's pasture-ground and resting place, to separate thyself from the world and the children of the world; and if they therefore hate thee and cast thee out, Christ himself whom thou seekest will the sooner find thee and walk with thee in love. In close fellowship, also, with those who fear the Lord, in prayer, in godly converse, in ordinary intercourse, and in selecting them for associates, not for their earthly attractions but for their abundant grace, thou art in the straight way toward the revelation of Christ himself, for Jesus loves to be where his people are, and where they are valued for his sake.

And feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.—Which 'shepherds' are, no doubt, the pastors and teachers in the Church, and their 'tents' 'the amiable tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts,' in which 'a day is better than a thousand.' Now, to rest in these the Bride greatly dreaded; it was to turn aside by the flocks of the companions, and in the days of her unbelief she had learned to her cost what it was to make an idol and an end of servants and of means. Possibly, also, at her first espousals she had some foretaste of her future experience in the ignorance and harshness of certain of the watchmen. From whatever cause, she appears in this to have carried this holy jealousy too far, for Christ directs her to the diligent use of the very means in which she was so afraid of resting. There is no experience so common, soon after the outset of the Christian life. The insufficiency of the creature has been learned, the deadness of the letter, the inefficacy of unblest means; and over-against these the infinite sweetness of the love of Christ, and of fellowship with himself apart from all human instrumentality. But the higher we advance in grace, and rise above leaning on the instruments, the more do we prize and use all divinely-sanctioned instrumentality. The same jealous Bride of the Lamb does afterwards thankfully and eagerly inquire of the watchmen, 'Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' and finds him quickly, in connexion with the inquiry. It is not, however; that Christ will deny her or discourage her in the direct and personal

search for himself; but that he will honor his own appointments, and have her wait patiently on him in the observance and diligent use of all the ordained means of grace. *Feed the kids*, is a command to the Bride to discharge her daily duties as a Shepherdess, the flock committed to her care being first of all her own soul, with its manifold occupants. Looking ever to the great Shepherd of the sheep, she proceeds to say,

My soul's a shepherd too, a flock it feeds
Of thoughts and words and deeds;
The pasture is thy word, the streams thy grace,
Enriching all the place.—*Herbert*.

But the 'feeding of the kids' is also the Bride's care for the souls committed to her charge, and more expressly the young of the flock and of the herd. In seeking our own soul's salvation and comfort, we must never neglect the souls intrusted to our care, and especially the young that are under our charge. Earlier and oftener than many parents imagine, may the kids be fed by the shepherds' tents, for children are not fools except so far as rendered such by sin; and irrespectively of more direct efforts for themselves, their souls are capable, through grace, of relishing and thriving on the pastures provided for the flock. The Church in these days has done well in looking after the kids that they be not neglected, but she has gone too far in dividing the lambs from the sheep in the pastures, as if the same herbage were not suitable for both, and as if the lambs should not be fed beside the same shepherds' tents, but around separate sheds erected for themselves. A double evil has hence arisen, of tempting the shepherds to forget to pitch their own tents in the midst of food fit for lambs as well as sheep, and of scaring the lambs from cropping the herbage which has been chosen only for the sheep, and seems not tender enough for their feebler teeth. It is a double mistake, for the flock will perish where there is no pasture for the kids, and the kids will never starve on what is good pasture for the flock. Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents. It is also true that the young in grace, and likewise the young in years, have sometimes, through the hunger of their own souls, such a discern-

ment of the pasture suitable for them, as may be helpful to the pastors themselves in seeking the great Shepherd.

If, fairest maid, thou knowest not
The pathway to my calm retreat;
Thy kids shall guide thee to the spot;
The young can trace their mother's feet.

Graduate of Oxf.

But remember, Bride of the Lamb with charge of young souls, and especially of those born in thy house, that it is not enough for thee to feed those kids with the green pastures that surround the shepherds' tents, but thou must also lead them forth by 'the footsteps of the flock.' Thither wouldst thou go for thyself, at least thou thinkest so, yet thither oft thou wilt not lead thy kids along with thee; as if they had not been committed to thee for the very end both of guiding and controlling their path, so that they may walk in the narrow way of life. They love the world, and thou sayest thou must give them liberty—liberty, that is, to go astray like lost sheep, and wander in the broad way that leadeth unto death. Nay, peradventure thou addest sin to sin by judging that thou canst follow them in the footsteps of the lost, so as to watch over their souls—making thyself also, for their sakes, a wanderer from the footsteps of the flock. Thus thy kids, left to their own youthful follies, are feeding, not among the lilies, but amid the briars and thorns of the wilderness, where the fox and the serpent are lurking for their prey; while thou art in thine own path losing the footprints of the flock, endangering thine own soul, enticing or emboldening others to wander from the fold, preparing for thyself sorrow in this life, and for thy children no crown of glory when the chief Shepherd shall appear. 'Go,' rather than, 'thy way, follow thou the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids likewise by the shepherds' tents.'

IV.

THE CHARIOTS OF PHARAOH, THE CHAINS OF GOLD,
THE BEAUTIFUL CROWN.

I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of *jewels*, thy neck with chains of *gold*. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.—
CHAP. i. 9, 10, 11.

THE CHARIOTS OF PHARAOH.

O my love.—How suddenly and how completely changed is the scene!—the Bride no longer seeking either a near or a distant Saviour, but having found the fellowship she desired; no more remembering the past or hoping for the future, but rejoicing in the present consolations of the Spirit, and in the closest communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. She has submitted patiently to his denial, obediently to his command, and soon, or even instantly, has obtained more than she had sought. She has traced the footsteps of the flock, she has fed by the shepherds' tents, or it is in her heart so to search for her absent Lord, but in following hard after him she has quickly outstripped them all. Being drawn, she has run, her feet have become swift as the hind's, and to the joy of her Lord and her own, she finds herself in his presence, seated with him 'at his table' (12). The sacramental table haply it may be, or the house of prayer, or the closet, or 'the solitary place' of the mountain, or the river's side. The Bridegroom first accosts her, 'O my love,' responding to her own address, 'Thou whom my soul loveth.' He declares that the love is mutual; for he loves them that love him, and those who thus seek him early shall find him. How sweet to be thus assured, thus accosted by his own lips, O my love, my friend, my associate, or, in the expressive rendering of some of our old translators, My fellow-friend! What a reward even in this life of all longing, seeking, hoping, waiting, fainting! What a joy un-

speakable to be welcomed thus into his palace above! 'O Thou whom my soul loveth,' our heart hath said to him while as yet we see him not; 'O my love,' he will say to us face to face, 'Come ye blessed of my Father.'

I have compared thee to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots, or as in the Great Bible, Unto the host of Pharaoh's chariots have I compared thee. So compared, *first*, because the church, the one Bride of Christ, consists of an exceeding great company. Immediately after the marriage of the Lamb in Revelation (xix. 7), the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses (verse 14); those armies being none other than the Bride, the Lamb's wife, whose marriage had just been celebrated. If the Lord is a Shepherd the Church is his flock, if he is an husbandman they are his vineyard, and if he is a captain and conqueror they are his chariots and horses. On a memorable day in the annals of the Church, the Bride of Christ is to the eye of man in the weakness of death, she has run her race on earth, and faint and weary she waits to be carried to the King's palace above. But Israel's monarch reading in the book of the Lord, had seen her compared to Pharaoh's horses and chariots, and gazing on the departing soul of the prophet he beholds an armed host, and exclaims, 'O my Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!' (2 Kings xiii. 14). In like manner in the sixth chapter of this Song, the Bride is described as 'terrible like an army with banners.' Pharaoh's chariots and horses were well known to the daughters of Judah, ever since Moses and Miriam had given them imperishable record in their lofty songs. There was nothing with which Israel was acquainted that presented such an image of martial beauty, for their own hosts were glorious not with the power and pageantry of chariots and horses, but with the unseen majesty of the Lord their God in the midst of them. To so gorgeous a host of cavalry, glittering with gold and silver, with its myriads marching in unbroken array, the Church is compared in her goodly order and her dazzling beauty. The comparison may be taken *next* of the conquering power of the chariot host, not however of Pharaoh's chariots conquering, but of the hosts by which they

were overcome. Such comparisons are frequent in the Psalms — ‘I will make mention of Pharaoh and Babylon, Philistia triumph thou because of me—why leap ye, high hills? this is the hill that God desireth.’ So in the Psalms and the Prophets there is frequent reference to another chariot host that rode through the Red Sea side by side with Pharaoh’s, but more numerous and more glorious by far, and overcame it in the deadly struggle. It was the unseen host of the chariots and horsemen of Israel, for it was the host of Israel’s God. ‘The chariots of God are twenty thousand; I will bring my people from the depths of the sea; was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, thy chariots of salvation? thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters’ (Ps. lxxviii.; Hab. iii.) ‘To him that overcometh will I give;’ to the soul that through grace conquers the world and sin and Satan, trampling them under foot as with the hoofs of a triumphant host; to the soul that overcomes the King himself, prevailing over him when ‘the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’ ‘Tell me where thou feedest, else I will not let thee go;’ ‘O my love, thou hast overcome me (vi. 5), and to the host of Pharaoh’s chariots have I compared thee.’ But *specially* the comparison to the chariots of Pharaoh has immediate reference to their swiftness. The trembling followers of the cloudy pillar knew it in the day when they pursued them like a flock of sheep, and overtook them between Baalzephon and the sea, and the swiftness of Pharaoh’s horses and chariots became for ever memorable in Israel. ‘We will run after thee’ said the Bride, but as she ran her Lord seemed to flee, so that she could neither overtake him with her footsteps nor discern him now with her eye. But his right hand secretly upheld, while her soul followed hard. As with the running of footmen she had pursued, but now as with the fleetness of horses, and her feet like the hind’s on the high places. ‘Making as if he would have gone further,’ yet willingly overtaken, Christ yields to the prayer of the soul that cleaves to him in faith and love; and commending the ardour, the swiftness, and the perseverance of her pursuit he accosts her, ‘To a company

of horses in Pharaoh's chariots I have compared thee, O my love.'

Longing soul, go thou and do likewise, and thou shalt be upheld by the same almighty arm, arrive at the same result of holy rest, and receive the same divine commendation. Was it not one of thy fellow-virgins, way-worn and weary, that fainted beneath the juniper-tree and desired to die; yet when the chariot of Israel's king was hastening as with the swiftness of the wind from the blackening tempest, did not thy God gird him so with strength that he outran the horses even to the gates of Jezreel? And was this not a typical transaction and achievement, by which the Lord would say to his Bride in all generations, 'I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots'—swift above all the chariot-steeds of earth? Fear not, for He who compares thee to Pharaoh's chariots doth in the very utterance make thee such as he calls thee; it is the King's word, not of acknowledgment only but of command, of comparison but also of creation; and as it proceeds from his lips, and is by faith received, thou art already transferred into 'the chariots of Pharaoh,' and ere long thy soul also will make itself 'like the chariots of Amminadib' (vi.) There is this idea *further* in the comparison of the Church to chariots of war—that She supplies the chariots which the Lord employs in the progress and in the conquest of his kingdom on earth; nor is the warlike figure at all inconsistent with bridal solemnities and joys. The King to whom the Church has been espoused is the Captain of the Lord's hosts—She a soldier's Bride. It is in the duration of a long warfare, and in the heart of a great campaign, that the nuptials have been celebrated; and if she will associate with him at all, she must accompany him forthwith to the battlefield. 'Thou art my battle-axe and weapons of war,' saith he to Jacob (Jer. li. 20); and of 'Judah, the Lord hath visited his flock, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle' (Zech. x. 3). There is nothing more grateful to the Redeemer than that the Church should be a fellow-worker with him in his warfare, presenting herself as a living sacrifice, making herself ready as swift chariots, and as chariot-wheels that tarry

not, on which the Lord may ride forth, conquering and to conquer. Even when thou hast come weary and heavy laden, hast run beyond thy strength, and hast found rest to thy soul, thou mayest not tarry; but must go forth again as the swift messenger of the Lord of Hosts, with warlike energy and zeal for the triumph of peace and good-will amongst the sons of men.

THE CHAINS OF GOLD.

Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.—The historical reference as regards the national Israel is to the ‘jewels of silver and jewels of gold,’ which they wore as the divinely-given spoil of the Egyptians. Seeking the resting-place of the great Shepherd they had followed him through the deep, and in triumphant commendation he had compared the armies of Israel to the engulfed hosts of Pharaoh. Safe on the further shore of the Red Sea, the King refers to the jewels which were borrowed at first, but were now their own both by divine and human right. The slaves unjustly subjected to the yoke, had borrowed the ornaments just as they had borrowed the three days’ liberty, and both wherewith to keep a feast to their God in the wilderness. The treacherous tyrant repenting broke faith, came forth to destroy the helpless multitude, and by his own murderous attempt dissolved all implied obligation to return in their own persons, or with the gold and silver that adorned them. Free now to serve their heavenly King, he commends their inward grace under the image of the jewelled bands upon their brows, and the golden chains around their necks. In like manner the presentation of gold by the Bride from the tents of Kedar in the worship of the Eastern Sages, as well as the personal wearing of jewels, might suggest the image in its application to the New Testament Church.

‘Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.’ Thou poor slave-girl, thou hard-wrought dresser of the vineyards, thy cheeks were burned and blackened by the mid-day sun, for to thee it was not given to rest at

noon; but they are comely now through thy Saviour's comeliness put upon thee. Thou hadst lien among the pots and wast begrimmed with their soot, but now thou art 'as a dove whose wings are covered with silver and her feathers with gold.' Thy bread was eaten with the sweat of thy brow, but thy Lord hath wiped the tears from thine eyes, and the sweat-drops from thy forehead, and hath adorned thy brows with radiant rows of jewels; with the precious onyx and the sapphire from 'the land that is very far of;' with heavenly wisdom whose price is above rubies, and with the 'one pearl of great price' like to which the great King above promises none other, and equal to which are not all the riches of his kingdom. Thy neck was scarred with the iron yoke, while serving in the vineyard not thine own, when thou couldst not dig and wast ashamed to beg; it was compassed also with pride as with a chain, thy boast and thy bondage both; but now that neck is loosed from its bands, and encircled with chains of gold, with ornaments of grace.

In Haran thus

The kindred of Rebekah wondering saw
 The newly-given splendour: bracelets rich
 Circled her arms; and pendant on her face
 The weighty proof of Isaac's bounty shone,
 In value questionless. And could she doubt,
 Could any doubt who saw her decked with these,
 His covenanted love and bounteous heart,
 Of whom they were the sparkling messengers?

Meditations.

They are the free gifts of thy Redeemer who hath delivered thee from the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage; they are his words of truth which have set thee free, 'the instruction of thy father and the law of thy mother' promised for chains about thy neck, provided for thee to 'tie about thy neck continually' (Prov. i. 9; vi. 21). Thy Lord has likewise adorned thee, 'not with the wearing of gold, but in the hidden man of the heart, and that which is not corruptible, with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price.' Instead of the 'broidered hair and the pearls and the costly array,' which were but badges

of thy bondage to the world and its prince, he has enabled thee to 'adorn thyself with shamefacedness and sobriety; and, which becometh women professing godliness, with good works'—not servile labors but works really good, the fruits of the Spirit through Jesus Christ to the glory of God.

Retrace a little further thy history. 'Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite' (Ezek. xvi). Thou wast born among the sun-darkened children of Ham, in their land, of their stock, beneath their curse and hereditary bondage. For thyself 'thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person in the day thou wast born;' born not in the curtains of Solomon, in the tabernacles of the Prince of Peace, but in the tents of Kedar; and thy mother that bare thee cast thee out into the open fields, and forsook thee. Thou wast 'of the works of the law,' but the law that bare thee could neither 'swaddle thee' nor nurse thee; had for thee no eye of pity and no hand of help, but left thee to perish in thy sins. 'But I passed by thee, and I said unto thee, Live—yea I said unto thee Live; now when I passed by thee and looked upon thee, thy time was the time of love; I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck, and I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings on thine ears, and thou wast exceeding beautiful.' Here as in the Song we have the 'chain on the neck' of gold or of gems, for in neither is the material specified; and we have the 'jewel on the forehead' corresponding to the 'rows of jewels on the checks.' But in Ezekiel we have expressly given the origin of the ornaments, as not Zion's own in herself but wholly from her God—'thy fair jewels of my gold and my silver which I had given thee' (verse 17); and the character likewise of the ornaments, as a divine beauty moral and spiritual like Jehovah's own holiness—'perfect through my comeliness which I had put upon thee' (verse 14). These 'rows of jewels and chains of gold' with which thou art adorned, O bride of the Lamb, are, then, the comeliness of the Lord Jesus Christ freely imputed to thee for thine own, and the graces of the Holy

Spirit fashioning thee into some resemblance of that comeliness.

But while the king describes only Zion's glorious adorning in the day of first love, the prophet fills up the picture with the sad disrobing in the day of departure; for Solomon sung of the marriage, but Ezekiel bewailed the divorce. Beware, then, of her sin, lest thou fall after the same example of unbelief; take heed that thou part not with his jewels as gifts to all thy lovers, employing them or squandering them to glorify the world or thyself, instead of jealously guarding them as seals of the covenant of thy God in the day when he swore unto thee and thou becamest his; and watch also lest in any way thou be tempted to make a gain of godliness, instead of counting godliness itself thy gain. If thus or otherwise thou dost join hands again in 'the friendship of the world,' then, slowly perhaps yet surely, a time will come when God 'will judge thee as women that break wedlock are judged, take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked, because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth,' nor the love of thine espousals (Ezek. xvi. 38, 39, 43).

THE BEAUTIFUL CROWN.

We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.—But who will make them, and what are they when made? It is the Bride that is spoken to, the King that speaketh, and to believers in Christ Jesus there is nothing strange in hearing him say, 'We will make.' The Jews acknowledged God as their king, and Messiah as their king, and to both these kings they refer in the interpretation of this book; but they did not know that these two are one, for they owned Messiah to be God's son only by adoption, but not by nature which alone gives unity (Lightfoot). But Solomon elsewhere asks, What is his name, or what is his Son's name? acknowledging both to be alike mysterious; and he describes the Wisdom of God, which can be none other than the Eternal Word, 'as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him, and having his delights with the sons of men.' His father David in like manner sings,

‘I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion, this day have I begotten thee’—and ‘the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand.’ Without inquiring what amount of insight David or Solomon had into the plurality of persons in the Godhead, or into the union of divine and human natures in the one Messiah, it need not surprise us that Solomon, moved by the Holy Ghost, and knowing that he was speaking concerning God and the Church, should employ the plural number, ‘We will make;’ while he might himself be compelled to inquire what the Spirit that was in him did signify. Moses, narrating the first creation, had recorded the mysterious and instructive counsel, ‘Let us make man after our image;’ and Solomon the wisest of men, speaking of the new creation, records the not dissimilar divine decree, ‘We will make thee borders of gold.’ The King in his own person on earth unites in like manner his own name with his Father’s, ‘If a man love me, my Father will love him, and *we* will come and make our abode with him.’

All grace and all increase of grace is the common work and united gift of the glorious persons of the Godhead. ‘Of his own will the Father begat us; created anew in Christ Jesus; born of the Spirit; every good gift cometh down from the Father of lights—I give unto them eternal life—He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you.’ There is a great concurrence of divines that such is the mind of the Spirit in the words before us. ‘Borders which are of golde We Three will make for thee,’ is the interpretation of one of the best of our old translators of the Song (Fenner). To him that hath shall be given, is the promise, and he shall have more, he shall have abundance. The Bride hath already ‘rows of jewels and chains,’ she shall now receive ‘borders of gold with studs of silver.’ She hath grace, which through grace she has not lost nor lessened, but retained and used, and she shall have more grace. The eye attracteth the heart even of the King, and Jesus admiring his own grace in the believer, is moved by the sight to promise its increase. ‘Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold, we will make thee’

Borders of gold with studs of silver.—‘And what can be meant,’ asks a distinguished critic, ‘by the making her borders of gold with studs or spots of silver, which should be more valuable than what she wore, except the crown-royal; something superior is visibly intended, and what other ornament of mere gold, or gold mixed with silver, could be so superior as to be the subject of this Song?’ (Harmer.) Understanding, then, these silver-studded circles of gold to mean either the royal or then uptial crown, or both in one, the description tallies exactly with that of Ezekiel, ‘I decked thee with ornaments, I put a chain on thy neck, and a jewel on thy forehead, and a beautiful crown upon thine head; thus wast thou decked with gold and silver’ (xvi. 11–13). It is pardon, first, and reconciliation, it is saying Live, when cast into the open field; it is, next, the ring on the hand and the shoes on the feet, or in Old Testament and bridal language, ‘bracelets on the wrists, jewels on the forehead, and chains around the neck;’ and it is, finally, ‘the beautiful crown upon the head.’ And though these are all given in the first hour of a sinner’s acceptance, yet both the sense of being made kings and priests unto God may follow after, and the crown itself is set forth as an object of desire as well as of possession—the crown of righteousness which the Lord will give on that day to all them that love his appearing, ‘the borders of gold with studs of silver.’ ‘To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me in my throne,’ saith the King; and the bride hath overcome, hath followed hard after him with feet swifter than Pharaoh’s chariots, hath overtaken, and her Lord now saith to her, ‘I will put a beautiful crown upon thy head.’

Bride of the Lamb, thou didst make for him a crown of thorns, its ruby studs were the drops of his own blood, and lo, this is the exchange he maketh with thee! The crown had fallen from thy head, thy gold had become dim, thy fine gold changed, and his own diadem of beauty, his own fire-trying gold, his own crown of righteousness, he putteth upon thee. This crown thou hast in possession, though concealed beneath thy soldier’s helmet; and thou hast a more glorious crown in promise when the battle shall have been fought and won, to

be openly given thee in the great day—it is the same crown, but publicly and for ever thine. ‘Hold fast that which thou hast, and let no man take thy crown.’ The flesh and the world and the devil are striving hard either to wrench it or to filch it from thee, but hold it fast and let no man take it. Hold it fast everywhere, and at all times except only in the presence of thy King; and there cast it at his feet, for none dare snatch it thence, and with his own royal hand he will give it thee again, weightier and brighter than when thou laidst it down. ‘Be thou faithful unto death, and he will give thee a crown of life.’

V.

THE SPIKENARD AT THE FEAST, THE MYRRH IN THE
BOSOM, THE CAMPHIRE IN THE VINEYARD.

While the King *sitteth* at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. A bundle of myrrh *is* my well-beloved unto me; he [or rather, it] shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. My beloved *is* unto me *as* a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.—CHAP. i. 12-14.

THE SPIKENARD AT THE FEAST.

While the king sitteth at his table, or while the king is ‘on his circuit’ some have rendered it, ‘at his banquet’ others; or rather, as an old translator conveys the whole idea, ‘While the king sitteth at his round table,’—*sitteth* or reclineth with his guests around the banquet table. In the hour when the Eternal Word was made flesh and Jesus was born in Bethlehem, because there was the King of kings, there also was the king’s palace and banquet-hall and guest table. Thither from the ends of the earth hastened his prepared guests, and opened their precious caskets of frankincense and myrrh, that the chambers of the King might be filled with the costliest odours that earth could afford. My soul, be not thou the last to follow the example:

See how from far upon the Eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet;
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet.

Milton.

This table is the same as David describes in the twenty-third Psalm, ‘Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over.’ It is in both cases a table in the midst of green

pastures where the flocks are feeding; a table under the cool shadow where the chief Shepherd is resting at noon; a table in the presence of enemies, yet replenished with an overflowing cup of grace and of gladness. It is the same also as the King himself denotes when he gives the promise, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me.' It is the communion which the Lord Jesus holds with his saints on earth—not merely guiding them with his eye and calling to them with his voice, not only meeting with them by the way—but sitting down with them in settled, unhasting, quiet fellowship and intimacy. He hid his face before when the Bride sought him, and drew back as she drew nearer, but he now sits with her at his table in kindly confidential intercourse. While on earth without a house or a table of his own, because all were his, He ate with his disciples and with strangers. But wherever he entered as guest he was still the acknowledged King, the recognised Lord of the feast; the table was still regarded as his, even by his enemies; and if aught displeased them, as in the admission of sinners, they looked not to the owner of the house, but to him, that it might be rectified. But most of all it was his table where he sat as King, when, assembled with the twelve, he said, 'Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you; This cup is the new testament in my blood, drink ye all of it.' There the man of sorrows, seated at the lowly board in the upper room, said to his disciples in the plenitude of regal power, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' At his own table in the sacramental supper he still sits with his people, sits as a King among them, and freely confers on them royal favors, kingdoms, thrones, and sceptres over all opposing hosts. But in closest friendship he is still our Lord and Sovereign, saying, 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.'

My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof, for as the fragrance of Christ's grace attracts to itself every believing soul, so the presence of Christ draws forth every grace that is in

the believer. Repentance, faith, hope, love, gratitude, joy, peace, which had lain cold and frozen in his absence, are now drawn out toward him, as to the source whence they all had flowed. He is the sun that melts the precious nard and extracts all its fragrance; he is the dew or the gentle shower on the aromatic shrub, that diffuses around its sealed perfumes. Often when the believer imagines that he has no grace at all, the simple presence of Jesus raises a cloud of grateful incense from his heart. The spikenard exceeding costly is closely sealed within the alabaster, the stone casket alone is recognised, and the heart doubts if there be aught but stone within. But Jesus has come, the willing hands break the alabaster, and the goodly ointment fills all the house with its odour. 'The king sitteth at his table, and my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.'

All the perfume, however, that the Bride ever brought to Christ on earth, was the material ointment which the herbs of the field afforded; of its kind, indeed, exceeding costly and fit for royal use, still only of earth. Twice she poured it on his feet and once on his head while he lived, (though two of these may have been united in one,) as if for the threefold unction of prophet, priest, and king; and his dead body she embalmed and imbedded in precious odours. But, all these anointings only signified that he is 'the Lord's Anointed,' all whose 'garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia,' the fragrance from whose anointed body diffused itself around, typical of the priceless and unmeasured anointing of the Holy Ghost. To this therefore it amounts, that as He is the myrrh in the bosom, and the camphire cluster in the vineyard, so is he also the spikenard at the table. 'His name is as ointment poured forth' even in his absence (3); but now much more in his presence, the fragrance of his grace and truth fills all the table, and rejoices all its guests. One of these, referring to the king's words, 'Ye call me Master and Lord,' thus describes the joy of that presence:—

How sweetly doth My Master sound—My Master!
 As ambergris leaves a rich scent unto the taster,
 So do these words a sweet content,
 An Oriental fragranc^y—My Master.
 With these all day I do perfume my mind.—*Herbert.*

THE BUNDLE OF MYRRH IN THE BOSOM.

A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me, he [or rather, it] shall lie all night betwixt my breasts; for though the original expresses neither but leaves it open, the structure of the passage refers it to the myrrh. He, indeed, is the bundle of myrrh, he is the cluster of camphire; but as it is the cluster that is in the vineyard, so it is the myrrh that is in the bosom.

A bundle of mellifluous myrrhe,
Is my Beloved best
To me, which I will bind between
My breasts, while I do rest
In silent slumbers.

Troth-plight Spouse.

Nor is there any exclusive reference to the season of the night, for the word is often translated *dwell* or *lodge*, as in the twenty-fifth Psalm, 'his soul shall dwell at ease, or lodge in goodness' (marg.); and an old translator of the Song renders it, 'a little bundell made of myrrhe which doth always remain' (Fenner). If we take it of the night, it is the entire period of darkness till the dawn of endless day. Employing the same term, the Lord asks by his prophet, 'How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?' Instead of vain thoughts which lodged in me night and day, and would have dwelt for ever, this bundle of myrrh, saith the believer, shall now lodge in my heart. As constantly as these dwelt within me, as much room as they occupied, as attractive as they were, such and far more shall my Beloved be, such and far more shall be this bundle of myrrh in my bosom. Yet myrrh is not so much a flower or shrub gathered in bundles, as a fragrant juice collected in drops, and a bag or casket of myrrh is probably the more exact idea:—

As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is a dying Christ to me;
And while he makes my soul his guest,
My bosom, Lord, shall be thy rest.—*Watts.*

Such blessings as these, believer, are thine when, through

grace, thou bindest this bundle of myrrh in thy bosom. *First*, it is Christ dwelling in thy heart by faith, in thy inmost soul, in the inner man, in the secret of thy mind and will. Nothing more inward within thee, nothing more cherished by thee, nothing more fragrant to thee than thy Well-beloved, thy Lord, thy King, thine eternal Bridegroom; yet the same whom once thou couldst not endure, whom thou wouldst give no place in thy bosom, and of whom thou criedst, 'Away with him.' *Second*, it is Christ fragrant to the soul that cherishes him, even when not expressly seen to be admired. The bundle of myrrh in the bosom is not beheld while there, it was seen and shall be seen again, but it lodges there, cherished yet unseen. So is Christ often to the believing soul, not rejected, not let go, but held fast in the heart and 'his death borne always about in the body;' though in the multitude of employments not always expressly looked upon. Blessed it is to bind him fast in the bosom, and blessed to find him there when we seek for him again. *Third*, it is Christ fragrant all the night to the soul that cleaves to him in faith and love; fragrant to the soul through darkness and fear, fragrant to the soul when the senses are locked in slumber, and breathing fragrance through the soul with the first dawn of morning—a bundle of myrrh all night in the bosom. 'My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother, bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.' Like this bundle of myrrh tie them round thy neck, like this bundle of myrrh bind them ever in thy bosom; and 'when thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, when thou awakest it shall talk with thee' (Prov. vi.) And *fourth*, it is Christ in thee fragrant as a bundle of myrrh to all around, even when thou art not conscious of its fragrance for thyself, nor aware of its fragrance to others. If thou art bearing him about with thee in thy bosom, that bundle of myrrh between thy breasts will be always and in every place unto thee 'a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish' (2 Cor. ii. 15). How blessed to be ever, consciously or unconsciously, a savour of Jesus Christ to men; how much more blessed to be a savour of Christ unto God! Such thou canst only be,

and such certainly thou mayest become, by taking the King for a bundle of myrrh unto thee, to lodge always within thy breast:—

From this enfolded bundle flies
 His savour all abroad:
 Such complicated sweetness lies
 In my Incarnate God.—*Erskine.*

THE CAMPHIRE IN THE VINEYARD.

My Beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire, in the vineyards of En-gedi.—This cluster of camphire has cost the critics incredible pains to discover, pains which in many instances would have been more profitable in searching for him whom the camphire typifies. Yet in all labor there is profit, and there is instructive information in the following words of a diligent and successful inquirer into the natural productions described in Scripture. The camphire, or rather, as the margin renders it, the Cypress, 'is now generally agreed to be the Henna of the Arabians. The deep color of the bark, the light green of the foliage, and the softened mixture of white-yellow in the blossoms, present a combination as agreeable to the eye as the odour is to the scent. The flowers grow in dense clusters, the grateful fragrance of which is as much appreciated now as in the time of Solomon. The women take great pleasure in these clusters, hold them in their hand, carry them in their bosom, and keep them in their apartments to perfume the air' (Kitto).

The comparison of Christ to the cluster of camphire in the vineyards suggests these ideas, besides that of fragrance common to it and to the myrrh: *First*, Christ the Beloved is represented full of attractive beauty, as well as aromatic fragrance. Throughout the word, every sense which God has given to man is charged to yield itself as a channel into the soul for the exhaustless fulness of Jesus. 'Behold the Lamb of God—hear and your souls shall live—taste and see that God is good—a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour—that which we have handled of the word of life.' So here the Bride

is not satisfied with the bundle of myrrh in the bosom, but must also have the rich cluster of camphire before the eye, that she may appreciate all his worth. 'Every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him hath eternal life:' 'let us run the race set before us looking unto Jesus.' *Second*, there is nothing that the Eternal Father, or the Son himself, or his ransomed Bride the Church, glories in more than the oneness of the Lord Jesus Christ—the only-begotten Son of the Father, the one good shepherd, the one true vine, the one rose of Sharon, the one light of the world, the one servant of the Father, the one sacrifice for sins, the one way, one truth, one life.' But in this perfect unity there is a fulness so exhaustless, that the Church here describes it by a rich cluster of fragrant flowers. The cluster is one in its undivided integrity, one Beloved, one Christ, one Son of the living God and Son of Man, not two clusters but one; but the cluster is manifold in its beauteous blossoms, for innumerable graces crowd harmoniously together in the Lamb of God. The faith of Abraham, the persuasiveness of Jacob, the meekness of Moses, the zeal of Elijah, the holiness of Job, the love of John, are all full and perfect in him. Truth, righteousness, wisdom; love, pity, friendship; majesty, might, sovereignty; lowliness, patience, faith; zeal, courage, holiness; all the graces, that are found as separate blossoms in saints and angels, are in him gathered together in one rich glorious central cluster, the admiration and the attraction of the universe of God. *Third*, This cluster of camphire is in the vineyards, from which the Greek Fathers take it to refer to the 'fruit of the vine, as well as the flower of the cypress.' (Gregory, etc.) This idea we are unwilling to lose, because the connexion is so constant between the vine and Christ; and not only so, but by the prophet Isaiah the promised Seed of Jacob, the inheritor of the holy mountain, is expressly compared to the 'new wine found in the cluster' bringing a blessing to the elect of God (lxy. 8, 9). The vineyard of the Lord of hosts had brought forth only wild grapes, and therefore he declares that he will lay it waste (Isa. v). But before the sentence is executed there springs a stem out of Jesse, a tender plant out of his roots, a true vine with a cluster of rich

grapes, and when the other babes are slain in Bethlehem the command is issued 'Destroy it not for a blessing is in it,' and for its sake is spared the remnant according to the election of grace. But as the cluster of grapes in the Lord Jesus which we have already noted, may be applied to a cluster of grapes quite as naturally as of flowers, we shall not open it further; but rather consider the circumstance of the cluster of camphire being in the vineyards of En-gedi—a rural retreat of exquisite beauty. The spikenard is at the banquet; the bundle of myrrh is night and day in the bosom, through the bustle of business, or in the quietness of ordinary rest; but the cluster of camphire is in the summer seclusion, and in the heart of all that is most attractive in nature. In the midst of the clustered vines, and of the aromatic plants with their odorous gums for which En-gedi was famous, this cluster of camphire is at once distinguished by its fragrance, and conspicuous for its beauty. But the vineyard itself is embedded in all that is lovely, and encompassed by all that is grand in nature. The citron, the pomegranate, the olive, and the palm in the warm valley,—in the distance, the lofty mountains—overhanging the bold and craggy rocks of the wild goats,—around, the deep caves where David found his strongholds, half opening their dark mouths to the light of heaven. No book of man sets forth the beauties of this earth like the book of God, and no child of man enjoys those beauties like the child of God. Sun, moon, and stars, green earth, and blue sea; the everlasting hills, the ever-rolling rivers; the cedars of Lebanon, and the oaks of Bashan; the birds that sing among the branches, the thunders that peal around the heavens; all have their sweet attractions to the unstopped ear and the opened eye of the heir of heaven. But in the midst of all—in the very vineyards of En-gedi—the Well-beloved is to him the one cluster of camphire of which all these are only the rough footstalk. Sometimes it is in contrast to them all, finding them all empty and vain, and turning to him for relief; sometimes it is in union with them all, admiring all, enjoying all, loving all, yet counting all loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But is there no Bride of Christ to whom he is spikenard at

his table; to whom through the course of the year he is a bundle of myrrh in the bosom; but who in the season of relief and relaxation, in the unbending of the mind, and the invigoration of the frame amid the beauties of nature, cannot aver, 'My Beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi'? Be sure of this, that the loss of Christ is never gain; that no circumstances require the sacrifice of Christ; and that in the absence of Christ from any scene there is the blank of its essential joy. But there are many more—not indeed of the righteous or the upright—but creatures and subjects of God, and not ignorant of the fact of his Son's crucifixion on Calvary, who derive much joy from the work of his hands, and have never rejoiced in the Lord himself; who discern the beauties of En-gedi, but have never discovered its Cluster of Camphire, fairer than the sons of men; who search all nature's secrets, but never enter the secret of Jehovah's tabernacle, nor inquire within his hidden holy place.

The fleet astronomer can bore
 And thread the spheres with his quick-piercing mind;
 He views their stations, walks from door to door;
 Surveys as if he had design'd
 To make a purchase there.

The nimble diver with his side,
 Cuts through the working waves that he may fetch
 His dearly-earned pearl, which God did hide
 On purpose from the venturous wretch.

The subtle chemist can dissect
 And strip the creature naked, till he find
 The callow principles within their nest.—
 What hath not man sought out and found,
 But his dear God? --*Herbert.*

VI.

THE GREEN COUCH OF THE SHEPHERD KING.

Behold thou *art fair*, my love, behold thou *art fair*; thou *hast doves'* eyes. Behold thou *art fair* my Beloved, yea pleasant: also our bed [or couch] *is green*. The beams of our house *are cedar*, and our rafters of fir.—CHAP. i. 15-17.

Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.—‘I am black, for the sun hath looked on me, I am black, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.’ ‘Thou art fair my love, behold thou art fair.’ ‘We have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments,’ is the true confession of the Church—‘I have given them thy word, and they have kept thy word,’ is the pleading of their great advocate, for he seeth no iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel. Behold thou art fair, and the secret of the beauty is found in this—‘thou hast doves’ eyes;’ eyes chaste and constant, for of chastity and constancy doves are the common emblems. ‘I have espoused you,’ said one of the bridegroom’s friends, ‘unto one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.’ This virgin’s eyes are not wandering like the fool’s to the ends of the earth, but are fixed steadfastly on Jesus. Thence all her beauty is derived, for ‘if the eye be single the whole body is full of light,’ and full therefore also of beauty; but ‘if the eye be double the body is full of darkness,’ and full likewise of deformity. He that hath an eye for anything equally with Christ hath no comeliness in his sight; ‘he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.’ The eye that looks elsewhere is the eye that offends, and is good for nothing but to be plucked out and cast away; the eye that looks back while the hand is on the plough is not fit for the kingdom, and shall never see the

King; the backward glance on the lovely plain forfeits the life, in losing the love of the life-giver. But 'blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God'; blessed the racers that look fixedly on Jesus; blessed 'the eyes of doves' in the soul, for then the whole form is fair, the whole person beloved.

Behold thou art fair, my Beloved.—The beauty is not in me but in thee, for I am not fair in myself; if I am fair, my comeliness is all from thee, and all in thee, and therefore is no glory of mine. But thou art fair, my Beloved; in thyself, and not in another; fair without any abatement or detraction; thou art fair altogether, thou art fair always, and thou alone art fair. 'The Bridegroom to us believing is everywhere beautiful,' saith the Bride, in words not inspired, yet true; 'He is fair in heaven, fair on earth; fair in the virgin's womb, fair in the arms of his parents; fair in his miracles, fair in his stripes; fair when calling unto life, fair when disregarding death; fair in laying down his life, fair in receiving it again; fair on the cross, fair in the sepulchre.' (Augustine.)

Yea pleasant.—Fair without being pleasant the sons of men often are; pleasant also in measure they may be without being altogether fair; but Jesus is both, and in both he is perfect. Pleasantness implies a peculiar fitness to yield a resting-place for the soul, as distinguished from the excellence which excites mere admiration, or even from that which awakens love. It is found in the good man, for whom peradventure some would even dare to die; but not in the just man, for whom men would scarcely die. The word is used to describe the sweet and solemn melodies of the sanctuary—'sing praises to him because it is pleasant;' the affectionate union of brethren,—'behold how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity;' and the agreeableness of a chosen earthly friend, closer than a brother,—'very pleasant hast thou been unto me, O Jonathan.' Even such a delight, such a quiet rest and repose of soul, do the redeemed Church and the ransomed soul find in the Kinsman Redeemer. Behold thou art fair, yea pleasant; pleasant, acceptable, suitable, refreshing; so that all else in comparison are displeasing, harsh, and ungenial. Thou art pleasant, and thou alone, invariably and altogether pleasant;

pleasant in the discoveries of thyself here, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Also our bed is green.—Our translators render it *bed*, for want both of a precise English word to express the idea, and of an English usage corresponding to the Eastern word. It is the same as the *bed* whereon Esther sat or reclined at the banquet of wine with the king and Haman; and is here the sofa or couch on which the Great King sitteth with the Bride at his table (12). If we understand the supposed scene to be now a palace, then this couch is *green*, being strewed with flowers and green leaves as for a marriage-feast; or if, rather, we still take it of rural imagery, then the couch is the green grass on which the Shepherd King reposes, and where he spreads his table. ‘Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock, and where thou makest it to rest at noon.’ The prayer has been answered, the feeding of the flock has been found, the shepherd’s resting-place discovered.

Those pastures are green and pienteous into which the Lord leads his sheep, as David gratefully confesses, ‘he maketh me to lie down in green pastures;’ and the good Shepherd’s rest at noon is not less green and refreshing, as the Bride, having found it, acknowledges. The spirit of man wanders through dry places seeking rest and finding none; through the parched wilderness the weary soul wanders till it hears the sound ‘this is the rest and this is the refreshing’—yea, till the good Shepherd with irresistible persuasion makes it lie down in green pastures and beside still waters. In southern countries the water is ever the source of the verdure; and if there is in the desert a spring of water whose waters fail not, around it there is ever spread a carpet of brightest green. The pilgrim Bride of the Lamb has sought him long and earnestly, in solitude she has crossed the burning sands in the eager pursuit, tents resembling his she has seen in the wilderness, but on approaching and entering she has found them only the tents of his companions. She is afraid of another fruitless attempt, and before running with hasty feet she prays with a loud cry, ‘Tell me where thou restest at noon.’ Her feet sore with crossing the broiling sand, her throat parched with calling

upon One who answers not, her eye failing with looking long, she hears him speak at last,—‘O my love!’ She beholds him near, she sees a green oasis in the desert with a banquet prepared, a table spread, and in the fulness of her heart she exclaims ‘How pleasant art thou, my Beloved, how green is our couch!’ How oft the soul, finding rest in Jesus, has addressed him with words like these! It is no prayer, and the twenty-third Psalm is no prayer, and contains not a single petition; neither is there formal praise in ‘his resting-place is green,’ but it is exactly in the grateful and congratulatory strain of that Psalm,—‘he leadeth me into green pastures, he spreadeth a table before me.’ It is a friend found by one who was friendless before; it is living water springing up for one who was parched and perishing till now; it is a green oasis discovered by one whose weary eye had never in this world till now lighted on a spot of beauty and verdure. Ah! brother, sister, hast thou seen it? There is even for thee a green spot on earth if thou wilt seek it, as verdant as around the fountain of life in the paradise above. It is the good Shepherd’s noontide rest. ‘Heavy laden’ and hopeless thou art, seeking peace afar off and passing him who is near; like Hagar in the desert, with the last drop drained from the now shrivelled water-skin, thou art ready to lie down and die. But open thine ears and thou wilt hear one say, ‘Come unto me and I will give you rest’; open thine eyes and thou wilt see the well and the green sward around it; and with a full heart thou wilt answer him, ‘Behold thou art pleasant, also our couch is green.’

In the historical sketch we have given of this wondrous song, we have supposed a literal resting-place of the Babe of Bethlehem and his parents on the grass provided for the cattle. If ever there was joy or thankfulness on earth, it must have been under that humble roof, ‘the soul magnifying the Lord, and the spirit rejoicing in the Saviour’ with such fulness of heart as could not fail to transform the lowliest circumstances into sources of gratitude and emblems of beauty. That Infant, ‘fairer than the sons of men,’ the smiling light upon the countenance of the new-born ‘Prince of Peace,’ the hope that illumined his features as he hung ‘upon his mother’s breasts,’ the

radiance, more inwardly felt by the onlookers than outwardly seen, that beamed from the brightness of Godhead dwelling in the Babe—could not but elicit the wondering exclamation, ‘Behold thou art fair!’ If the infant Moses, through whom was to come the fiery law, was a goodly child and ‘exceeding fair,’ how much more ‘that Holy Thing born of Mary full of grace and truth, and fairer than the children of men’! As they took him up in their arms and blessed God, and looked upon ‘the pleasant child,’ they could not refrain from adding ‘yea pleasant;’ and while they rested together with him on their lowly couch, all images of beauty would spring up in their souls, and, far from murmuring at their lot, the mother’s joyful heart would exclaim, ‘also our bed is green.’

But the acceptance of this idea does not in the least preclude, but only opens the door for every just application of the words. The first bed and the last, the narrow cradle and the narrow grave, are oft conjoined in all men’s thoughts; but in the case of the Lord Jesus, the two are akin in a manner altogether peculiar.

The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
So both himself and us to glorify.—*Milton.*

Christ took human nature for the purpose of dying—‘ready to die from his youth upward.’ It was ‘the Lamb of God,’ the sacrificial Lamb, that was laid on the ‘green couch’ in the manger of Bethlehem; but his rocky bed on Calvary was already prepared of God.

Twice only are the curtains drawn from around the sleep, or the sleeping-place, of Jesus on earth,—thrice, perhaps we should rather say, for we read of his deep repose upon the pillow in the sinking ship. Saving that, however, the chamber or the bed whereon he slept is never unveiled to our eyes except in his cradle and in his grave; and each time the curtain is drawn for us by the hand of angelic ministers—alike from around his first bed and his second, as if there were none between. ‘Ye shall find the babe lying in a manger,’ said an

angel to the shepherds in Bethlehem; 'Come see the place where the Lord lay,' said the same or another angel to the mourning women at the sepulchre. The lowly manger is ours as well as his, for in the hour in which he was cradled there, we were 'members of his flesh, of his body, and of his bones'; and truly there 'our bed is green,' full of hope, of life, of immortality. The cold bed of earth is ours as well as his, for we have been 'buried along with him'; and this bed of his, this 'bed of ours, is green,' for in it 'we are planted together with him in the likeness of his death,' that we might spring up together with him 'in the likeness of his resurrection.' All else besides is black earth, dead mould, barren sand; there is in it all no living seed, no root, no blade. But this 'corn of wheat hath been cast into the ground to die,' in the same seed-bed have all believers been 'planted,' and that bed is now 'green' with the innumerable blades of a joyful resurrection from the dust of death.

Yea the dark grave is lightened by the thought,
 That in the lonely rock of Calvary,
 Thy sacred body had its silent rest;
 —whence thou didst rise,
 As from bare grain the freshly springing herb.
 Now cheerful Hope
 Decks with strange garlands the believer's grave,
 Gathering her verdant buds, O Lord, from thine.
 Our bed is green; yes though the worm be there,
 It preys but on the curtains of a tent
 The pilgrim hath abandoned.—*Meditations.*

The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.—What these beams and rafters are according to the letter, depends on whether the scene is still to be regarded as external and rustic, or the interior of the palace. There can be no doubt that the 'banqueting-house,' a few verses onward, is within the palace of the great King, but it is difficult to mark the moment of transition. The 'beams of cedar and rafters of fir' agree well with the attraction and beauty of royal residence, or rather, with the temple of God itself at Jerusalem, which was the earthly palace of the King of heaven; and taken in

connexion with the subsequent verses, the whole scene accords with the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple of Jehovah, and the joy of the little flock assembled round the infant 'Shepherd of Israel'—the 'two or three gathered together, with Jesus in the midst of them.' Agreeably with this interpretation, the words are well applied to all the assemblies of the saints; for

No beams of cedar or of fir
 Can with thy courts on earth compare;
 And here we wait until thy love
 Raise us to nobler seats above.— *Watts.*

With this agrees the interpretation of the Chaldee paraphrast:— 'Solomon the prophet said, How fair is the house of the Sanctuary of the Lord, which is built by my hands of cedar wood! but fairer shall be the house of the Sanctuary which shall be built in the days of the King Messiah, whose beams shall be of the cedars of the garden of Eden, and its rafters of the brutine tree, the fir, and the box.'

On the other hand, the grassy carpet of the verse preceding implies, that the shepherdess bride had discovered the tent of the Shepherd King from among all the tents of his companions; and if within that tent the outward figure is still preserved, it is the glory of the King himself that transforms its supporting stakes into cedar beams, and its cords and curtains into cieling wood-work. Or if the idea that has found most acceptance with modern critics be preferred, the imaginary scene is a royal bower with living cedars for its walls, with intertwining firs for its roof, and a carpet of grass beneath; such as Milton describes in *Paradise Lost*:

The roof
 Of thickest covert was inwoven shade,
 Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew
 Of firm and fragrant leaf; on either side
 Acanthus, and each odorous bushy shrub
 Fenced by the verdant wall.

But whichever of these ideas may be adopted regarding the letter of the image, the spiritual and real idea is the beauty,

the fragrance, and the durability of the house in which Christ dwells with his people. It is 'the temple of Christ's body,' more durable, more beautiful, and more fragrant than that which was built of the cedar of Lebanon; it is the Church, 'the temple of the Holy Ghost,' in which he 'abides' with his chosen, 'the new creation,' the glorious living work of his hands, 'the trees of righteousness, the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted'; it is 'the congregation of his saints' where 'brethren dwell together in unity,' and beautiful beyond all that earth can afford, either in the bowers of nature or the palaces of art; and it is 'the house of God eternal in the heavens,' such as earthly 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man, but prepared for all them that love him,' and sinking into mere hovels all the royal palaces of earth in comparison.

But not the least remarkable feature of the picture is, that the Bride herself dares to call it 'our house, our beams, our rafters.' Because they are Christ's, and because Christ is hers and she is his, all that she hath is his, and all that he hath is hers. Is it thy house on earth, believer? then it is Christ's, and thou canst say it is 'ours'; is it Christ's house on earth? then it is thine, and addressing him thou canst call it 'ours.' In that better country whither he hath gone to prepare a place for thee, it is indeed his Father's house and his own, yet within the spacious palace is a mansion for thee, thy mansion, thy palace, thy house; 'that which is thine own,' thy Lord hath called it; thine own and not another's, 'prepared for thee from the foundation of the world.' Yet were it thine exclusively, it would be joyless for thee, but it is his house as well as thine; he hath bought it for thee with his own blood; with that blood he sprinkled its lintels and door-posts when he went 'to prepare the place for thee'; and when he shall bring thee into it, he shall 'receive thee to himself' for ever. There, holding sweet fellowship with him and he with thee, thou shalt say, 'Behold thou art fair, my Beloved, yea pleasant; how amiable are thy tabernacles, how lovely is thy dwelling-place; the beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters are fir.'

VII.

THE ROSE OF SHARON AND THE LILY OF THE VALLEYS
 —THE LILY AMONG THORNS—THE APPLE-TREE IN
 THE WOOD.

I am the rose of Sharon, *and* the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so *is* my love among the daughters. As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so *is* my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit *was* sweet to my taste.—CHAP. ii. 1-3.

I am the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys.—Words most seemly in the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom it is not robbery from others, but condescension and grace, to commend himself to the sons of men. ‘I am meek and lowly’ would be the utterance of pride in the lips of Gabriel, but is humility from the lips of Jesus, who has stooped that he might become meek and lowly. ‘I am the true vine, I am the good shepherd,’ is the expression alike of truth and of grace; and so ‘I am the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys.’ Some, indeed, take these to be the words of the Bride, for there is here no grammatical construction to mark the person who speaks. But our translators have evidently referred them to the King, and with good reason. In the Old English Bibles the verse is entitled, ‘The voice of Christ;’ and ‘The Bridegroom’ in the French, Italian, and Portuguese Bibles; and this interpretation has the sanction of the earliest of the Greek fathers. (Orig., Theod.) The reference to the Bride is advocated, by no means exclusively, yet principally, by the literal interpreters, and on ground which is quite untenable. They render the words, I am a rose of the field; and receive them as the Bride’s humble account of herself, as a mere wild rose in contrast with the nobler flowers of the garden. But there is not a single passage in the whole Hebrew Bible in which the word here employed signifies ‘field,’ but invariably Sharon; which not only justifies, but necessitates, an adherence to the received translation (Gesenius). This settles, as appears to us, the question of the person speaking, because Sharon in Scrip-

ture is uniformly a title of commendation, never of humiliation; it was likewise famous for its roses, for when 'the desert is to rejoice and blossom as the rose,' it is by 'the glory of Lebanon given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon' (Isa. xxxv. 2). The same remarks apply to the lily 'like unto which Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed,' and which is never referred to in the way of depreciation, but invariably of honor; for while it is inconceivable condescension in Jesus to call himself, or rather to become, the Lily of the Valleys, that flower was unquestionably one of singular beauty.

Amongst the works of God on earth, flowers are most expressly created for beauty and delight, apart from necessity; created for the admiring mind of man, and not for the beasts that perish. Amongst flowers, the rose always and everywhere, with us now and still more in the East and of old, has held the foremost rank; and amongst the roses, the Rose of Sharon was chief. In the words of an ancient author, 'If a king were set over flowers, it would be the rose that should reign over them, being the ornament of the earth, the splendor of plants, the eye of flowers, the beauty of the field.' 'I am the bread of life,' is Christ affording necessary food to the perishing sinner; and how eagerly have thousands of the dying stretched their feeble hands to grasp this bread, and eating it have lived. 'I am the true vine,' is Christ giving, not the first necessity, but the choicest cordial, to miserable men; yet also it is 'strong drink to them that are ready to perish,' as well as 'wine to such as are of heavy heart.' But 'I am the Rose of Sharon,' is Christ presenting himself as an object of pure admiration and delight to the children of men. How often has the child of God, deeply convinced of his own sin and of the sin of all around him, of unclean lips in himself, and dwelling amongst a people of unclean lips, been surprised and cheered by looking on the flowers of the field; and has said with himself,—It is not all sin and sorrow and displeasure; this is God's own fair handiwork, and he still spreads joy and beauty before the eye of man! But it is only through Jesus Christ that these outward symbols afford real joy to the soul; is it Christ taking up the fairest of earth's flowers, pluck-

ing it haply from that green carpet of which the Bride had said, 'How green,' or as many render it, 'how flowery is this couch!' selecting thence the fragrant rose, drawing her gently from the more general beauty of the scene, and leading her straight to himself by proclaiming, 'I am the Rose of Sharon.'

Nor less attractive is the image, if we take it of the Infant born in Bethlehem, and of Sharon's opening Rosebud, as the expression seems more exactly to denote. The holy child Jesus with every grace indwelling; wisdom, righteousness, truth, love, and all that was to adorn the mature manhood, found in him; that holy flesh which the Eternal Word had taken, and in which, in infancy as in manhood, Godhead was dwelling bodily. No evil found within him and no shadow of defect; childhood without spot or blemish as a snow-white lamb, childhood immeasurably lovely with all possible beauty, childhood from which aught taken would have left want, childhood to which aught added would have been superfluous and uncomely; childhood with all the graces of manhood, but not all developed; and perfect childhood with graces of its own, not pertaining to maturity but peculiar to itself. The Rosebud of Sharon, the one Rosebud that ever bloomed on earth without a worm within it; for in Paradise the full-blown rose appeared at once in Adam. Many a rosebud seems fair to a mother's eye, but only because its leaves have not yet been expanded. If opened, the blossom will go up as dust, the cankerworm will be found within; the folly that is bound up in the heart of the child, if left to unfold itself according to its own nature, instead of the rose of Sharon will be found at last to be the hemlock and the nightshade. But in the holy child Jesus all the unseen, all the undeveloped, is purest wisdom, purest truth, purest love. Day by day and hour by hour as Sharon's Rosebud unfolds its leaves, it only displays the beauty that was hid before; till it shall have expanded into Sharon's fully blossomed Rose with every leaf shining in its loveliness, every petal perfect; and then the hand of the Father plucks and transfers it to the Paradise above whence it came—now also a flower of earth, but fairer than all the flowers of heaven. There for ever it both perfumes and beautifies the palace of the King eternal, im-

mortal, invisible; and, amid admiring angels and archangels, Jesus still for ever says, 'I am the Rose of Sharon.' Happy Sharon—blessed Earth, to have furnished such a flower for Heaven!

And the lily of the valleys—probably some beautiful district of country named by way of eminence the Valleys, and not far from Sharon, because, as here, so we find them elsewhere named together (1 Chron. xxvii. 29); and the King's herds feeding in Sharon and in the Valleys, as in the choicest pastoral districts of the land of Israel. Next to the roes amongst the shrubs, the lily was pre-eminent amongst the flowers. It was so decked with beauty, that Jesus selects it from among the grassy flowers of the field as of unrivalled magnificence; and affirms of the lilies, that 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' Of this plant we seem hitherto to have obtained no certain knowledge. The lily that is afterwards selected by the Bride to paint the lips of the Beloved must unquestionably have been red (v. 13). From the connexion and its distinction from the Rose, the lily referred to here and in the next verse seems more probably white; and thus together with the rose containing contrasted elements of beauty, and corresponding to the Bride's description 'my beloved is white and ruddy' (v. 10). Then, he is so described by her in reference to his death; but now, thus described by himself as soon as he is born in Bethlehem; white and red the Holy One is in death when his blood is shed, but white and red in his lovely infancy as the Saviour prepared for the sacrifice.

Returning to the Rose of Sharon, the 'name' of Jesus 'is as ointment poured forth'; and he is himself the fragrant plant from which the precious odour is distilled; the Plant of Renown raised up by Jehovah, the Rose that gladdens the wilderness and the solitary place (Ezek. xxxiv. 29; Isa. xxxv. 1). How glad the solitude is made by the Rose of Sharon; what joy this fair flower brings to the desolation of the heart of man! To the weary traveller when his heart has been sinking within, the tiny moss has gladdened the desert with the proof it afforded of a present God. And when to the desolate soul all the universe has seemed but desert sand, and barren rock, and

wild lonely waste, how gladdening has been the sight of that fair Flower of Paradise—from heaven transplanted into this desert, by heaven protected, breathing the fragrance of heaven around, and, to him that plucks it and bears it in his bosom, the sure pledge of personal transition into heaven! The tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God Jesus was; born in Bethlehem, he became the Rose of Sharon fairer than earth, yet in the earth; departing, he returns thither whence he came down, saying ‘to-day in Paradise;’ but now in Paradise the Rose of Earth still, Jesus the Son of Man for ever, and from heaven proclaiming to men, ‘I am the Rose of Sharon.’

Yes, there are roses on this guilty earth!
 Sons of affliction fainting on your way;
 Yea, almost tempted in some fearful hour,
 Impatient of home-distance, to lie down
 Beneath the Junipers and wish to die.
 Who is among you that can truly say,
 I found no blossoms in my lonely track?
 The testimony mute of fragrant things,
 Cheering the wilderness which sin has made,
 May hint encouragement, but Christ alone
 Makes the dull waste incipient Paradise.
 His odour fills the solitary place
 Of pining sickness, poverty, restraint,
 With thoughts of tenderness; his beauty cheers
 The melancholy heart deprived and reft.

Meditations.

There is, further, in the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys, Christ set forth as open and free to every comer. It is no rose enclosed within a high-walled garden, no flower reserved for a few, but open in the field of Sharon and at hand in the valleys. With all its heavenly beauty and its rare fragrance, it is yours, O man, to pluck and take into your bosom for yourself; yours, not merely to admire, but to possess. As if in the closest alleys of our crowded cities there grew a flower blooming and odorous, never sullied nor savourless, but always fresh, and free for every hand that seeks to pluck it; yea, not as if it were, but actually so it is, for Jesus entering our streets and lanes is ever proclaiming, ‘I am the Rose of

Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys'; and proving his presence by planting there a lily among the thorns to testify of himself. But alas! 'man without understanding is like the beasts that perish'; like the herds and flocks that feed on Sharon's pastures, and see no beauty in Sharon's roses. To earthly and unbelieving men Jesus is a root out of a dry ground; without form, or comeliness, or beauty, that they should desire him.

THE LILY AMONG THORNS.

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.—'Close by these lilies there grew several of the thorny shrubs of the desert; but above them rose the lily, spreading out its fresh green leaf as a contrast to the dingy verdure of these prickly shrubs—"like the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters"' (Bonar). Amongst the daughters, that is, not of God but of men; amongst the daughters of Jerusalem also, in so far as these are not virgin followers of the Lamb; and, it may be, amongst the true daughters of Zion, when they are mingled with the world, and like them—thorns wounding Jesus in the house of his friends. Because Christ is the lily of the valleys—pure, lovely, beautiful, therefore his bride, his sister and spouse, is a lily also, bearing the image of his loveliness, and reflecting it to men. Bride of the Lamb! next to the delight thou hast in Christ, is thy delight that he should have joy in thee; next to admiring him as the lily of the valleys, is thy satisfaction that his eye should rest on thee, and his soul repose on thee as a lily among thorns. While briars and thorns have been with him, and he hath dwelt among scorpions, it is no common contentment to the soul that he should not be pierced by thorns of thine, but that in gathering his lilies he should find in thee one blooming for his hand to pluck. Then it is thine honor that among the waste briars men should behold in thee a flower of heaven, thriving in the wilderness, and lovely in the desolation. Ask not what they can discover in thee, that they may not see directly and far more gloriously in Christ. Hast thou never thyself gazed unexpectedly on the muddy waters beneath thy feet, and in the dim mirror seen wonders in the heavens above athwart the

sun's disk or around his fiery orb, which by direct gazing upward on his glory thou couldst never have discovered; and do not men of earth stooping downward, and with eyes all unexercised to look upon the Sun of Righteousness, require even thee for a mirror, dark indeed yet not false, in which they may behold the brightness of his glory? Besides, it must not be forgot that the one fair Lily of the Valleys, like whom Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed, has been by the great Husbandman transplanted into Mount Zion above; that him, therefore, the men of this world see no longer; that he has left his disciples for his witness on earth; and that the reflection of his heavenly image by them is due both to their Lord and to the perishing children of men.

But remember that a lily thou art among thorns. A thorn amongst lilies probably thou wast once, a spot in the feast of love, a dog in the fold of sheep; and now wouldst thou grow as a lily among the lilies? So be it—see that thou fail not even in this; but if thou art Christ's lowly lily at all, such a lily must thou be wheresoever growing, and by whatsoever surrounded. Sheep in a flock of sheep—nay, said the Shepherd, but 'as sheep among wolves I send you forth.' If thou takest to thee the fence of thorns because thorns are around thee, then thy Lord's hand holds thee not, for thou wilt pierce it too; and thyself thou canst not thus defend, for the prickles which protect the thorn will only tear the tender leaves of the lily. Ask to be, dare to be, and rejoice to be a lily among thorns. So will thy Lord say, 'this is my love among the daughters;' and so from time to time the very thorns around thee will be transformed into lilies, to thy Lord's great honor, and thine own present and everlasting gain.

THE APPLE-TREE IN THE WOOD.

As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.—This apple-tree had a goodly shadow, and yielded fruit both fragrant in scent, and delicious in taste. These two last agree with what we now call peculiarly the apple-tree, but not the first; for it is not remarkable for its shadow, neither in Judea noted for its apples. The *citron*,

however, abounds in Palestine, and, like the orange and other trees of the same class, has a dark foliage of surpassing beauty and abundant shade; through which the shining of the bright golden fruit presents one of the most attractive objects within the garden of this earth, and not more beautiful to the eye than pleasant and reviving in its fragrance. The Hebrew word, which signifies 'breathing' odour, may include any fragrant fruit; and is here rendered *citron* in the Chaldee paraphrase, as well as by most modern translators. It is explanation, however, rather than alteration that our common version requires; for the term *apple* in our own, like the corresponding word in other languages, had not in the time of our Bible translators the same exclusive meaning as now, but extended to all large round fruit not enclosed in a shell. It included along with our apple the pome-citron or citron-apple, the pomegranate or grained apple, and the orange or golden apple; and is for this very reason preferred by some of the best critics of that age to any more restricted term. (Ainsworth.) They are probably right, both on this account, and from the difficulty of determining one tree; for if the apple wants the shade under which the Bride sat down with delight, we doubt if the citron possess the sweetness of the fruit that was delicious to her taste. It rather seems as if, by this beautiful figure, the Church would set forth Christ as the one Fruitful Tree amongst the fruitless, combining in itself all variety of excellence, the beauty of the apple, the refreshing juices of the pomegranate and the orange, the cool shadow and reviving fragrance of the citron. The Vine he calls himself, glorying in dependence upon the Father, but to the Church He is 'the Apple-tree' erect, self-sustaining, and affording shelter as well as food for the perishing.

Among the trees of some wild wood of nature's growth is the fir-tree, where the stork hath its dwelling, with its sealed cones affording no food for man; the oak of Bashan, whose boughs the lightning hath rent, and around whose roots the wild boar is feeding on the acorns, the husks which the swine alone can eat; the ash also, which the rain hath nourished, and out of which the idolater fashioneth his god. But for the traveller weary and faint, there is in all the forest nothing to

attract the eye, to satisfy the hunger, to quench the thirst. At last, one bright tree with ripe golden fruit shines through the dreary waste; how beautiful the sight, how fragrant the perfume, how refreshing the food!—The apple-tree among the trees of the forest. Fruitless, useless, disappointing they all are; how lovely this one tree! So is my beloved among the sons; such is Jesus Christ among all the children of men—the Son of Man. Sons of men they are too, but bleak and barren trees; the Son of Man he is, and the one fruitful tree in the whole forest of the human family in all generations. Ten thousand times ten thousand trees, fruitless all, fit fuel for the fire; amongst them all affording not a single fruit for the eye to admire, the hand to pluck, the mouth to eat. But this apple-tree laden, and clustered over with heavenly fruit, yet growing in the heart of a bleak earthly forest; richⁿ in its fruitfulness, and rich in contrast with the barrenness around; lovely in itself, and by comparison with surrounding desolation. Oh, what a tree of life is Jesus Christ—life-possessing, life-exhibiting, life-affording to all the dying that will consent to eat and live!

As in some sere and unproductive wood,
 One lovely fruit-producing Apple-tree,
 Bright contrast to the ruin'd thousands round.

Met. Meditations.

I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.—The rest of the trees, as lightning-scathed, afforded no shelter to sit beneath; or if perchance they did, it was only the shade of the juniper under which to lie down in grief and die, for it yielded no food for the perishing. But when the sun is scorching above, the throat parched with thirst, and the life within expiring for want, the wanderer can safely sit down and rest beneath this tree, because it yields not shelter only but food, and food most delicious to the taste. Any food had been welcome in such a case, but the very fruit of Eden is found by the outcast offender. How often has the soul, after traversing the forest—sin-blasted and judgment-stricken—of all the sons of men, of all the refuges of men, and of all the

solaces of men, exclaimed at the first sight of Jesus, 'As the apple-tree among the trees of the forest, so is my Beloved among the sons; I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.'

There is on this one tree all manner of fruit, and in all abundance; fruit of wisdom, holiness, righteousness, truth, peace, love. Man requires fruit to present to his God in return for the garden intrusted to his care; he needs fruit for himself that he may eat and live; in himself he has neither, but in Jesus Christ he finds both, he finds all. In him are holiness, justice, goodness, not in stern demand, but in ripe produce and free gift. To keep the tree and gather its fruit he had first been commanded, had essayed, and had quickly failed; to labor for it lost with the sweat of his brow, and to buy it with his reprobate silver, is his next unbidden and unblest attempt; and when all has failed, he finds divinely provided for him in Jesus, fruit fairer than Eden ever bore; fruit sweeter than grows in angelic gardens; given without labor to him that worketh not, without price to him that hath no money. Sweet to the taste it is, strangely sweet, marvellously delicious fruit; all else but gall and wormwood beside it, all husks, all ashes, all apples of Sodom, all grapes of Gomorrah. This is the fruit that God the great husbandman rejoices to gather—'My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' God's Beloved he is, and the soul's Beloved—'his fruit sweet unto my taste.' How wonderful that my parched lips should ever have tasted such fruit as this; that my guilty hands should ever grasp such fruit to offer to my God! With great delight the soul sits down beneath his shadow; sits, rests, and remains; requiring to search for no other tree besides, but obtaining all shelter, all solace, all sustenance, in this single tree of life, this apple-tree in the forest, this Son of Man, this Christ of God.

But there are loftier trees by far in the forest, statelier to the carnal eye, and many are saying, 'Who will ascend for us into heaven' to gather there the lost fruit of Paradise? There are trees remoter, and many say, 'Who will go beyond the sea' to fetch for us thence the fruit of life? Meanwhile Christ is 'nigh thee,' beside thee, before thee; and this laden apple-tree

stands overlooked because so lowly, and because so near. Nay, when thou seest, thou fearest to eat, because thou didst not plant the tree, and canst not produce the fruit. But it is free, and is thine if thou wilt only 'eat and live.' Of the tree of interdicted knowledge Satan falsely affirmed, It is thine, eat of it, and thou shalt not die; and believing the liar, obeying the rebel, kissing the murderer, thou didst stretch thy hand to pluck and perish. Of this second Tree, this Tree of Life, he says, Eat not, it is neither thine nor for thee, if thou eatest thou diest—and therefore dost thou hesitate to eat? Thine own distrustful heart also surmises that there must be some delusion in so rich a prize, some lion prowling near to tear if thou venture to touch, and as thou approachest thou hearest his roar, the fiercer as thy footstep draws nearer. But advance, nay run, thou trembling soul! and be assured that beneath that tree he is not, for 'no lion shall be there.' Therefore it is that he roareth so loudly now, because within the circle of that shade he dare not enter, to him it is the interdicted shadow of death, but to thee the inviting and relieving shadow of rest and of life. But there is some serpent concealed within its roots, or coiled around its branches? Nay, in that first forbidden tree there was; as into a silver basket of tempting fruit thou didst thrust thy hand, but the deadly aspic lay concealed beneath, in an instant its venom was through all thy frame from head to foot, and within that hour thou wast dead. But there is no serpent here, for this is that tree of goodly shadow and fairest fruit of which Jesus, while he bare to Calvary the accursed tree on which he was to hang, said 'if these things be done in a Green Tree.' On that tree he spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them and nailing them to his cross; and hanging on that tree thou mayest still behold the old serpent nailed fast. He cannot deliver himself, he cannot injure thee; 'out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong one sweetness.' Sit down 'beneath the shadow' of Jesus, rest and fear not; 'cease to spend money for that which is not bread,' 'hear and your soul shall live,' 'eat that which is good'; 'sit down' and assuredly it shall 'be with great delight,' 'eat' and assuredly the fruit shall be 'sweet to thy taste.'

VIII.

THE BANQUET-HALL.

THE BANNER OF LOVE—THE BANQUET OF WINE—THE HANDS OF THE KING—THE HINDS OF THE FIELD.

He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me *was* love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I *am* sick of love. His left hand *is* under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please.
—CHAP. ii. 4-7.

THE BANNER OF LOVE.

He brought me into the banqueting-house.—In New Testament history, it is in the birth of Jesus Christ that this joy is fulfilled, as when Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary, rejoice over him together in the temple of Jehovah, rendering all past manifestations of his presence to the church only faint and distant in contrast. The words of Mary's own song, and the words of her father Solomon, regarding that blessed birth, are scarcely different. 'He hath brought me into the banqueting-house' are the words of David's son,—'he hath filled the hungry with good things' the words of David's daughter, after the lapse of a thousand years; but both describing the same divine feast. In the history of ancient Israel, the banqueting-house of the King was entered when, having sought the Shepherd's noon-day rest, they were led to the mountain of God, and beheld his glory. Then Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and 'saw the God of Israel, with a paved work as of sapphire-stone under his feet; and on the nobles he laid not his hand, but they saw God and did eat and drink.' That sight and that feast opened to the Church Jehovah's banquet-hall as had never been done before; yet was it but through a glass darkly, compared with the temple that

was filled with the glory of God manifest in the flesh,' by the presence of the Holy Child Jesus.

'He brought me to the banqueting-house'—he hath now brought me into his banquet-hall; the same King who had at an earlier season brought the believing soul 'into his chambers,' which were cherished in memory, and an entrance to them entreated again. 'Draw me and we will run'—Jesus hath heard this prayer of the Bride, and step by step hath answered it. Being secretly enabled, she had overtaken and found the King; at an outer repast he had received her as on a carpet of grass, under the shadow of the cedars; he had been to her as 'the rose of Sharon' in the scentless wilderness, 'as the apple-tree' in the fruitless forest. But now, he has not only suffered the seeking soul to find him, but has brought his follower further—has introduced her into his royal palace, entering along with her—has spread for her not only a feast of fruits, but a banquet of wine; not a mere noon-tide repast, but a sumptuous bridal supper. It was all, and more than all, that had been remembered, or had been asked; it was more than had been expressed or conceived. 'Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not,' things known and unknown; asked and thought, yet above all asking and above all thinking.

And his banner over me was love.—Was and is love, for it continues floating over her still. It is the banner of *conquest* over thee, believer, by which he subdued thee to himself; by which he conquered thee when thou wast in hatred, in rebellion, in arms against him. It was he that disarmed thee, he that subdued and took thee captive. Command thou didst meet with resistance, righteous anger with unholy enmity, threatened vengeance with servile fear and flight. Law arrested thee, fettered thee, silenced thee, slew thee; without it thou hadst made light of all the tenderness of love, but it never completely disarmed thee. Love called to thee in thy rebellious flight, and turned thee to reason together with thy Lord; love allured thee to look upon the righteousness of law, and to own the justice of judgment; kindly drew aside the veil of prejudice from thine eyes, gently yet irresistibly took the

arms of war out of thy hands, the arguments of self-vindication from thy lips, the gall of bitterness out of thy heart. He loved thee, thou believedst the love, and being overcome thou lovedst him again who first loved thee. Having conquered thee by love, he erected over thee love's triumphal banner.

It is the banner also of *protection*. He has planted it firmly over thee, thine enemies see it and are afraid, the god of the world and the children of the world fear to touch thee beneath this ensign. They often saw it waving over the holy Jesus, of whom the Father testified—'This is my Beloved Son,' and they trembled to touch him, because his hour was not come. When at last they took him and crucified him, and conscience inwardly gnawed them all the while, their confidence was that the banner of God's love was removed from over his devoted head. 'Persecute and take him, for God hath forsaken him,' they cried to each other; 'why hast thou forsaken me?' they heard him cry. They dared to nail him to the tree, only because they dared to think that God's banner of love was over him no more—'Let God deliver him seeing he delighted in him.' 'God delighteth in him' had been their terror, and now they mock the forsaken banner which once they feared. So, believer, still Satan and the world fear that love, and fear thee when that banner floateth over thee. Thus, also, within thine own soul 'the peace of God that passeth understanding keepeth thy heart and mind in Christ Jesus,' guardeth thee, protecteth thee, preserveth thee more than with a wall of fire. O tear not this banner down, disown it not, but let thy soul make her boast in the Lord, believing in his love.

It is the banner likewise of *enlistment*, and thy glorious ensign of battle; for Christ has chosen thee to be his soldier, and the banner under which he has enrolled thee to serve is Love. In the legion of love he has inscribed thy name, the warfare of love he has called thee to wage, the battles of love he has engaged thee to fight. His best soldier is he that loveth best; who, through love, 'suffers all things for the elect's sake,' through love 'becomes all things to all men to win some,' through love 'gives his body as the ground and as the street to them to pass over'; who in love 'suffereth long and is kind,

bearcth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and by love overcometh evil with good.' The emblem graven on this banner is 'a Lamb as it had been slain;' the superscription written over the emblem is, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' If thou alter this ensign, or if thou suffer its tokens to lie furled and hid within its folds, thou shalt neither please the Captain of thy Salvation nor conquer his foes. But if thou 'display it because of meekness, truth, and righteousness, speaking the truth in love,' when all other weapons in thine armoury have failed, Love will triumph. Only, it must ever be His banner over *thee*, conquering and subduing thee to himself; if thou wilt wave it as *his* banner over others to overcome them, thou must, first of all, say for thine own soul—'His banner over *me* is love!'

THE BANQUET OF WINE.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.—The soul is now brought by the Spirit into the closest and fullest communion that can be either known or sustained on earth; nor is there the same overflowing fulness of the Holy Ghost in any future portion of the believer's history, as illustrated in this Song. This does not imply that God takes the same order in his revelations in every case or even usually, for the Spirit distributeth to every man severally as he willeth. In some, it may be at first conversion and first love, which is past before this song commences; in others, in the mid-day^s of their course when he giveth them 'rest at noon;' or, as with the aged Simeon, it may come to pass that 'at evening-time it shall be light;' while in most, this exceeding great joy is reserved for the banquet above. That, when bestowed, it may sometimes occur comparatively early in the divine life, is evident from the history of Paul; who, speaking of ecstatic vision, says he 'knew a man in Christ fourteen years before, caught up into the third heavens and hearing unutterable things'; implying that during all the intervening years nothing in that kind equal had been granted him by the Lord. In the Church

in the wilderness, it was when the glory of the Lord filled the newly-reared tabernacle; in the Church in Jerusalem, when the glory filled the temple, so that the priests could not stand to minister; in the later Hebrew Church, when the child Jesus was presented in the temple; in the Christian Church, when the rushing mighty wind filled the house, and tongues of fire rested on the disciples. The ancient promise may be kept in the order as well as in the substance of the words—‘they shall mount up on wings as eagles,’ flying first; next, ‘they shall run and not be weary,’ swift runners now, yet upon the earth; then slower and humbler still, yet equally sure, and equally good—‘they shall walk and not faint.’

The address of the Bride ‘stay me with flagons’ is to more than one, and may be directed either to her fellow-virgins, or to the daughters of Jerusalem; or rather, in the words of one well acquainted with such exercise, ‘she shows a ravishment and kind of rapture in this exclamation (as the disciples did on the mount, not knowing what they said); not observing to whom she speaks, but expressing her delight in that which she enjoyed; yet mainly intending Christ, for it is he who in the next verse applies the case.’ (Durham.) The flagons are the vessels which contain the wine in the banqueting-hall, or they are caskets full of aromatic ointments with which she desires to be strengthened; the citron-apples are the fruit of the tree under which she had been seated, and which she now desires, not for refreshing food, but for restoring fragrance. The wine is the ‘new wine of the kingdom,’ the Word and the Spirit of Christ; and the apples the fruits of Christ’s life and death, his promises and manifold grace. The love of Christ has wounded and overcome the soul (Sept.), creating such intense desire, that nothing can bring relief but a greater abundance of the same love, as if the heart said—Stay me with love, for I am sick of love.

The love, the love that I bespeak,
 Works wonders in the soul;
 For when I’m whole it makes me sick,
 When sick it makes me whole.

I'm overcome, I faint, I fail,
 Till love shall love relieve;
 More love divine the wound can heal,
 Which love divine did give.

More of the joy that makes me faint,
 Would give me present ease;
 If more should kill me, I'm content
 To die of that disease.—*Erskine.*

‘This is a mystery to the generality, yea even to many who are really godly, and have some glances sometimes of his face; for every one is not admitted to this length of access, yea but very few, and these but once or twice, it may be, in their life. Therefore I dare not adventure upon diving too far in this depth, which is one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian’s life; for as I shall not pretend to be so far advanced as to know this case, so if I should attempt it, few would understand me.’ (Mirror of Divine Love.) It is profitable, however, to read in the words of others even that which for the present we comprehend not, both that we may know by testimony the power of divine love in men of like passions with ourselves, and also that for ourselves we may be stimulated to covet earnestly these best gifts. We shall therefore, in illustration of the text, transcribe the following passages from Fleming’s Fulfilling of the Scripture:—

‘Now it is known how great a testimony the experience of the godly in these late times, could give to what they have in a large measure felt of the power and refreshing outlettings of the Spirit within their soul; yea, how after sorest downcasting they have been wonderfully raised above themselves, and filled with the consolation of God and joy unspeakable: I shall name these:—

‘Mr. Welch and Mr. Forbes, great witnesses of Christ in this land, when they were prisoners give this account of their ease,—“Dear brethren, we dare say by experience, and our God is witness we lie not, that unspeakable is the joy of suffering for his kingdom. We had never such joy and peace in preaching of it as we have found in suffering for the same; we spoke before in knowledge, we now speak by experience, that

the kingdom of God consists in peace and joy." And in another letter thus they say,—“Our joy hath greatly abounded since the last day (which was after passing sentence of death on them), so that we cannot enough wonder at the riches of his free grace, that should have vouchsafed such a gift upon us to suffer for his kingdom, in which there is joy unspeakable and glorious; and we are rather in fear that they (the sufferings) be not continued, and so we be robbed of further consolation, than that they should increase. Surely there is great consolation in suffering for Christ—we cannot express unto you the joy which our God hath caused abound in us.”

‘I shall also mention that great servant of Christ, Mr. Rutherford, whose letters now published can witness what solemn days of the Spirit, and sensible out-lettings thereof he oft had in his experience, though books can tell but little what he really felt and enjoyed. I shall only set down some of his last and dying expressions, which I had from those who were then present, and caused write down the same from his mouth; that may show how lovely also he was in his death, and how well that did correspond with his former life. Some of his words are these:—“I shall shine, I shall see him as he is, and all the fair company with him, and shall have my large share. It is no easy thing to be a Christian, but as for me I have got the victory, and Christ is holding forth his arms to embrace me.” And a little before his death, after some fainting, he saith, “Now I feel, I believe, I enjoy, I rejoice;” and turning to Mr. Blair then present he said, “I feed on manna, I have angels’ food, my eyes shall see my Redeemer; I know that he shall stand at the latter day on the earth, and I shall be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air.” And afterwards he hath these words,—“I sleep in Christ, and when I awake I shall be satisfied with his likeness. O for arms to embrace him!” and thus, full of the Spirit, yea as it were overcome with sensible enjoyment, he breathes out his soul, his last words being—“Glory, glory, dwelleth in Immanuel’s land.”

‘I shall instance also Mr. John Welch, whom Mr. Rutherford in one of his books called “that heavenly prophetic and apostolic man of God”; and showeth that from the witnesses of

his life he had this account, that of every twenty-four hours he gave usually eight to prayer, if other necessary and urgent duties did not hinder; yea, spent many days and nights which he set apart in fasting and prayer.

‘During his last sickness he was so filled and overcome with the sensible enjoyment of God, that he was sometimes overheard in prayer to have these words, “Lord, hold thine hand; it is enough, thy servant is a clay vessel, and can hold no more.”’

The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, nor his mighty working limited to ages past. In our first ministerial labors our lot was cast in one of nature’s retreats, by whose sandy hollows and rocky caverns there sometimes ‘passed the glory of the Lord.’ All but alone among its inhabitants there sojourned a man whom God himself had taught, who grew in grace like a tree by the rivers of waters; and with him week by week we sought the blessing promised unto two agreeing together to ask in the name of Jesus. He was in the prime of manhood, his fine countenance stamped with the double impression of meditation and intelligence, yet blooming with a glow of ruddy health, the fruit of constant out-door labor. One summer evening, the moment the hour allotted to prayer was ended, he went home without uttering a word, and with scarcely any sign of recognition at parting. He appeared unwell, his face had sunk, the bright hue of his cheek was pallid, he looked as a strong man ready to faint, but bearing up against some physical distress that all but overmastered him, as if a grain added to the pressure would have broken him down. Partly from his haste, and partly from his obvious aversion to speak, we parted without exchanging words; but without any doubt on our part that he was suffering from sickness. The second day following, when we hailed him at some distance in the fields to inquire for his health, it was after much reserve, and only by successive questions, that we could discover the cause of the apparent distress. You seemed unwell when we parted the night before last—were you sick? Oh, no. Were you in distress of mind? No. What then? Slowly and reluctantly he replied, ‘When we were on our knees I was so

filled with a sense of the love of God, that the joy was too much for me—it was all that I was able to bear, and it was with a struggle that I did not sink under it.’ The fact itself was obvious, although to us it had not excited the least suspicion of the cause. This divine love, both better and stronger than wine, had remained with him all the night, and, though less intensely, throughout the next day and the night following. To him it would have been no strange sound, but the natural utterance of his heart, and the most exact description of his mental condition, ‘Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.’

Many will deride both the language of the Song, and the love which it indicates, but ‘behold ye despisers and wonder and perish;’ for if there are flagons full of the new wine of the kingdom, and if his people shall be filled ‘like bowls, and as the corners of the altar,’ there are also vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and endured by God with much long-suffering. Take heed that you be not among them, for it is written of them, ‘Every bottle shall be filled with wine, and I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord; I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them. Be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken; give glory to the Lord before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness’ (Jer. xiii). But for the Lord’s poor ones that tremble at his word, and instead of such overflowing joys have scarcely faint gleams of gladness, there are the sure promises that ‘to him who hath shall be given, and he shall have more;’ and that ‘blessed are they that mourn, for their sorrow shall be turned into joy;’—lasting joy in heaven, for on earth such joy in the Holy Ghost cannot have long continuance.

Great joys are all at once,
But little do reserve themselves for more;
Those are at home—these journey still,
And meet the rest on Zion’s hill.—*Herbert.*

THE HANDS OF THE KING.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.—The fainting soul has received from Christ himself the support it requires, for his left hand is under the head; the soul is thus sustained from swooning under that excess of joy, and the joy itself is no longer insupportable. The left hand is that which is inferior, by which the love which the Lord cherishes, and the honor he bestows, are less fully manifested than by the right. The hand of providence, we may understand it, as distinguished from the hand of grace; the left hand of outward care, in distinction from the right hand of inward love; and also the left hand of secret support, in contrast with the right of open acknowledgment. In reality these two are never divided, but each is near the other, but in appearance and in sensible perception they are frequently separate. Sometimes there is only the support of the Lord's left hand, his unseen arm protecting outwardly and sustaining spiritually, while there is no joy of love, no free fellowship of the Spirit, no right hand embracing. At other times there is the joy of Christ remaining in the soul, and the joy of the soul full; yet in the midst of such outward trouble and oppression, as if the left hand were scarcely sustaining but rather smiting, while the right hand embraces. But here are both—there is no outward trouble, or none interfering with the divine consolation, so that the shielding and upholding hand of providence is distinctly and thankfully felt; while there is the smile of divine love, the embrace of the right hand of the Lord. In such a case what more, what else has the soul to desire? Nothing save continuance, nothing except a universal restraint from disturbing the holy rest of the Lord, and moving him to arise ere it is his own pleasure to depart.

It will not fail to be remarked, that while the charge not to disturb the rest of the Beloved occurs thrice in the Song, 'the left hand under the head with the right hand embracing,' is never found in its fulness except this once; for although it passes into similar repose, these tokens, when repeated in the

eighth chapter, are not actual but conditional (viii. 3). This quite accords both with the fainting of the soul through excess of joy, which is likewise nowhere else, and with the rapture of the aged Simeon in the temple when he took the infant Jesus in his arms. Reversed, indeed, the outward attitude may appear, for it is the prophet's left hand under the Redeemer's head and his right embracing the Holy Child; but well he knew that the real sustaining and embracing arms were not his enfolding Christ, but Christ's enfolding him. Never in all the Gospel history does the Incarnate Word seem quite, so nigh as now,—never so fulfilled the prayer, 'let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth'—never any soul so near to swooning away through excess of joy and love—never, it may be, eye on earth so satisfied with seeing, 'for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

But we must not omit a view of the Lord's left hand under the head, taken by some of the early Fathers, from the left hand representing punishment in the great day of account. (Theod.) Understanding the right as honor, favor, love; and the left as wrath, retribution, judgment; we behold the believer in a glorious rest, with vengeance itself for the pillow on which he placidly reposes. It is justice satisfied, judgment executed, vengeance fulfilled, curse completed. There is no left hand upraised any more to smite, no left hand to open the door of the bottomless abyss with the doom, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.' The transgression is finished, the displeasure removed, the curse exhausted, and there is no pillow on which the soul can sleep either so safely or so sweetly. Yea, it is the pierced hand of the great Shepherd himself that upholds the head; the print of the nail is on it, fit rest for the weary and heavy laden sinner. Ah! how many rest with no left hand of the Lord beneath them; what a troubled, unsettled repose is theirs, how insecure, how unholy, how deceptive! 'Awake thou that sleepest thus, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' Then first will you dare to grasp the right hand of love and favor, when you have believed and rested on the left hand of judgment executed, or else you will embrace them both together; and then alike in trust and in triumph will

you exclaim, 'His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.'

THE HINDS OF THE FIELD.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please.—This is no oath by the hinds of the fields, but a solemn charge with the strength of an oath, to act as cautiously as with the roes and hinds—'I charge you as among the roes and among the hinds of the field, so not to awake my love.' It is a charge to the attending daughters of Jerusalem, and a charge to herself, doubtless, as well as to them, with allusion to the great care observed in the East against intrusion upon the sleep of any, but especially of one held in high honor. It is an exhortation not to awaken the soul's Beloved till he please, because there is a limit to his resting in love, and that limit is his own pleasure; or more correctly the exhortation is, not to stir up nor awake Love, or this love until it please—until love itself shall please. But the love that is not to be disturbed is chiefly that of the Beloved, so that the awakening of this love and of this Beloved is the same. It indicates, however, the soul's love to Christ as well as Christ's love to the soul; and the full meaning appears to be, the rest of the Holy Spirit of love, both in Christ upon the soul, and in the soul upon Christ. In the two other repetitions of this charge, this expression is repeated (iii. 5; viii. 4); while elsewhere in the Song the very same expression is never employed except in the asseveration that many waters cannot quench love (viii. 7). Now the apostle Paul, in a passage exactly parallel on the indestructible character of love, asks who shall separate us from the love of Christ (Rom. viii. 35); which appears to signify Christ's love to us; but the following words, 'for thy sake we are killed all day long,' proves it to include also our love to Christ. So, here, it is a solemn charge not to grieve the present Holy Spirit in Him communing with us,—in us communing with him.

It is impossible for language or imagery to convey more strongly the care that ought to be taken not to grieve the Holy

Spirit, nor offend Christ; not in any way whatever, not by any provocation, however seemingly slight, to move him to leave his quiet rest in the soul. The roes and hinds are remarkably swift to flee from their pursuer, intently watchful to discover his approach, singularly quick to catch the least noise that indicates danger. Men unaccustomed to the habits of these creatures have no likelihood of taking them in hunting, and chiefly because they can form no conception of the exceeding care and the breathless stillness with which they must be approached by the huntsman. Exactly thus is there nothing more observable in young converts who have recently found Christ, or inquirers after him like the daughters of Jerusalem, than their ignorance how easily the Spirit present, or the Spirit waiting to be gracious, is disturbed so as to withdraw. As with most men to employ the huntsman's watchfulness with the roes and the hinds of the field would be a new art to learn, and a new life to lead; so with all men it is much more new to acquire the holy wisdom of not disturbing the rest of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the twenty-second Psalm, descriptive of the sufferings of Christ, the marginal title is 'The Hind of the morning,' which is Jesus whom the Psalm describes as hunted to death by the dogs and lions; in the eighteenth Psalm he says that God 'has made his feet like the feet of hinds'; and in the next verse of this Song the Beloved is represented as a roe upon the mountains. Here it is the same roe, not pursued by the dogs, not skipping over the hills, but quietly reposing, yet with a rest most watchful, and quickly broken by the slightest sound.

Take the case of a huntsman with his family hanging upon him for food, with his arrows all but spent in the quiver, with the roes of the field either seen at a great distance, or suspected to lurk within a certain range. What disregard of everything else but keeping the eye fixed upon the critical spot; stones cut the feet, waters chill them, brambles tear them—he regards it not, he feels it not, he even knows it not! A hundred attractions may surround him, flowers, trees, palaces, songs of birds, but they are all unseen and unheard. Have the hinds been disturbed, is the one inquiry; can the eye still discover

them, or is the grass or brushwood that conceals them still unmoved? Soul! in quest of the hind of the morning, in search of Jesus, even thus must thou seek if thou wouldst ever find; heedless of a hundred hindrances and hurts by the way, blind to a hundred attractions, and deaf to a hundred allurements.

In such a search, either of two errors is certain loss of the prize—presumption or despair. If, presuming that the roe will not be disturbed, will not see, will not hear, the huntsman walks lightly and rashly forward, all is lost. How anxious will he be rather to err in carefulness, when so much rests on the issue! Inquiring soul! presume not; say not in thine heart, I may walk securely for there is no fear of grieving the Spirit, or of losing Christ; presumption is certain and fatal loss. Fixed desire must there be, but along with it unwearied patience; proof against rashness, proof equally against despair. How oft has the huntsman lost all his pains by giving over the pursuit in despair. Careful as long as he hoped—advancing step by step as cautiously as if life hung on every footstep, he has drawn near and has not found—now at last he has come up to and passed over the very spot where the roe was thought to rest, and it is not there—he walks heedlessly on, the next moment it starts at his feet, and bounds away into its own liberty far from his unprepared arrow. How many immortal souls have so come short of everlasting life, giving over the pursuit as hopeless, because the place seemed past, or the season past on which they had reckoned, and so losing Christ when almost within their arms—their sin and folly displeasing and disturbing him, so that he hid himself from their eyes!

These remarks, applied to the pursuit of the Beloved when sought, admit of easy transference to the retention of the Beloved when found; which is represented as requiring the very same care—the same breathless lip, the same watchful eye, the same listening ear, the same circumspect step, because though in the text the object is that of retaining Christ, the image is that of capturing the roes and hinds of the field. O succoured and favored child of God, remember the wise man's saying that 'the sluggard roasteth not that which he took in hunting.' Having spent much time and bestowed hard labor to take the

prey, he is too indolent to add the slight additional pains requisite to prepare it for food, but having once secured it, he sleeps and leaves it to be devoured by the dogs. When you have sought hard to find Christ, have pursued swiftly, followed far and overtaken, grudge not the needful diligence and circumspection to retain him when found; but be assured that such care is as necessary to preserve his presence, as your hard labor was to secure it. Charge therefore all around you—believers, inquirers, friends, strangers, that they rob you not of this your prize, that they interfere not between you and your Beloved, that they intrude not with distracting words or worldly ways. Charge your own soul neither to court nor to suffer the distraction of your heart by other gods, of your seasons of devotion by other pleasures or other cares, of your devotions themselves by other thoughts. ‘I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please.’

I charge you, all ye earthly toys,
Approach not to disturb my joys;
I charge my sins not once to move,
Nor stir, nor wake, nor grieve my love.

Watts.

IX.

THE ROE UPON THE MOUNTAINS—THE GLIMPSE
THROUGH THE LATTICE.

The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth [or through] at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.—CHAP. ii. 8, 9.

THE ROE UPON THE MOUNTAINS.

The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.—‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand,’ is the evident subject of this whole passage; the king of heaven as coming. The Bride of Immanuel has slumbered in a long repose; first in a quiet holy rest in the Spirit, but that has passed away as on earth it must ever pass; and the repose of grace has been succeeded by the listlessness and slumber of nature and of sin. After midnight, and along with the first streaks of morning to which sleep renders her insensible, she is awoke by the sudden cry, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!’ It is ‘the voice of him that cried in the wilderness, Behold, there cometh One after me, prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.’ It is the voice of the Bridegroom himself through the lips of the crier, his humble herald, ‘the Bridegroom’s friend rejoicing greatly in his own soul because of the Bridegroom’s voice,’ and reporting his words to the slumbering Church; an awakening voice, breaking the long sleep, and preparing the Bride to welcome her King and her God.

In the wilderness of Sinai it was ‘the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud’ calling to assembled Israel, the Lord’s betrothed—Prepare to meet thy God! Then ‘He came down, his feet touched the mountains, they trembled and shook, the perpetual hills did bow; like lambs the mountains skipped,

and the little hills like rams at the presence of the Lord,' because he 'came skipping on those mountains, and leaping on those hills.' In the wilderness of Judea it was but the voice of a man with camel's hair for his clothing, with leather for his girdle, with the locust and the wild honey for his food. But he came 'in the spirit and power of Elijah,' and before him shook and bowed, not the mountains of earth, but the harder rocks of earthly and stony hearts. In God's name, with a loud voice as Sinai's trumpet, yet loving as the jubilee's silver sound, he proclaimed, 'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.' And why? because 'He cometh leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills'; for 'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.'

Taking the passage of the individual believing soul, there is no special reason to conclude that the Bride had broken her own solemn charge, and had disturbed her Beloved before he pleased; although his departure in his own time, and according to his sovereign will, has been succeeded by the sleep of sin. It is, indeed, too rarely that Christ's own pleasure is made by the Bride the rule of this holy repose; for his rest in the souls of his people is disturbed by the restlessness of sin, of vanity, of fickleness within them. Yet he is sovereign in his gifts, and at his own time he does withdraw, irrespectively of provocation on their part. But there are few that wait patiently on him when he has withdrawn, and therefore the common result of his absence is spiritual torpor.

This coming of the Lord Jesus is, very distinctly, of his own free grace—'I am found of them that sought me not;' yet such finding is always either preceded or followed by inquiry, for 'I am sought for by them that asked not after me.' The Bride is suddenly visited and called upon by Christ, not undesired, yet not earnestly sought; but ere he is fully found again at the close of this particular song, there is the searching for him with the whole heart, and soul, and strength. Meanwhile, even in this slumber there is no such deadness of sleep as to prevent the soul hearing the voice of the great Shepherd, recognising it, and responding. In the second and far more

sinful sleep, the voice is also heard and known, but sleep for the moment is sweeter than Jesus (v. 2); but not so here, for the recognition is alert and joyful, according with what the Beloved himself declares, 'My sheep hear my voice, know my voice, and know not the voice of strangers.' It is the voice of strangers that awakens the world, and that awakens the Bride of the Lamb when she has become the friend of the world. The voice of thy Beloved, what is it—who is thy Beloved, and what is his voice? How quick in the worldling's ear, and how awakening, sounds the voice of gain, the voice of honor, the voice of pleasure, the voice of rivalry; and how soon the soul is up and in action in answer to such a call! Blessed art thou if thou dost swiftly hear, quickly recognise, and alertly respond to the word of Jesus when it greeteth thee, exclaiming—'The voice of my Beloved!' and 'rejoicing greatly because of thy Bridegroom's voice.'

Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills, my Beloved is like a roe or a young hart.—The emblem of the hart or roe is not only used afterwards by the saints of themselves, through their likeness to the Lord, as when Habakkuk expresses his confidence that God 'will make his feet like those of hinds,' but had already been applied in the Psalms to the Lord Jesus Christ. The 'Hind of the morning' is the marginal rendering of 'Aijeleth Shahar' in the title of the twenty-second Psalm, and presents a beautiful emblem of Jesus in the day of his sorrow—sought out and hunted by a multitude of dogs, encircled by the bulls of the mountains, and the unicorns from the rivers, tossed and goaded by their terrible horns, and then roared upon with open mouth by the devouring lion. The same hind of the morning who was then beset by the wild beasts of the night, is here described as appearing on the mountain tops with the first dawn of day, and, like the sunbeams themselves, glancing from hill to hill. In like manner, in the eighteenth Psalm, in which he speaks of himself as the Lord's King and Anointed, and the Head of the heathen, the Messiah employs the same image as in the Song—'It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect—he maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my

high places; thou hast enlarged my steps under me that my feet did not slip.'

The figure implies intense desire, indicated by corresponding speed toward its object. It is 'Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will;' it is 'with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you.' Superhuman strength, energy, activity, are found in him; he cometh 'leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills,' overcoming all obstacles, mountains inaccessible for height, ravines impassable for breadth and depth. The course set before the first man was straight and level, though it called for strength to overtake the distance, and for watchfulness to run between its even lines; but before the Second Man was placed a course in which sin had raised dark mountains, and cut deep gulfs of separation between the human family and their God. Jesus the Son of Man took man's position, and started in the race from the very point where man now stood, or rather where he now lay fallen and helpless; without the camp, without the gate, amongst the unclean, numbered with transgressors. Beneath our curse, and from our distance, the Strong One rejoicing started for the race; first to go thence to God for us, and then from Him to return with good tidings for all people. Sinai's mountain with thunder, and lightning, and earthquake of Jehovah's wrath—Sinai's wilderness with fiery serpents of Satan's darts—Jordan's deep floods of cold heartlessness and hatred in us, and of accursed death with its dark and bitter waters,—all lay between the starting-point and the goal. But lo, he cometh rejoicing for the race, delighting to do the will of God unto sacrifice and death, desiring to eat the passover with his own blood for its wine-cup, consumed by the zeal of his Father's house, despising the shame for the joy set before him in the redemption of his chosen Bride. Well indeed may she exclaim as she sees him approach, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills—'My beloved is like a young roe or a young hart.' Simply, yet not without deep meaning, has one of the bridal virgins expressed the gratitude of the rescued soul:—

When manifold obstructions met,
My willing Saviour made

A stepping-stone of every let,
That in his way was laid,—*Erskine*.

This combination of strength, of zeal, and activity is finely illustrated by a kindred figure in these words of the 110th Psalm, ‘he shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head.’ The image seems to refer to Gideon’s famed three hundred, who bowed not down on their knees to drink; but like soldiers ardent for the battle, alert and strong, merely drank of the brook by the way, without resting or stooping, or almost halting to refresh themselves. It is impossible to witness the Gideon-like act and attitude without being struck as with a most lively image and token of warlike activity. The faithful messenger from the mountains of a southern land is seen hasting as with the feet of hinds under a burning sun, and, parched with thirst, crossing a brook in the way. He stoops not his head, rests not on his knees, but with one limb bent beneath him—preserving the attitude not of rest or ease, but rather of a leaper or runner ready to start—with his face still erect towards the heavens, he dips his right hand in the flowing brook and lapping with it rapidly, ‘as a dog laps’ with his tongue, he pours through his opened lips a continuous stream of water that quickly quenches his thirst. The moment before, he had caught your eye ere he reached the brook, and while you wonder at the action and try to observe its process, he is already onward and away as on the feet of hinds; for he had not stooped on his knees to the water, but had ‘drunk of the brook by the way.’ Even such, so zealous and so swift a messenger of the Lord of hosts, coming suddenly, was Christ Jesus in the days of his flesh; the Bride’s Beloved, ‘like a roe or a young hart,’ with his ‘meat and his drink to do the will of his Father, and finish his work.’ He is ‘the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever’; so loving to come down from the hill of Zion for the least of all his little ones; so speedy to intervene between us and every evil:—

The voice of my Beloved sounds,
Over the rocks and rising grounds;
O’er hills of guilt, and seas of grief,
He leaps, he flies to my relief.—*Watts*.

THE GLIMPSE THROUGH THE LATTICE.

Behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.—The Beloved is first heard by his voice awaking the soul out of sleep, next he is beheld on the distant mountains, then the intervening space is surmounted with the swiftness of the roe, and he is seen close at hand behind the wall, for he ‘cometh suddenly into his temple.’ It is ever the Lord’s way; long promised, long expected, long deferred his visit, but sudden at the end. So is it in the day of his coming in the flesh, in his coming in the Spirit at Pentecost, so in glory coming at the last day like a thief. In like manner he often comes in his first entrance into the lost soul; the wind hath blown where it listed, the Spirit as he willed, the sound is heard, and the soul is already born again; but it marvels at the vast and sudden change, at the blessed command, ‘Zaccheus, come down! to-day I must abide at thy house.’ So also in future visits; denied, delayed, almost despaired of, then the voice suddenly heard, the distant form seen, and in a moment the soul’s beloved at the very wall of the dwelling, knocking at the door and entering within the heart.

The figurative wall is taken by some interpreters for a hedge, through whose interlaced branches the Bridegroom can be partially seen; but is certainly, rather, a wall of stone, beside the openings or gates of which, or even over its cope, he is discovered appearing and then disappearing. Next he looketh forth at the windows, or rather looketh *through* them, for he is obviously without; showing himself through the lattice, being still partially concealed by the lattice-work which in the absence of glass served for a protection, and in the heat of the sun for a screen. So the voice of Jesus was heard by the ancient Church speaking through the prophets; so with the eye of faith afar off his form was seen by Abraham through mountains of intervening ages, making him glad; and by the patriarch of Uz, when ‘he knew that his Redeemer lived and that he should see him for himself and not for another.’ But

at intervals he drew nearer, and, as by glimpses from behind the wall, was seen, like a wayfaring man taking to him the human or angelic form, and talking with Abraham, with Joshua, with the wife of Manoah. So, likewise, through the latticed window of types and shadows, of ceremonies and sacrifices, did he show himself to Israel. Even in the cloud of glory that went before them, and rested over the Ark of the Covenant, he was both seen and hid—more glory indeed seen than could be looked upon, yet himself partially revealed in that brightness. Then beside the waters of Jordan, more nearly and more clearly far than ever before, does he begin to reveal himself, and the Baptist to discover and proclaim his approach. But it is not yet in the broad light of day, walking and teaching in the midst of the Church; but rather hid than seen, more unknown than recognised. ‘There standeth one in the midst of you whom ye know not; and I knew him not.’ He is standing also behind a wall which he is soon to break down, the middle wall of partition, the law of commandments against us which he is to remove by his cross; and, through the rent veil of his flesh, make an opening to the Father within the holiest of all. When at length the Church on earth beheld the Beloved, she ‘saw indeed his glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth’; but, even then, the flesh which he took was a veil partially concealing the very Godhead that dwelt within it bodily, in the very hour and by the very means which made that invisible glory manifest.

And now, in all our communion with him, our King, and Bridegroom, and Beloved, visits us at transient intervals; ‘a little while seen by us, and again a little not seen, because he hath gone to the Father’; the Spirit breathing as he willeth, coming we know not whence and revealing Jesus, but going we know not whither and leaving Jesus hid. Now, likewise, it is only through latticed windows that we see him at all, even when the vision is brightest. By the eye of faith through the word, through the sacraments, through prayer, we discern him; yet these are but lattices of divided light that yield a glimpse but no full vision of the Beloved; at once disclosing and concealing the Desire of our eyes. But therefore do we

see him now through a glass darkly, that we may the more earnestly long to behold him face to face, and be constrained to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!' Yet beauteous windows they are through which the beloved looks, windows of agates and gates of carbuncles, bordered with pleasant stones; lovely lattices, when by them the Bridegroom shows himself. Through the glass and the grated window how glorious is the glimpse of his countenance, and how sweet are his smiles, like sunbeams after rain; 'when he looketh with glorie shining bright through the windowes of his worde, and grates of his sacraments' (Fenner). O that these glimpses were more desired, more frequent, and more abiding!

Through lattices that light divide,
 Through glorious gospel lines,
 Through veil of flesh, through pierced side,
 His love, his beauty shines.—*Erskine*.

X.

THE GARDEN OF FLOWERS—THE SONG OF BIRDS—THE
VOICE OF THE TURTLE.

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over *and* gone; the flowers appear on the earth. The time of the singing of *birds* is come; and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines *with* the tender grape give a *good* smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.—CHAP. II. 10-13.

THE GARDEN OF FLOWERS.

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.—This is the first vineyard or garden of the king described in the song, for the previous references have been only to the unkept vineyard of the Bride, and to her servile dressing of the vineyard of strangers. Her own vineyard in the garden of Eden she had not kept, and the tempest of the Lord's anger had laid it desolate; but He has now prepared a new Paradise on her behalf, a garden let down from heaven to earth, enclosing every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden. Looking down from above he pronounces it very good; through the opened curtains of his chambers in the heavens he declares himself 'well pleased.' Not matured as yet is this new garden's ample fruit, but already blooming in all the beauty and with all the promise of a most genial spring; and the Bride is invited not merely to visit, but to enter and possess it as her own.

1. The invitation announces that winter with its deadening cold is past, and that its stormy blasts and sweeping rains are

over and gone. By general consent from the earliest times, the winter is referred to the law of the covenant of works. Holy and just and good the law is in itself, but framed with no design and possessing no efficacy to call dead souls into new life; having no reviving warmth to clothe the leafless vineyard with the beauty of resurrection; but binding all the barrenness and death of the apostate heart with the icy bands of perpetual winter. How cheering to souls sealed in hopeless death the wondrous announcement, 'Lo the winter is past'; how beautiful upon the mountains the feet of the first great herald that proclaimed the fact to a benumbed and sleeping world! 'The law and the prophets were until John, from that time the kingdom of heaven is preached.'

The other element of winter, likewise, the desolating rain, is over and gone. Clouds and darkness were gathered about an offended God; thunder, and lightning, and tempest, burst all round in terrible explosion from the secret fires of a trampled law. On the stony tablet was engraven, 'Thou shalt not touch lest thou die'; but the surface of the marble pavement was smooth, no frame of barbed iron encompassed it, nought betokened death to the intruding transgressor but the words of the living God—'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' In a fatal moment man presumptuously touched the forbidden ground, transgressed the guarding word of the Living One; and on the instant the sleeping fires of Divine jealousy burst forth, and the lightning, the tempest, and the rain drove man to hide himself beneath the trees from the face of an angry God. Not outwardly visible, indeed, to the carnal eye on earth is the kindled wrath of Jehovah, but brought forth from time to time in the fiery sword of Eden, in the waters of the deluge, in the flames of Sodom, and most of all in the clouds, the thunder, the lightning, and the tempest that encircled Mount Sinai at the proclamation of the holy but trespassed law. But all the indignation was to rest on the head of Him who was made of a woman, made under the law in order that, without knowing sin himself, he 'might become sin for us,' and 'be made a curse' in the room of the condemned. The long gathered waters of the winter's flood were together to burst upon him till he cried

—‘I sink in deep waters, thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.’ And now because he has already come, though his work is yet unfinished, his herald proclaims the joyful sound of the ‘rain over and gone.’

But ‘who to this day believeth the report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ How few believe that the wintry death is past; how few apprehend that in Christ Jesus God breathes more than summer’s warmth on dead souls, raising them into life; how many still vainly endeavor for themselves to thaw the frozen ice of their hearts, and melt it into the love of God, while abiding within the region of nature’s winter, and refusing to come forth into the summer of grace, and of free Divine love! For a moment the cold heart seems to melt by the effort, but is quickly frozen harder than before, as in the midst of an eternal winter. Ah! poor soul, enclosed within the arctic circle of cold and darkness, wilt thou not hear and live? shut up in thine icy heart of sin and alienation, wilt thou not look out and come forth from thyself and thy benumbed and torpid sleep? Thy God hath spread for thee a green Paradise beside the very snows that cover over thy cabin—come out and see. All was winter with thee, and all was winter likewise for thee, when thou didst gather thyself within thyself and lay thee down to sleep in death; with thee all is winter still, but for thee all is changed into summer if thou wilt but advance into its beams. Thy God announces the winter past, and calls ‘Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light;’ for during thy deathlike sleep ‘the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing and reviving warmth beneath his wings.’

The voice of the Beloved awakes thee, O sleeping soul, assures thee that the rain is over and gone, and invites thee forth. Awoke by the voice of strangers thou hast sometimes arisen to open, but the unrelenting blast has beat upon thy face, and thou hast shrunk backward and inward again, closing thy doors. But the voice of the Beloved, the word of Jesus the faithful witness, calleth thee. The Beloved, thou repliest, but not my beloved; yes, thine if thou wilt listen to him—‘awake and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.’ In

the hour in which he summons and awakes thee, he pronounces thee both beloved and lovely, 'calling her beloved that was not beloved;' and he invites thee to come away unto him, and along with him into his vineyard, his garden, his prepared Paradise, saying—'Rise up, my love, my fair one'; or in the happy words of an old translation,—

My Fellow-friende, my Beautifull
Arise and come thy way;

'for lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone—arise my love, my fair one, and come away!' But—

2. Not only the assurance is given of winter past, but the fruit presented of returning spring. It is not however the fruit of autumn, but the first produce of the summer's sunbeams, for nothing in all the garden is ripe. The flowers are in bloom, the fig-tree is swelling and sweetening the green figs that had hung upon its branches through the winter, and the tender grape is forming out of the fragrant blossom. The flowers are emblems and assurances of joy, created only for beauty and delight; and the tender figs and grapes give the sure promise of abundant fruit. The flowers are tokens of anger past, of grace and favour come, and the summoned bride is welcomed to weave from them garlands of beauty wherewith she may adorn herself to meet the King (Tres Patres). The green fruits are pledges of ample provision against all want in the kingdom of heaven. It is the kingdom of heaven as proclaimed by the Baptist, commenced and established yet not matured, but with its doors thrown widely open, and all men invited into it. To Israel of old it was the land of promise, that noble type of the kingdom; but it was the promised land not yet possessed, but with its fruits, its figs, its grapes of Eshcol presented—ripe indeed, but a mere evidence, and earnest, and foretaste of the land of covenant. Sinai's thunder, and tempest, and rain were over and gone; the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts was set before the people; and though they knew not the day of their visitation, the gracious invitation of the Lord came to them, 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.' So again the invitation came in the days of John, but

unto a people 'made willing in a day of power', who 'pressed and entered in.'

Now, if the garden is the kingdom of heaven, what is its flower but the Lord Jesus Christ? the one fair flower that ever sprang from earth—the 'Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valleys,' and the Garden's perfect flower; one indeed, yet springing manifold through all the garden, and beautifying all its borders with whatever things are pure, or lovely, or of good report, or of any virtue, or of any praise. The fig-tree, what is it but the 'Green Tree,' fair and of goodly fruit, nobler far than that beneath whose shade sat the Israelite without guile when the eye of Jesus was upon him; or rather the very Fig-tree unseen, under whose ample shadow Nathanael worshipped. And the vine with the tender grape, is it not the stem out of the root of Jesse, the tender plant growing up before the Lord of Hosts, and bearing the still swelling yet ample eluster that hath the new wine in it and the blessing? the True Vine of which the Father is the husbandman, whose ripe grapes are soon to be bruised in the wine-press of Jehovah's wrath for the life of a perishing world. Into this garden filled with flowers and figs and grapes, not of our planting nor of our watering nor culture, we are invited freely to enter, and to rejoice in the Lord and in his great goodness.

The immortal vine of heavenly root,
Blossoms, and buds, and gives her fruit;
Lo, we are come to taste the wine,
Our souls rejoice, and bless the vine.—*Watts.*

But also in this heavenly vineyard are innumerable offshoots from the Plant of Renown, believers planted together with him, bearing flowers and figs and grapes, precious before the Lord of Hosts, and not uncomely or unattractive to the eyes of men. In a season of the Lord's returning presence, such produce springs forth abundantly. Roots really dead are made alive in Christ, and send forth buds and blossoms; branches of the true vine, not dead but withered, flourish again and fructify; and happy is the man who discerns such a time, and obeys the divine call, and comes forth into the fragrant vineyard.

THE SONG OF BIRDS.

The time of the singing of birds is come, the season when the feathered songsters of the wood and of the sky express the fulness of their joy in sweetest melody. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the spring and summer of a returning and smiling God, and its invitation is—‘O sing a new song to the Lord, for he hath done wondrous things!’ There is in the universe no subject of song like redeeming love; within the bounds of creation no music equal to the song of the redeemed—‘like the noise of many waters’ breaking forth in praise, ‘Worthy is the Lamb!’ It is a song mingled with holy awe, yet not the less joyful on that account; its deepest tones only swelling the volume of mirthful melody. It is a hymn in praise of the slain Lamb, yet mingled now with no sadness for that death, but all the more converted into gladness. In going forth unto the last agony, Jesus ‘sung a hymn’ with his disciples; and when he was risen from the dead and had poured out his spirit, ‘they ate their food with gladness praising God.’ The believer, ‘in heaviness through manifold temptations, hangs his harp upon the willows, and asks how can I sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?’ and when, in no sadness for himself, he ‘has great heaviness for his kinsmen according to the flesh,’ and cannot sing when they are dying. Yet, heir of heaven! there is nothing in which thou misjudgest more. Did not Paul and Silas sing praises in chains at midnight, till all the prisoners heard them; and the jailer himself joined in the song before the day had dawned, believing in God with all his house? There is nothing in the Gospel more attractive to men, than the joy it imparts to believers in their greatest trials; and when for the sake of perishing souls thou art refusing to ‘sing to thy Lord,’ thou art withholding not only from Him the praise that is due, but from them one of the likeliest means for their conversion. ‘Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.’ Let us, therefore, not return to our old rebel ranks amongst the evil and unthankful; but let the very singing of the birds of the air, and the bursting buds of

the flowers of the earth, remind us of the debt of joyful gratitude that we owe for the great salvation.

All creatures of the eternal God but man,
 In several sorts do glorifie his name;
 Each tree doth seem ten thousand tongues to have,
 With them to laude the Lord omnipotent;
 Each leaf that with wind's gentle breath doth wave,
 Seems as a tongue to speak to that intent,
 In language admirably excellent.
 The sundry sorts of fragrant flowers do seem,
 Sundry discourses God to glorifie,
 And sweetest volumes may we them esteem;
 For all these creatures in their several sort
 Prayse God, and man unto the same exhort. *P. Pett.*

Neither should the vocal melody of praise be neglected, for we are exhorted to 'admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,' as well as to 'make melody in our hearts to the Lord.' The song of your heart, believer, may edify yourself, but the song of your lips will edify your brother; 'you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are God's.' Your tongue is 'purchased' and is not your own; when your lips were your own, your unsanctified tongue greatly dishonored the Lord; and now let your tongue, redeemed, 'sing forth the honor of His name.' Around the family altar and in the sanctuary, your song is the confession of Christ before men, and in refusing such praise through shame and fear of men, take heed lest your Lord write it against you as a refusal to bear his reproach and proclaim his glory. In all seasons of abounding grace and spiritual liberty, the heart seems moved to praise with the lips; when the winter of the Church is past, it is ever succeeded by the time of the singing of birds; and the voice of holy song is one of the sweetest tokens of the rain being over and gone.

O sing unto this glittering glorious king,
 O praise his name let every living thing;
 Let heart and voice, like belles of silver, ring
 The comfort that this day did bring.

Kingwellmersh.

We must not, however, omit to note, that what we translate ‘the time of singing’ is in our older bibles rendered ‘the time of pruning.’ The season of the singing of birds is the season also of the growth and the pruning of the vine’s luxuriant shoots; the branch that is pruned for fruit, and the song that is pruned for beauty, are expressed in the same terms by the Hebrews; and it is therefore difficult to determine whether ‘the time of the singing’ of birds, or ‘the time of pruning’ the vines is intended. But as they are not distant in nature, so neither are they distant in grace; for in the kingdom of heaven the season of spring, the season of growth, the season of song, and the season of the sharp knife of the vine-dresser are the same. Wonder not if thou wast left alone while thy branches were dead, but hast felt the edge of the knife so soon as they have lived again. Has not thy Lord said, that ‘the branch in him that beareth not fruit his Father taketh away, and the branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit?’ Pruneth ever the husbandman the lifeless tree? If toward it he stretch forth the iron at all, it is not the pruning-knife, but the axe, that fills his hand. But when the shoots spring forth luxuriantly, he repents of the threatened yet deserved stroke of excision, lays down the lifted weapon of destruction, and loses no time in applying the pruning-knife, the token now of a recognised place in the vineyard.

‘When fading trees of righteousness,
Renew their fruitful life;
Thou dost the branches lop and dress;
I bless the pruning knife.’

THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE.

And the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land—the voice of Elias, according to the Jews; the voice of John the Baptist, according to some early Christian interpreters. The kingdom of heaven preached by John was like the melodious singing of birds; it was good tidings of great joy, like summer songs after wintry tempests. His testimony also remarkably resembled

the voice of the turtle, and his appearance was like its coming. (1.) As the turtle is one of the doves, and the dove, the emblem of peace, plucked the olive leaf when the rain was over and gone, and presented it to the rescued human family in token of divine reconciliation: so John, the first on earth honored to tell of the approaching summer of grace and truth, was the true turtle-dove bearing in its mouth the olive branch of mercy to men. (2.) The turtle among the doves is selected in Scripture for its returning to meet the returning sun, neither ignorant nor forgetful of the season, and as a standing reproof to man for not discerning the gracious return and coming of the Lord. 'Shall he turn away and not return? yea the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.' (Jer. viii). He, than whom none greater had been born of women, was selected by God as the Turtle, that first of all should recognise and welcome the return of God to man in the person of Jesus Christ; should know it for himself as the turtle knowing the time of its coming, and should publish it to others as the turtle making its voice to be heard in the land—the voice in the wilderness testifying that in the desert is now found the vineyard of the Lord, on earth the kingdom of heaven. (3.) The turtle, with its tender and mournful note, is a scriptural emblem for repentance. 'They refused to return, no man repented, yea the turtle knoweth the time of its coming' (Jer. viii). John came preaching the baptism of repentance for remission of sins; his testimony was—'Repent'; it was the plaintive voice of the turtle heard in the land along with the song of birds, and both on account of the kingdom of heaven come; grief and joy together—affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost—heaven singing over penitents on earth, and earthly penitents praising God for the heavenly grace.

But as 'the ox knowing his owner, and the ass his master's crib,' reprove Israel ignorant and inconsiderate; so does the time-observing turtle convict the forgetful and self-blinded sinner. Look at the turtle or the crane, or at the swallow more familiar to thy sight. Did it sleep in summer, did it

not discern the smiling flowers and budding grapes, but suffer spring and summer to pass away in slumber or in joyous idleness, and then turn toward our shores when the season was past—what a miserable death would await the ill-timed wanderer, either cast into the deep by the angry tempests, or landing on our coasts only to be frozen to death. So fruitless and so fatal, O sinner! is thy late and unseasonable seeking of the kingdom of heaven. They who seek early find, but why does the Saviour of sinners weep over lost souls, but because they ‘know not the day of their visitation,’ their season of grace, their time of opportunity? Is he not saying even now—‘O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her brood beneath her wings, and ye would not!’ Are not his compassions stirred over thee, and his repentings kindled together, and is not the utterance of his heart, ‘Oh that thou hadst known even thou at least in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, ere they be hid from thy eyes?’ Let thy voice be heard even in this hour, as the voice of a weeping penitent returning to thy God; as the voice of a believing suppliant calling on the name of Jesus; as the voice of the turtle knowing its season and improving it: for now is thine accepted time, now thy day of salvation, and in returning to thy God thou shalt meet him already returning unto thee, falling upon thy neck and kissing thee as a son, lost but now found, dead and alive again.

The legal wintry state is gone,
The mists are fled, the spring comes on;
The sacred turtle-dove we hear
Proclaim the new, the joyful year.
And when we hear Christ Jesus say,
Rise up my Love, and come away,
Our hearts would fain outfly the wind,
And leave all earthly joys behind.

Watts.

XI.

THE DOVE IN THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK—THE FOXES
THAT SPOIL THE VINES.

O my dove, *that art* in the clefts of the rock, in the secret *places* of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines *have* tender grapes.—CHAP. ii. 14, 15.

THE DOVE IN THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK.

O my dove that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely.—By this emblem of a dove the Church is so often described both in this Song and throughout the Scriptures, that we shall note the leading ideas which the term is employed to convey. Here it is a term of endearment used by Christ of his Church, and this may be regarded as its principal meaning throughout the Song—‘my Sister, my Love, my Dove.’ In like manner exactly, the Church applies it to herself in the Psalms, when she prays, ‘O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked.’ Both with Asaph and with Solomon, the dove is an image and term of affection of precisely the same significance as the lamb in Nathan’s parable of the poor man—the one little ewe-lamb that grew up with his children, that ate of his own morsel and drank of his own cup, and was unto him as a daughter. Such also, and so cherished an object to Jesus, is his Church,—‘his sister, his dove, his only one.’ Nor need we exclude the more common though less relevant interpretation, which connects the image with the closeness and constancy of attachment subsisting between doves themselves.

The following account of the death of his infant son in James Melville’s diary may serve to illustrate both. ‘The bairn was fallon beautiful, loving, and merry, but by the space of a quar-

ter of a year he consumed and dwined away, keeping always the pleasantest eye that could be in any head. He was my first propine and handsel to heaven. I cannot forget a strange thing at his death: I had a pair of fine milk-white doves, which I fed in the house; the one whereof, that day of his death, could not be holden off his cradle, but crept in and sat under it, and died with him; the other, at my home-coming on the morrow, came, lighted at my feet, and crying piteously, ran a littly away from me. I took it up and put food in its mouth; but it shook it from its throat, and parting from me with a pitiful piping, within two or three hours died also:--

O first like pleasant flower on earth thou grew,
Then, dwined to death, with doves to heaven thou flew.'

This passage affectingly illustrates, what requires no proof, that, like the ewe-lamb brought up with the children, the dove is a natural emblem for a cherished object of affection; and shows likewise the faithful attachment of doves between themselves. But besides being emblematic of affection, the image is associated with many other ideas in Scripture. (1.) The dove is the emblem employed for the Holy Ghost, who 'descended on Christ like a dove and abode upon him'; and every soul united to Christ has this dove-like Spirit dwelling in him, for 'if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.' (2.) Broken hearts repenting towards God are compared to doves; 'for they shall be like doves of the valleys, every one mourning for his iniquity.' (3.) Saints are likened to doves for simplicity and gentleness in Christ's command, 'be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' (4.) Like doves also are they in beauty, according to the promise, 'though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of doves covered with silver and with gold.' (5.) Dove-like again they are, in congregating rapidly and in great multitudes, into the house and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'flying as a cloud and as the doves flocking to their windows.' (6.) They resemble doves in carrying messages of peace and good-will from God to perishing men, as the dove bare to Noah the olive branch, in token of the waters of wrath upon a guilty world being now

assuaged. (7.) And, finally, they are like doves in timidity, 'trembling like a dove out of the land of Egypt'; fearing and fleeing from sin, the world, and self; fearing and fleeing to Him that 'is able to cast both soul and body into hell,' and ever 'hiding themselves within the clefts of the Rock' of Ages, knowing that 'this Rock is Christ.'

'O my dove that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely.' There are three ideas, different yet not inconsistent, which may be conveyed by these rocks, and the stairs, which are the cavernous precipices of the rocks resembling stairs (trap-rocks); for they may be understood of the natural, of the spiritual, or of the outward, refuge of the dove of Christ.

1. The beauty of the dove is determined by the text, and also the call on the part of Christ to come forth to himself, but not the character of her hiding place. This secret refuge is therefore understood by some as the rock of nature, in which the trembling sinner has hid himself, and from which he is invited to come forth to Jesus; or as the hiding-place of sadness and despondency to which the believer has returned in a wintry season of the soul. In the very first effectual call of Christ, he addresses the soul—'O my dove!' and in the first forthcoming of the soul to him the countenance is 'comely,' already reflecting the image of Jesus. In the first emerging of the dove from among the soiling pots of Egypt, her wings are covered with silver and her feathers with gold; and as, in His beauty, the countenance is comely, so the 'voice is sweet' in the first utterances of repentance, of faith, of love. 'They were all of them snared in holes, and hid in prison-houses, and none said Restore.' But John the Baptist in the wilderness of Judea, when the winter of the law was past, called the people out to meet a coming Christ; and they came forth confessing their sins, and asking, 'What shall we do?' This voice of repentance Christ heard, as of the turtle that knows the time of its coming, and 'it was sweet;' their countenance he saw washed in purer waters than those of the Jordan, and it was 'comely.' So now Jesus 'says to the prisoners, come forth, to

them that sit in darkness, show yourselves;’ and in coming forth to him, benighted sinner! and in showing yourself, how vile soever or offensive before, your voice, likewise, is sweet to his ear, and your countenance comely in his sight.

2. This hiding-place is understood by others to represent the dove’s true refuge, Christ himself; from which in that case she is invited to come forth, not as forsaking it, but flying abroad on the wings of faith and holy liberty, to return again and to rest in the rock,—as the sheep of the good Shepherd, entering by him, go in and out and find pasture. ‘O that I had wings like a dove, I would fly away and be at rest; I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.’ Such a use has this dove of Christ made of her wings; the winter blast was howling, the torrent of rain descending, and she fled to the rock like Noah’s dove to the ark. But as when the rain was over and gone, that dove was the first to leave the ‘secret places of the stairs,’ in that floating palace, which had been a tower of safety when earth’s highest rocks were but the bed of the ocean; so the dove of Christ is now by himself invited to come forth from the rocky refuge, to confess the name of Jesus, to pray to him, to praise him, to bear for him messages of peace throughout the earth. Or, we may retain the image of the rock, not merely as a constant refuge of resort and return, but of continual abiding. Then it is within the rocky clefts, yet in holy liberty within, with opened lips confessing, praying, praising, testifying; within the clefts, yet in holy boldness, and, instead of merely casting down the eyes in shame, venturing in faith to look openly on Jesus, and to stand as accepted before him.

‘O dove in the clefts of the rock,’ what a refuge thou hast found!—a rock, and therefore sure; a cleft rock, and therefore open for thee. Clefts and openings enough didst thou see and try, but within no rock; refuges of lies quickly failing. One rock thou sawest, vast, beautiful, eternal, awful, but on its glittering surface there was no seam nor rent wherein to hide thyself. The Lawgiver with the iron rod of Sinai smote that Rock of Ages for thee, and rent it with harboring clefts, when it pleased the Father to bruise his Beloved Son. How quickly

then didst thou flee for refuge to the hope set before thee, and how deeply didst thou hide thyself within the wounded Saviour, 'thy life hid with Christ in God'! Once within that rock, thou hast loved to hear the tempest howl, and the billows roar without, beneath, around, till the earth shook with the swelling thereof, that thou mightest prove thy safety the more, and with a louder hymn might sing to Jesus,—'God is our refuge, therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.' Thither thou hast fled from every foe, thither from every fear, thither from hell, thither from earth, there is thy dwelling, thy home there; not thy home for a season, not thy tabernacle of exile during life, but thine eternal refuge, which neither life nor death can for a moment shake. When the Jordan shall swell around thee, and the waters rise so high as to bear away on their bosom the frail bark of this earthly frame in which thou wast when betaking thyself to the Rock; even then wilt thou calmly look upon the shattered wreck floating from thee on the stream, but thyself hid and held securely within the Eternal Rock.

Rock of Ages cleft for me,
 Let me hide myself in thee;
 Let the water and the blood,
 From thy riven side which flowed,
 Be of sin the double cure,
 Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
 When mine eyelids close in death,
 When I soar to worlds unknown,
 See thee on thy judgment throne,—
 Rock of Ages cleft for me,
 Let me hide myself in thee.—*Toplady.*

3. But a special reference may well be allowed to the persecuted Church of Christ, wandering in deserts and in mountains, hiding in dens and caves of the earth, to whom, more even than to others, must these words of the Bridegroom have been sweet,—'O my dove that art in the clefts of the rock.' 'The timid dove seeks to hide itself in such recesses from the birds

of prey; and how oft has the Church been glad to hide herself in woods and solitary places, yea in caverns and in clefts of the rocks to escape the storms of persecution; and in these retirements to worship God, and enjoy communion with him, out of the reach of the talons of the persecutor! Ah, ye Waldenses, ye Albigenes, ye Piedmontese, how often was this your case! Yes, and ye ancient British Nonconformists, of whom the world was not worthy, how often have ye retired to some solitary cottage in the wood, how carefully have ye closed the door, the chimney, and every avenue of sound, that the listening informer might not hear! But the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him' (Williams). More literally still, did the mountain dove of the true Church of Scotland hide herself in 'the clefts of the rock'; and oft from 'the secret places of the stairs,' within the craggy precipice, seeing afar yet herself unseen, has her voice of prayer and praise ascended to heaven and mingled with the songs above. Nor does the dove's earthly rock over-shadow or displace, but only illustrate and recommend the Rock that is higher. Most admirably has Solomon's noble father exhibited this truth; for no man on earth was better acquainted with the character of both these rocks, and none knew better how to distinguish between them. 'Wings like a dove' he had taken, and had hid himself in the Rock of Ages; swift also as with the feet of hinds had he scaled the high places of the precipice, and hid himself in 'the rocks of the wild goats.' His foiled foes taunted him by this very image of the dove in the clefts of the rock; and proudly bade him 'fly like a trembling bird' to its craggy refuge, as if that earthly rock had been his real stronghold. Listen to his magnificent reply to the cruel taunt—'In the Lord put I my trust, how say ye to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain?' for the real rock in which that mountain dove had hid itself was the Rock of Ages, whom alone in his securest stronghold his song ever celebrated—'The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my strength, my buckler, my high tower.'

THE FOXES THAT SPOIL THE VINES.

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our

vines have tender grapes.—Most emphatically was this injunction given to John the Baptist in the first blossoming of the Lord's vineyard, in the opening of the Gospel dispensation when the kingdom of heaven was proclaimed at as hand. In that kingdom foxes are both subtle sins—for the deceitfulness of sin is ever one of its darkest brands in the word of God, and deceitful workers—fox-like men who corrupt others. Never were the two more resolutely taken and dragged to the light of day, than by the hands of the herald who prepared in the wilderness the way of the Lord. He preached the kingdom of heaven, the winter past, the day of sunshine from heaven come, and all men he invited to press into the vineyard. But mark how vigilantly he took the vine-spoiling foxes, the subtle sins: 'He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none; exact no more than is appointed you; do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages; repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.' With the same determined hand he caught the crafty fox-like men that would enter the blooming vineyard, branding them openly by the kindred figure of the cunning serpent. 'O generation of vipers,' said he to the Sadducees and Pharisees coming for baptism, 'who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' Nay further, the crafty and cruel Herod whom the lowly One spares not to designate as 'that fox,' this friend of the Bridegroom at the cost of his own life caught with iron grasp in his own den, (for even around it there were vine-blossoms, when he did many things gladly,) and told him face to face, 'It is not lawful for thee to have her.'

The season of spring and summer, both in the Church and in the soul, has its own peculiar dangers, and its own special labors. The winter of spiritual death contains within itself all possible evil; yet certain forms of evil seem often to be frozen up along with the good. When the vineyard by the returning sun is full of tender grapes, then the foxes which were either few or elsewhere before, find shelter under the abundant foliage, and increase rapidly in number. There are noxious heresies which spring up less readily while the church is dormant, for though doubtless the seeds of those tares are

sown while men sleep, yet when the wheat springeth up, the tares appear along with it. In a season when men's minds are moved about divine things, false teachers arise with the craftiness of the fox, prophets in Israel like the foxes in the desert, and by subtlety they beguile unstable souls, deceiving and being deceived. These as 'men that are heretics' after the first and second warning, are to be rejected, cast out of the Church, lest like foxes they should spoil the tender vines. So likewise, errors in doctrine and sins in life are fraught with special danger at such a season; roots they are of bitterness springing up to trouble, and defiling many; drinking in the abundant rains then falling from heaven, only to bring forth the wormwood of malice and hypocrisy. Indifference towards such errors, or tenderness towards such sins, may soon lay a pleasant vineyard waste. Because the pastors and elders of the Church will only hearken to the singing of the birds, and the voice of the turtle, and admire the swelling and sweetening of the fig, and will not grapple with and destroy the foxes, the little foxes that are spoiling the vines,—these, left to grow large, are taken both with difficulty, and after much mischief already perpetrated.

So in the spring and summer of the individual soul, both plausible fox-like errors and subtle fox-like sins will make sad havoc in the vineyard, if not timeously crushed. Remember, living soul! that the joy of the Lord is thy strength both to root out old sins that have always beset thee, and to cut down new sins that spring up under the shelter of the very joy and peace which have now been bestowed upon thee. Pride, vain glory, worldliness; selfishness, envy, strife; self-confidence, uncharitableness; impatience, sloth, levity; fickleness, rashness, covetousness, and other sins innumerable; will creep in like foxes to waste the vines, and often like little foxes, in small and seemingly weak beginnings. Now mark what these little foxes will work, if you leave them alone. They will burrow beneath the vine roots, they will gnaw the bark, they will break the shoots, they will scatter the sheltering leaves; or if they forbear for a time, yet ere the vintage arrive,

they will fatten themselves on the ripe fruit, and leave the wine-press idle, and the wine-vat empty for want of grapes.

Foxes are said to make sad devastation in a vineyard; the name, however, including other animals of kindred species, along with what we more particularly term the fox. 'Foxes,' Bishop Patrick remarks, 'abound in Judea, and are observed by abundance of authors to love grapes, and make great devastations in vineyards; insomuch that Aristophanes compares soldiers to foxes, spoiling whole countries as they do vineyards.' This desolation of the vineyard, leaving it leafless and fruitless, is like the return of a second winter, but more unsightly by far than the barrenness of the original winter itself. Have you never seen such a soul? with the vine-stem peeled and bare, the boughs broken, the leaves strewn and withered, the fruit gone; and not for want of a noble vine-plant, a rich soil, genial showers and a smiling sun; not for want of knowledge or ample privileges or surrounding grace; but the vineyard devoured and laid waste, its goodliness devastated, because of errors and sins, or of one error or one sin suffered to creep in subtly like the fox till the garden of the Lord had become a desolation. If you think you stand, take heed lest you fall; arise quickly and 'take the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.'

But the taking of these foxes will demand various graces in vigorous exercise. Thy Lord calls thee to take them for him and for thee—'for us;' he taking them along with thee and thou along with him. Thou layest hold of his strong arm and entrest him to take them for thee; and he grasps thy hand, and employs it to take them for him. Diligent searching is called for to find out their lurking-places, for there is no limit to the deceitfulness of sin, and patient watching to discover their outgoing and incoming; so that while it grieves thee to have them in thy vineyard at all, thou mayest sometimes rejoice at their appearing, in order that they may be caught and destroyed. Then it requires courage to put forth thy hand to seize them, for Satan, that evening wolf, is growling round them in defence of his offspring; and it demands stern resolution to resist the plea of tenderly sparing the sin,

because it is a little one. There is, however, no doubt of their destruction, great or little, if we bring them before the Lord of the vineyard to be slain; for 'if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

The foxes' tender brood destroy,
Their cries for pity hush,
Else they thy buds of grace and joy,
Thy tender branch, will crush.—*Erskine.*

XII.

THE NIGHT BEFORE DAYBREAK.

THE BRIDE'S INTEREST IN HER ABSENT LORD—THE
BRIDE LONGING FOR BREAK OF DAY—THE MIDNIGHT
SEARCH—THE KING CONDUCTED HOME.

My Beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his; he feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel. By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. 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. The watchmen that go about the city found me; *to whom I said*, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? *It was* but a little that I passed from them, but 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. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please.—CHAP. ii. 16, 17; iii. 1-5.

THE BRIDE'S INTEREST IN HER ABSENT LORD.

My Beloved is mine.—Christ had come suddenly, or rather had suddenly spoken and partially appeared. The bride hearkens to his welcome voice, and endeavors to obtain a steadfast sight of his form, as he glances flittingly from behind the wall, and shows himself for an instant through the lattice. But while she looks and listens he is already gone, and is feeding elsewhere among the lilies. In the next verse she calls aloud to him as absent, and beseeches him to return; but here, meanwhile, she comforts herself with the assurance that, whether present or absent to sense, he is bound to her by a union that can never be dissolved—'My beloved is mine and I am his.' In the third chapter of Hosea, the Lord in a season of absence employs language which in the original is strikingly

similar—‘Thou shalt abide for me many days, thou shalt not be for another, so will I also be for thee.’ So likewise, in the verse before us, the words may be rendered either, ‘My Beloved is for me and I am for him’ (Portuguese Bible); or ‘My Beloved is mine and I am his.’ He has come ‘leaping over the mountains,’ and ‘showing himself through the lattice’; he has addressed words of awakening and encouragement; has invited the Bride to come forth into his vineyard, and along with him enjoy its luxuriant promise of fruit. But he has left his gracious words with her, and not his own presence; yet he is never so distant as to be without the reach of her voice; and his words are a stay and an assurance to the soul, and warrant the believing heart to affirm of an absent Lord—‘My Beloved is mine!’

Our Beloved may not with assured certainty be ours; Christ may be longed for and loved with the whole heart, yet the heart that cleaves to him as the limpet to the rock may be unable to say—‘He is mine.’ Yet the truth is infallible, that ‘if any man love God the same is known of Him,’ and that Christ loves all who love him. Therefore, O trembling soul! if thou lovest him thou hast him; if thy heart cleaves to him as thy choice and delight, he is also thy possession; if he is beloved by thee, he is thine, and thy beloved. ‘My Beloved is mine,’ is no mean consolation to the mourner. Hopeless pining after Christ takes strength away; but because he whom thou truly longest for is assuredly thine, take courage, and in his own strength go forward seeking him. Cleaving and longing soul! what a possession thou hast! All thou lovest, all thou adorest, all thou admirest, all thou seekest, is already thine own. What relief, what rest, what power, what glory this truth contains! On earth the sons and daughters of men often sigh hopelessly concerning manifold objects of desire. Their beloved wealth, beloved power, beloved wisdom, beloved fame, beloved beauty, or the beloved choice of their hearts’ affections, is not in their possession; and their language is—My Beloved is not mine, never was mine, and may never be mine. In eternity all who ‘rise to shame’ and confusion of face will say regarding all their desires—My beloved is not

mine; all I cared for, lived for, it may be, died for, is lost for ever! Poor, disappointed, ashamed, lost soul.

But it is true of every follower and lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether thou knowest it or not, that thy Beloved is thine; for ever and ever thou shalt sing, 'My Beloved is mine,' and thou mayest sing it as assuredly now. He is mine by the free gift of himself to me; he is mine to look on, to lean upon, to dwell with; mine to bear all my burdens, mine to discharge all my debts, mine to answer all my accusers, mine to conquer all my foes; mine to deliver me from hell, mine to prepare a place for me in heaven; mine is absence, mine in presence, mine in life, mine in death, mine in the grave, mine in the judgment, and mine at the marriage of the Lamb.

And I am his.—I am his, by him created; I am his, by him redeemed; I am twice his, by original right, and by purchase when I was lost. I am his by the ransom of his blood, his by the conquest of his Spirit, his by my own free consent; his in body, in soul, in estate; his entirely, his exclusively, his irrevocably. I am his and he will defend me, his and he will correct me, his and he will make use of me; but his and he will love me, his and he will delight in me, his and he will claim me against all rivals and opponents; yea rather, his and he doth love me, his and he doth delight in me, his and he claimeth me now against all adversaries. I am not my own, not the Church's, not the world's, not man's, not the law's, not Satan's; but his, Christ's, my Beloved's. I am not the property of time, nor of care, nor of business, nor of necessity; but of Christ, for I am his. All things, O believer! are thine in Christ; yet thou art no one's but his. All things pertain to thee; but thou pertainest to none but Jesus. Thou art the property of no man, the property of no creature, the property of no uncreated, yet mighty reality, like sin. I am my Beloved's, and none else possesses either right or power over me, except according to his will and sufferance; and if I am my Beloved's and he is mine, then all that is mine is his—all my sin, my weakness, my condemnation, and my misery; and all that is his is mine—all his strength, his righteousness, his wisdom, his holiness, his salvation, his glory. His God is my

God, his Father my Father, his brethren my brethren, his heaven my home.

Lord thou art mine, and I am thine,
If mine I am; and thine much more,
Than I or ought or can be mine.

If I without thee could be mine,
I neither should be mine nor thine.

Lord I am thine, and thou art mine:
So mine thou art, that something more
I may presume thee mine than thine;
For thou didst suffer to restore—
Not thee but me; and to be mine,
Since thou in death wast none of thine.

O be mine still; still make me thine,
Or rather make no thine and mine.—*Herbert.*

He feedeth among the lilies.—This feeding is either of a roe pasturing amongst the lilies, or of a shepherd tending his flock in the rich valleys where they abound; the flock not feeding on the lilies, but among them. These lilies are ‘the pure in heart who see God’; they are ‘those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’; they are ‘the virgins following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.’ Jesus feedeth his flock among the lilies on earth, ‘lilies among thorns’ though they be, and all the more because they are in the midst of the thorns. He is ever among them, he delighteth in them, he leaveth them not; among them he pastures, among them he ‘taketh his rest at noon!’ If I am one of them, he cannot be remote from me; and ‘he is mine and I am his,’ whithersoever he may have gone. But he hath not gone far, for he never goeth out from amongst the lilies that he hath gathered into his garden; or if he do, it is only to gather another and return with it. If he ‘leave the ninety and nine sheep,’ it is only to make up the number of the flock; by restoring the sheep that he had lost. But if thou art one of the thorns, he is not thine and thou art not his; thou knowest neither his pasture, nor his resting-place, and his feeding among the lilies is only the more distant from thee. Yet many a thorn has he transformed into a lily; many a lion into a lamb. ‘Wilt thou not also be made clean?—when shall it once be?’

THE BRIDE LONGING FOR BREAK OF DAY.

Until the day break [or while the day is breaking] and the shadows flee away, turn my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.—These mountains of Bether, if they had any earthly form, are supposed to have been the mountains of Bithron, separated from the rest of the land of Israel by the river Jordan (2 Sam. ii. 29); and if so, they could not be remote from the place where Jesus was first manifested to Israel, ‘in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.’ Or if the name of Bether is taken allegorically, as in the marginal explanation, they are mountains intersected with deep rents, and difficult to pass over; or mountains of division separating between the Bride and the Beloved, between the soul and Christ. The prayer is the same as in the closing petition of the song, ‘Make haste my Beloved;’ but the mountains there are hills of spices on which the roe is supposed to feed, and here they are hills of separation whose craggy pinnacles and sepulchral gulfs must be surmounted to meet the Bride. In Christ’s second coming to the marriage of the Lamb, he has only to descend from the hill of Zion, the mountains of spices above, to meet the ransomed and prepared church; but in his first coming to betroth her to himself, he had to overpass the mountains of Bether—the whole height and depth and breath of divine law unchanging, divine law broken, divine law condemning.

The ‘breaking’ is literally, as in the margin, ‘the breathing’ of the day; with reference to the gentle breeze of early dawn; or rather, as has been happily suggested, in allusion to the life that distinguishes the morning from the death of night—as if all nature dead were, with the dawn, beginning to live and breathe (Good). The Bride has been awakened by the voice of the Beloved, and has caught a glimpse of his fleeting form, as of a roe on the mountains. Obedient to his summons, she has come forth into the vineyard, has found the winter past, has heard the song of birds and the turtle’s voice, has seen the tender grapes, and caught the crafty foxes. But she has not found the Beloved himself, for the call was not to come along

with him, but to come forth to meet him. In the following song, even on the summits of Lebanon and Amana, it is—‘Come with me my spouse, with me from Lebanon;’ but hitherto the summons is only—‘Rise my love, my fair one and come away.’ Having come forth and spent the day in the vineyard, the night has supervened. But there has been an implied promise by the Bridegroom, that he would appear with the first breathing of the following day; as if with one morning’s dawn he had already approached, had found the Bride shut in for security from the storms of winter, and asleep as in the depth of night, had awaked her with the intelligence of returning summer, but had disappeared ere she was ready to accompany him. Next morning she hopes he will again appear; but ‘her eyes now prevent the night watches,’ and, while the night is passing, she ‘waits for her Lord more than they that watch for the morning.’ Judging that the morning cannot now be distant, she calls aloud, ‘Until the day break’—before it has breathed, in readiness for its earliest breath and while it breathes—‘turn my Beloved, come again with hart-like feet over the mountains of Bether.’

Before Christ’s first appearance on the banks of the Jordan, and after the proclamation of his coming by the Baptist, the night must have seemed long to all that looked for redemption; and ‘more than they that watch for the morning’ must their souls have ‘waited for the Lord.’ The cry must oft have been presented, that he would come as with the beams of the morning sun, ‘with healing under his wings’—‘Until the day break, turn my Beloved like a roe upon the mountains!’ The Christian Church having now obtained the first, is looking for the second appearing of the Lord of glory, and for the dawning of the eternal day. It is but moonlight at best, with much darkness, sin, and misery, within and without, through all this night of time. The shadows of the evening are steadily wearing away, the night is far spent, the day is at hand; yet always the coldest, and sometimes the darkest hour of the night is the hour before the day begins to breathe; and the Church’s cry is—‘Until the day break—while it is preparing to dawn—turn my Beloved upon the mountains of Bether!’

In the night of nature's daily rest, when the labors of the day are done; when Christ has awaked us in the morning as with the foot of the mountain roe, and called us to our allotted work and care and joy, and we have gone forth to our labor till the evening; when the twelve hours' work in the vineyard has not been without the song of birds on the right hand, and the annoyance of foxes on the left; and when now the shades of evening have gathered again—how seasonable is it in retiring for rest to present the prayer, 'Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn my Beloved and be thou like a roe on the mountains of Bether,' greeting thy suppliant at the dawn of morning!

In the night of providential or spiritual trial, there should be earnest prayer for Christ's coming quickly, as on the wings of the dawn; and, in this connection, Solomon's petition is expressly fitted, and probably designed, for the soul described by his father David—'I wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.' But specially, when the shades of evening are both gathering thickest, and fast preparing to disperse in the near approach of death, we should earnestly beseech the Lord Jesus to 'come quickly, like the roe upon the mountains of Bether.' It is still dark, but 'the night is far spent, and the dawn of eternal day at hand'—'Until the day break,' before it breaks, and while in the process of breaking, 'turn, my Beloved,' outstrip and anticipate that glorious dawn; let it not break upon my soul till thou hast 'come' to me thyself 'like the roe over the mountains of Bether.'

Among the shadows that flee at dawn of day, are to be included likewise, the types and ceremonies of the Jewish Church, which were not the substance, but the shadow of him that was to come, and which passed away for ever when the Sun of Righteousness arose. As those rites disappeared like evening shadows at the first coming of the Lord, so the precious means of grace which we now enjoy will vanish when he comes the second time, to receive us to himself. For illustration of this truth, we must recur to Ralph Erskine, to whose metrical paraphrase we have been so often indebted, and whose breath is so fragrant of the gospel as to make us forget the oc-

casional uncouthness of his dress; although in this instance we are compelled to alter certain of his words which would no longer fitly convey his thoughts:—

Even word and sacraments shall pass,
Which darkly show him here;
For then he'll break the misty glass,
And face to face appear.

Hence shall dividing hills and rents,
Between my soul and thee,
Be to my faith but arguments,
To haste thy march to me.

Welcome, the great, the glorious store,
Adieu! sweet earnest all;
I'll doubt, I'll fear, I'll sin, no more,
Christ doth to glory call.

THE MIDNIGHT SEARCH.

By night on my bed I sought him.—This instructive narrative is an inspired expression by Solomon of the thoughts of his father David, when ‘his soul waited for the Lord as they that watch for the morning.’ With David, the coming of the Lord is the rising of the morning light; and with Solomon, the breaking of the day and the scattering of the shadows are nothing else than the appearing of the Sun of Righteousness, gilding the mountain tops with his beams. For this morning the Bride has longed (ii. 17); waiting for it, she passes a sleepless night (iii. 1); and when it lingers and dawns not, she rises and goes forth to look for and to meet its earliest rays—the ‘soul waiting for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.’ In the bridal imagery of the Song, this is set forth by her calling at midnight to her absent and distant Lord, who is on the further side of the lofty mountains (ii. 17); and then in larger detail she narrates the history of the desolate night (iii. 1). She has prayed—‘Turn my Beloved!’, her spirit has made diligent search—‘I sought him whom my soul loveth.’ She has expected a response to her earnest call, and counts that he must be already on the way, traversing the

mountains, and bringing morning with him. But there is no echo of his voice, no sound of his footsteps, no ray through the gloom—‘I sought him, but I found him not.’ Then, since he does not come to her, she must go forth in quest of Him; she rises, goes about the streets, inquires at the watchmen as for one whom she need not name, because he ought to be well known to them all, passes them, and finds the King. In the light of the morning now—for throughout the Song He is the morning light—she conducts him to her mother’s house, prevails on him to rest beneath its roof, and as having ‘the Heir of all things’ for her guest, she charges the daughters of Jerusalem gathering round in the daylight, not to abridge by any intrusion the period of the prized sojourn, nor hasten by one moment the hour of his departure.

Historically, the parable describes the close of the ministry of John the Baptist. It is impossible in the language of allegory more exactly to describe the state of the people on whom the light of Jesus first shone, than by this image of ‘night.’ The term is the very same as the gospel narrative constantly employs—‘the people sat in darkness—under the shadow of death.’ Nor could figurative and literal language more completely tally, than the search upon the bed for the absent Lord agrees with the record of ‘all men musing in their heart concerning John whether he were the Christ or no.’ The ‘musing in the heart,’ and the ‘meditating on the bed,’ alike express thought without external effort; in the one case, reclining but not reposing by night; and in the other, sitting in darkness. Then follows the active and public inquiry, by sending Priests and Levites to John to ask for Christ—the disappointment when they ‘seek and find him not’ in the person of the Baptist—the speedy discovery ‘but a little way’ onward, when Jesus himself comes to be baptized—the open entrance of Christ ‘into our mother’s house’ to dwell in the midst of us—the dove-like descent and abiding on him of the Holy Ghost—the rest of the Beloved, not ‘to be stirred up nor awaked till he please.’

Practically, and in reference to literal earthly night, the believer may retire to rest without the presence of Christ—to outward rest, but neither with spiritual comfort nor bodily

repose. If possible, he had acted better otherwise; if more entreaty would have found Christ before resting, it had been not only holier and safer, but would have secured more quiet slumber. But the duties of the day were done, the prayer of the evening over, and the season of rest had arrived. Another coming day demands this night's repose, and Christ found or Christ beyond the mountains of Bether, the repose must be taken. Now it cannot always be expected that the soul by effort, or volition, or patience, shall obtain Christ's presence within an allotted time; yet, through grace, the believer will often be successful. If repose is preferred to Christ, or if rest and Christ are in equal balances, we gain or seek to gain the chosen sleep; but it is not the rest of the Lord's beloved, for we have lost Him who is better far than rest. But if Christ is first and best and most necessary, if he is more to us than food or sleep, he is often, though not always, quickly found, without actual loss either of the time or of the sleep which we were willing to sacrifice for his sake. Our sleep is then sweet unto us and refreshing, for the Lord himself is dwelling in us, and resting with us.

But if the Bride is capable of seeking repose without Christ, she is not able to find it; for none but Christ will satisfy the child of God. There is nothing easier than to deceive the natural mind with an imaginary saviour; it is easily deceived and easily satisfied. But there is nothing harder than to satisfy the soul that is taught of God, without Christ himself, or to beguile that soul with a false comforter—'by night on my bed I sought him, I sought him but I found him not.' Solomon, now or afterwards, knew well both the midnight seeking and the midnight finding of the Lord. In a dream by night God said to him at Gibeon, 'Ask what I shall give;' and by night upon his bed Solomon prayed—'O Lord my God! I am but a little child, give therefore thy servant an understanding heart.' In this instance it was of the Lord's giving, with apparently brief asking at the moment, as is often the case with divine blessings; but both the promise and the prayer were, doubtless, in connexion with much previous supplication and inquiry. 'My son!' saith he, in words which must have

been the fruit of experience; if thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou find the knowledge of God.' So, likewise, of the word if constantly embraced, he declares—'When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou wakest it shall talk with thee'; discoursing as one well acquainted with midnight and morning communion with his God. In the case of the Bride in this song, the word had talked with her when she awoke, for she heard the voice of her Beloved calling; when she walked, it had led her through the vineyards; and now she desires to bind it about her heart by night that it may 'keep her while she sleeps,' and talk with her when she awakes again. But she has lost the word and cannot recover it, she cannot now hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, and therefore by night upon her bed she cannot rest.

Him whom my soul loveth.—Four times over in these four verses she calls Christ by this name; and both here and elsewhere it is always in absence that he is so designated. 'He loved me,' is the language of gratitude and joy; 'he whom my soul loveth,' is the language of earnest desire. 'To him that loved us and washed us in his own blood,' is the song of heaven; 'I sought Him whom my soul loveth,' is the preparatory longing on earth for singing that song above. 'I sought him whom my soul loveth'—loveth now; but him whom I once neglected, despised, forsook, hated, betrayed, sold for thirty pieces of silver, crucified. I sought him with all he is and all he has, with 'his lips dropping sweet-smelling myrrh,' but with 'the two-edged sword in his mouth;' I sought him, and would object to nothing that pertains to him, if I could only find himself.

I sought him, but I found him not.—Disappointment and desolation are the result of the search. The unanswered prayer, 'Turn my Beloved!' has been repeated now, but with no better success, nay, with a result more distinctly adverse. When the Bride had called on Jesus to return, she did not know that the petition had not prospered; he had heard it,

doubtless, and might be coming; but the lapse of time at length induces the fear that there will be no response. Therefore she begins again to pray, and her 'spirit to make diligent search'; but the result is disappointment, definite and decided failure—'I found him not.' She does not therefore deny nor doubt that she had sought him, but owns it—'I sought him'—certainly and sincerely. But on the other hand, she does not deceive herself with the supposition that she may have found, when she has no token to prove it; rare truth and honesty—'I found him not.' Thousands of self-deceived and self-satisfied souls might yet be saved in the day of the Lord, were they only faithful enough to themselves to confess—'I found him not,'—I have never found him, I have never seen him, neither known him. Dying, yet undying soul! it brings no safety to thyself, no real peace or comfort, to flatter thyself with a false hope, 'to boast thyself of a false gift and become like wind and clouds without rain.' It is as much as thy life is worth to speak the truth to thine own heart, and say—'I found him not.' Thou hast then some opening feature of the Bride of Christ.

The same case, but more fully expounded, with a larger mingling of sorrow, and in fuller detail altogether, is described by Asaph in the seventy-seventh Psalm: 'I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord, my sore ran in the night and ceased not; my soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God and was troubled; I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed: Thou holdest mine eyes waking; I call to remembrance my song in the night, I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.'

I will rise now and go about the city.—The rising and going about imply the shaking not only of all slumber away, but of all temptation to slumber, that the whole man may be awake for God; the devoting of the undivided energies of mind and soul, and of the body itself so far as it can co-operate, to 'seek the Lord' Jesus Christ; and allowing no other object to take any place in the heart, or to engage any part of the entire man. 'I will rise now'—a good resolution; the weakest of

all things, or else the strongest of all. 'Son! go into my vineyard'—'I go sir,' is the answer—I go, the intention; but other objects intervene, and he has not gone. 'I will arise and go to my Father'—and he arose and went, with active, prompt, instantaneous repentance. The whole repentance and return of the prodigal son were contained within the kernel of that resolution.

There are two resolutions, distinct and radically different; one kind of resolution, that costs nothing and comes to nothing—another, which endures all the conflict, and contains all the conquest. The first deceives and destroys—it is a mere good desire, or at best a good intention. It counts not the cost, but goes forth with ten thousand against the enemy with twenty thousand, is overthrown in the battle, or turns at the mere sight of the sword. The difficulty does not consist in forming, but in keeping it. The earth is full of the leafy twigs of such resolutions, and the fire that is not quenched is fed with their fruitless branches. The other resolution in the strength of the Lord God, is sure to conquer, because it has fought and conquered already. The difficulty consists not in keeping, but in forming it; the whole elements, friendly and adverse, are gathered together at its first formation; there the whole conflict mingles, and there is seldom a second battle. 'I will arise and go to my father'—there was no difficulty in rising nor in going but such as was easily surmounted, for the whole contest lay in the question—Shall I arise or shall I not? When once the heart, yielding to the Spirit, resolved 'I shall arise,' the chain was broken—the slave sprang to his feet a freeman—the servant arose a child—the famished weakling stood up a strong man nerved for the race. In the homely but significant image of an old divine, 'an honest resolution is often to duty, like a needle that draws the thread after it' (Durham). As, when the sharp needle firmly threaded has perforated the fabric, the thread passes without a second effort, so does the needle's eye of a true resolution carry within itself the purposed action which quickly follows; 'I will arise and go—and he arose and went.'

In the streets and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my

soul loveth.—Let the wise man explain his own words, let the Preacher interpret the sweet singer of Israel. ‘Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief places of concourse, in the opening of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words,—Turn ye at my reproof—behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you.—Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars, she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, she hath also furnished her table—Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled’ (Prov. i. 20–23; ix. 1–5). The streets and the broad ways are, doubtless, the places of concourse, where ‘Christ the wisdom of God’ publishes by his messengers the good tidings of great joy—the ‘gathering of two or three together’ in the name of Jesus, with ‘Christ in the midst of them,’ the preaching of the Gospel in the house of God, the ‘eating of bread and drinking of wine’ at the sacramental table. It must not be overlooked, that this is the first time the Bride speaks in such a strain. She had never been separate from the entire Church of Christ, and could say along with others, ‘we will remember thy love;’ but in her difficulties she had sought deliverance directly from Christ, and was jealous of the tents of his companions. In reply, he had counselled her to ‘go forth by the footsteps of the flock,’ and in these returning trials she has not forgot the command; but, without a second injunction, ‘goes forth into the streets’ of Jerusalem—to the outward ordinances of the Gospel. The more the soul grows in grace and the less it leans on ordinances, the more will it prize them, need them, and profit by them. The recorded experience of Asaph will be opened in the great day, with ten thousand times ten thousand concurring signatures adhibited. Grieved and perplexed, with his footing all but lost, and with his own heart-searchings vain, he finds no key to the baffling mystery till he ‘enters the sanctuary of God,’ and there has the secret unlocked, not by special revelation, but by the opening of his heart to apprehend the word of truth. In the present case the result is not so immediate, for the Bride adds—

I sought him, but I found him not.—In these same streets and

broad places of Jerusalem multitudes never find Christ, with whom the reason is simply, that they never seek him. 'I found him not' is true of tens of thousands every Sabbath, of whom haply not one in a hundred confesses the truth which the Bride owns. They go with no definite object to the house of God, with no express purpose of finding Christ; and if they seek the praise of man or the approval of conscience, they find what their soul loves, and are satisfied. Others join the company of worshippers seeking Christ, but without faithfulness enough to test and own the result, and to confess—'I sought him, but I found him not.' But in the Bride there is the same sincerity as before; the same clear reckoning of the result of public means of grace, as there had been of secret efforts; and the same sad disappointment—'I found him not.' There is nothing in the beautiful gates of Jerusalem, or in the highest places of its paths, that can compensate for the absence of the Beloved; and she wanders mournful and desolate. But, sorrowing Bride of the Lamb! thy search shall not be fruitless; for the promise to the seed of Jacob is thine, and thou 'shalt not seek his face in vain.'

The watchmen that go about the city found me, to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?—The Bride had been directed to have regard to the shepherds, as well as to the footsteps of the flock, and she forgets not the injunction, but resorts to them personally, or in the ordinances of the Lord's house. In the place of prayer and under the preached word, her inquiry at the shepherds is, 'Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' How easy to preach, how impossible not to preach Christ and him crucified, were there many such inquiring worshippers in our assemblies; many eagerly looking through ministers and means to Christ himself! But how different oft the various occupants of the same pew! the fool with his eyes to the ends of the earth; the formalist thankful that he is not like other men; beside them, and unknown to them, the Bride of the Lamb come to to seek, to find, to worship Him, with the heart silently yet loudly calling, 'Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' With such hearers there is nothing more common than the experience—'The watchman found me' they spoke to me individu-

ally, and described my own character and case. Or, failing in the public ministrations, this longing soul seeks the man of God, the pastor or teacher, and is not ashamed to confess both her love to Christ and her want of his presence. 'Watchman, what of the night?' is the demand. These watchmen are 'stars in the right hand' of Jesus; and, by God's blessing, they oft become to the inquiring soul like the star that showed to the eastern pilgrims the spot where the infant Jesus lay.

When my Beloved's hid from you,
 What paths, what means of grace,
 What course do ye yourselves pursue,
 To see his lovely face?

Tell me, ye watchmen of the night,
 I pray you tell me where
 Did ye espy my soul's delight,
 That I may seek him there?

O happy stars, if ye might be
 My guides to Jesus now!
 Seers, did ye my Saviour see;
 Pray tell me where and how?—*Erskine.*

THE KING CONDUCTED HOME.

It was but a little that I passed from them.—These watchmen appear to have been faithful, wise, and tender, although from them the Bride found not the resort of the Beloved. They injured her not, upbraided her not; but seem both to have directed her to Christ, and themselves to have been very near Him, because she has 'passed them but a little,' only a few steps, when she finds her Beloved. But the best of servants is not the Lord, the first of the saved is not the Saviour, the star that points to Bethlehem is not the Sun that has risen there; and those who have most of the Spirit of Christ cannot impart that Spirit to reveal him to another. 'I passed from them,'—they are guide-posts pointing to a further goal, and past them toward that goal she hastens.

But I found him whom my soul loveth.—What an exceeding great reward of all her seeking! I found him, the pearl of

great price, hid from all the rich among men; I found him, the treasure of all wisdom and knowledge, hid from all the wise in this world; I found him, the power of God, hid from all the potentates of earth. I found him—I, a man, found the Lord of Glory; I, a slave to sin, found the great Deliverer; I, the child of darkness found the Light of life; I, the uttermost of the lost, found my Saviour, and my God; I, widowed and desolate, found my Friend, my Beloved, my Husband! Go and do likewise, sons and daughters of Zion, and He will be found of you, 'for then shall ye find, when ye search with all your heart.'

I held him and would not let him go.—Unheld, the King will go away; he is willing to be held, yet not willing to remain without being held. 'Jesus made as though he would have gone further,' but 'I held him, and would not let him go'; he pled 'let me go for the day breaketh,' but 'I held him' and said, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.' A child may hold the chariot wheels of a king; for while a weak cause enfeebles the strongest of the sons of men, a cause strong and urgent imparts strength and courage to the feeblest. A child with a message of life and death, has stood in front of those smoking chariots that rush along their polished pathways with the speed of the wind, and sometimes with the swiftness of the tempest; has planted himself firmly between the iron lines; has, with outstretched hands, called on the conductors to pause, has arrested the carriages in their full career, and saved a multitude of precious lives. A child in the kingdom of grace, with an errand of life and death for himself or for others, with the boldness and energy of living faith, may arrest the chariot of the King of kings till the King has received his petition, answered his prayer, granted pardon to the condemned, and salvation to the lost.

The conclusion of this Song is not dissimilar to the last, its charge not to awake the Beloved is exactly the same, yet how different the process! There, the King leads the Bride into his chambers, brings her into his banqueting-house. Here, it is the Bride that leads the King, and conducts him to her mother's house; conducts him willingly yet seemingly against his will,—

‘I would not let him go.’ The ‘worm Jacob’ grasps the arm of the Almighty; stirring himself, takes hold on it, and ‘wrestles’ with ‘the Captain of the Lord’s host’, the Angel of the Covenant. Suppose angelic strength confined within the form of a worm, how would every fibre of that weak frame be stretched and tried to the uttermost in the forth-putting of the gigantic might lodged within it! So, the weak Jacob, filled not with spirit angelic, but with the Holy Ghost working in him mightily, has every faculty of mind, soul, and spirit within him moved and energized to its utmost limits, to wrestle with the mighty One of Jacob. Clinging to the Lord of hosts with a strength in him and yet not of him—working through him, put forth by him, yet not his own—he says, ‘I will not let thee go’; he holds the King and does not let him go; and the King yields, goes not away, but suffers himself to be conducted by his weak conqueror whither he willeth.

‘In freedom great without offence,
And helped to wrestle still;
With holy, humble violence,
I won Him to my will.’

Until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.—As the manner in which this divine repose is introduced in this second Song is different from the first, so is likewise the reason on account of which that holy rest is desired. There it was eminently personal—‘his banner over me was love;’ yet by no means exclusively, for the resolution had been, ‘we will run after thee.’ Here, the personal is not excluded but strongly marked, ‘I sought him but I found him not’; but the reference to others is very special, and their welfare occupies a large place in the result—‘I would not let him go till I had brought him into my Mother’s house.’

But who is this Mother? Every child of God has two natures, the old and the new; two births, the first after the flesh, the second after the Spirit; and two mothers, Eve who is in bondage with her children, and ‘the New Jerusalem which is free, and is the mother of us all.’ Doubtless, first, it is this

New Jerusalem, the Church of the living God, the spiritual Zion where 'this man and that man was born,' who is 'our mother'; and 'her chambers' are the gatherings together of the saints in the name of Jesus. Her we own, we claim, we glory in as our honored mother; and 'better that our right hand should forget her cunning, than we should forget Jerusalem, or prefer her not above our chief joy.' Christ, found by us, ought never to be let go without an earnest effort to bring him within the walls of the Christian congregation, the Christian community, the commonwealth of all the Israel of God. Blessed are they who thus love Zion, and blessed would Zion be of the Lord, did all her daughters so love her and so plead on her behalf!

In remembering Zion, however, we must not forget 'Jerusalem, which is still in bondage with her children,' and that from her as a mother we are descended. Regarding her, some of the Christian fathers specially interpreted these words, taking them to intimate the conversion of the Jews to Christ (Greg. Great); for her firstborn son is our elder brother who has been angry with us, and will not come into our Father's house on account of the music and dancing that have greeted our reception. Blessed for ever shall they be among the Gentiles, and honored in Israel to all generations, who, finding Christ for themselves, shall so retain him, as not to let him go till he return again to Abraham's children, and He, and we, and they, dwell together within one 'mother's house'—one flock, in one fold, with one Shepherd.

The Gentiles once got to the height of sin,
 And fulnesse of the saved come to light;
 The elder brother Jew shall straight come in,
 And mourn for that he had no sooner sight.
 Their coming in shall be the Gentiles' light,
 Nor till that time will sun again be bright.

H. Clapham..

But we have another mother and other brethren in the human family from which we are sprung. The Church has the first, not the only claim on our affections; the perishing world has its right to a large share of our pity and our prayers.

‘God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’; and our love ought to be large, like that of our heavenly Father. His elect uncalled are in the world; for them the world is to Him an object of incessant regard, and for their sakes the world should occupy no narrow room in our thoughts. On their own account, besides; for the flesh clothing them which is our flesh and the bone sustaining them which is our bone; we should have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart over their perishing condition. Comparatively, it is not hard for us to bring Jesus into the Church, which is his ‘mother’s house’ as well as ours, in which he delights to dwell, and into which, if true to herself, she rejoices greatly to receive him. But the world hates Christ, has nothing in common with him, is aware that he rightfully claims the dominion, is sensitively jealous of the claim, and lives with its doors barred against him night and day. No criminal keeps so vigilant a watch against the officers of justice, no lonely widow makes her gates so fast against the midnight robber, no miser spurns so haughtily the beggar from his door, as the unrenewed heart keeps watch and ward against the entrance of Jesus, and scornfully sends him away when he asks for a lodging in the soul. To introduce Him, therefore, into this home of ‘our mother,’ is a work demanding effort, watchfulness, patience. There is much to provoke him to turn away; we must plead with him, hold him, and not let him go; and with our mother’s children we must also plead with the soft tongue that breaketh the bone, for they are offended with us as well as with him. So sought and prevailed the Bride of the Lamb, till she brought her own Beloved into the midst of her mother’s children, by whom she had been herself so hardly entreated; requiting evil with good. Hast thou attempted this? art thou engaged in the effort now? if not, arise and commence such a work of faith and labor of love on behalf of the lost.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please.—The same charge we have considered already at the

close of the first Song; but there is this difference, that here it conveys a solemn warning to the daughters of Jerusalem, as they value their own soul's salvation, not to disturb or offend the Spirit of Christ now resting in the Church. For her own sake, for her fellowship with Jesus, the Bride had desired that none should give him the slightest provocation. But now it is likewise for the sake of the living in Jerusalem, and the dying in the world; for the sake of her brethren and her companions, of her mother's children, both according to grace and according to nature. There is nothing on earth more important than not provoking Christ to withdraw till he please, when he has once entered a church, a community, a family, in the power of his word and Spirit. 'Grieve not, then, the Holy Spirit of promise'; let no living daughter of Zion, let no inquiring daughter of Jerusalem, disturb the Spirit's dove-like rest; but let 'fear come on every soul, that great grace may be upon all.' At such a season above all others, the salvation of many is trembling in the balance. Then, emphatically, vast eternal issues hang on the careful avoiding of all sin, all levity, all strife, all heedlessness, of everything by which 'the Spirit may be grieved' or may be 'quenched.' All impatience must then be anxiously watched against, lest, through want of perseverance in the use of means, the sowing of the good seed should cease, while the dew from heaven is still falling plentifully on the parched ground. Bride of the Lamb! seek to find him and 'bring him into thy mother's house;' and, ye daughters of Jerusalem! see that, when he is come, ye 'awake him not until He please.'

XIII.

THE BRIDAL PROCESSION.

THE PILLARS IN THE DESERT—THE ANGELIC SWORD-
MEN—THE KING'S CHARIOT—THE CROWN OF
ESPOUSAL.

Who *is* this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed, which *is* Solomon's; threescore valiant men *are* about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, *being* expert in war: every man *hath* his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof *of* silver, the bottom thereof *of* gold, the covering of it *of* purple, the midst thereof being paved *with* love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.—CHAP. iii. 6-11.

THE PILLARS IN THE DESERT.

Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?—The scene now opened is new; and the speakers are either the daughters of Jerusalem, or the friends of the Bridegroom, who are supposed to see a travelling litter or palanquin approaching from the desert. Clouds of sand and dust seen in the distance, and raised by the tread of the numerous bearers and royal guards, are conceived by some to suggest the image of columns of ascending smoke. But the speakers are represented, not as spectators far remote, but within the compass of the fragrant odours that perfumed the magnificent procession. It is therefore better to interpret the smoky pillars as arising from the rich perfumes which were burned around the Bridegroom and the Bride, which at once formed a bright cloud before the eye, and filled the air with fragrance, and therefore drew forth the admiring inquiry—'Who is this that

cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?' The reference is evident, to the marching of the Children of Israel through the wilderness, with the pillar of cloud before them, and with the pillars of smoke ascending from the altar of incense in the sight of the priests, and from the altar of atonement in the sight of all Israel.

The tabernacle was a remarkable type of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, of the entire human nature, consisting of true body and reasonable soul, which the Eternal Word took to himself. 'The Word was God, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,'—literally 'tabernacled' or dwelt as in a tabernacle among us, 'full of grace and truth.' 'Destroy this temple,' said Jesus, 'and I will raise it up in three days;' 'but he spake of the temple of his body.' The tabernacle and the temple were substantially the same; for the tabernacle was simply a movable temple in the midst of a pilgrim people; and the temple, with all its glory and all its solidity, was only a tabernacle that was soon to be shaken and taken to pieces. The body of Jesus on earth was 'the true tabernacle' of the living God; that body buried, risen, exalted, is the tabernacle taken down, and raised again as the everlasting temple of Jehovah. The sight of Jesus 'returning from the wilderness' awakens the inquiry, 'who is this that cometh up?' who or what is this? for the reference is to the bridal chariot. 'Behold his bed,' (or palanquin,) is the reply. It is Jesus, but not simply the Eternal Word, but the body in which that Word is dwelling. It is Jesus, yet not exclusively, but 'the tabernacle of his body,' containing likewise all his ransomed ones as 'members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.' The full meaning of the inquiry is, What and who is this? what is this chariot, and who is in it coming up from the wilderness? The chariot is described afterwards; its occupants let us consider now, Jesus and the Church.

1. Jesus 'returning from the wilderness, full of the Holy Ghost.' And well may the question be moved, 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, glorious in his apparel?' and well may we weigh the answer, 'I that speak in righteousness,

mighty to save. At the approach of 'the Prince of peace, the King coming in the name of the Lord, the whole city was moved saying, Who is this?' and blessed is the soul that is inwardly moved to repeat the inquiry, 'Who is this?' Jesus has been 'anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit' in exhaustless fulness, 'God giving not the Spirit by measure unto him.' As prophet, priest, and king, he has been 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.' But the consecration of the high priest is that which is chiefly described in the word, and his anointing oil, like to which none other was to be compounded on pain of death—human art being forbid to fashion it, because that which it typified could not be produced by human wisdom or power. The Spirit is given by measure to Abraham, to Moses, to Paul; to Gabriel also, and to every holy creature, only in measure. On Jesus our great High Priest, the Spirit is shed immeasurably. Into this 'vessel of honor fit for the Master's use,' the Spirit is poured without limit; abiding in himself in all fulness, and as an exhaustless fountain ever overflowing for his people; the vessel being divinely fashioned to receive and retain and impart every grace that is in the Spirit of grace.

But while every good and perfect gift that cometh down from above rests on the Son of Man, these heavenly graces gather in the wilderness a fragrance which is not elsewhere found; Jesus himself 'learning obedience,' not in its spirit or in its principles, yet in its exercise, 'by the things which he suffered.' The sweetest odours of earth are gathered, not amid rich and cultured fields, but amongst the rocks and sands of the desert; and heaven is filled with sweet perfumes gleaned in the wilderness of an apostate world. These are 'powders of the merchant,' sweet spices from a far country, which the unfallen inmates of heaven can appreciate, but which were never seen growing in the Paradise above; or rather, the plants which contain the odorous gums are there, but they cannot flow from the unpierced bark. Such are—'Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God,'—'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do;' and many kindred graces, or exercises of grace. Jesus came from the wilderness

of Judea 'perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and all the powders of the merchant'; and when his work was finished, he entered his Father's mansion above, 'coming up from the wilderness' of earth fragrant with every grace which it ever yielded; for none knew like him how to gather all its myrrh and all its spices.

But as perfumes of fragrant oil anoint the garments of the high priest, so pillars of fragrant smoke ascend from his hands. He fills his hands with incense, every grain most precious, and every part beaten small, that the whole may ascend from the burning censer. So Jesus, at once the priest and the offering, presents his own body broken for us and bruised by the Father, a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor acceptable unto God.' The Angel of the Covenant offers 'much incense' which ascends to God out of his hands, like pillars of smoke from the wilderness arising to the throne above.

2. But 'who is this coming up out of the wilderness?' It is not Jesus alone, but the Church along with him; it is God walking with Israel through the desert, but Israel also walking with God, 'going after him in the unsown land.' It is the Bride, the Lamb's wife; and who is this? a hundred voices inquire. Who is this so weak, trembling for dangers future, unseen, unreal? who is this so foolish, sacrificing solid present good for a distant dream of bliss? Who is this so sullen and morose, looking away from the world and its pleasures; so censorious, setting herself up for a judge of men and their ways; so meddling, taking charge of other men's souls and turning the world upside down? But who is this? saith the discerning human eye, yea saith the Spirit of God himself—who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense with all powders of the merchant; so beauteous, so glorious, so pleasant, so fragrant?

Who is this like pillars of smoke, with the pillar of cloud guiding by day and the pillar of fire by night; so guided in the trackless wilderness and sure to reach the city of habitation, so sheltered from the burning sun, so safe from the destroying foe, so glorious through the midnight gloom? But who is that, wandering through the desert with no guiding,

guarding, enlightening pillar before him; walking through dry places seeking rest, but finding none, and not knowing whither he goeth? who else is that, following the pillar once, but sleeping now while it advances onwards and leaves him? who is that third one, hasting so troubled and breathless through the burning sands, in eager desire or in trembling fear, while the pillar is standing still far behind him?

Who is this, like pillars of smoke, with fragrance ascending to heaven from the altar of burnt-offering, and the altar of gold? who is this, bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, with a sweet savour of his sacrifice ever ascending to the Father? who is this, with a constant cloud of prayer arising from the altar of atonement? and who is this, with a continual cloud of thanksgiving from the altar of incense? It is the virgin Bride of the Lamb. But who art thou, with no smoky pillar seen from the altar of the closet, or the altar of the family? You reply: Man searches not the heart—to the unseen God I may pray, unseen by man and unknown. Unseen certainly you may, but never wholly unknown. Let there be a fire lighted by the lonely widow within her humble cottage in the most retired wood, with neither husband nor child to witness the gathering of the fuel, or the kindling of the flame. It cannot be hid; for presently the pillar of smoke is beheld afar ascending to the skies, and indicating life and warmth within the dark recess of the forest. And without telling your neighbor of the fire you are kindling on the altar of your soul or of your household, the cloud of incense arising heavenward will soon mark both you and your dwelling with the sure sign of heavenly life within.

Who art thou, again, once a burning and shining light, but with thy fire as if dead out upon thine altar now? O quickly stir the gift that is in you—quench not the Spirit—strengthen what is ready to die! Or who art thou, not with pillars of smoke like the true Bride of Jesus, but with only one; a cloud from off the altar of atonement, but none from the altar of incense; a constant column of prayer ascending, but no breath of praise? But you cannot praise! Are you making the attempt; endeavoring to turn supplication into thanksgiving?

Go try; the fire that kindles coals will more easily burn odours. Take the living coal from the altar of sacrifice—put it into the censer—cast the incense on it; and although you think it all too cold to burn the perfume, you will presently see the cloud rise freely to heaven; and men will ask of thee, ‘who is this now coming up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke?’

‘Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?’—As for Jesus himself, so, much more, for the Bride who has nothing good of her own, the wilderness yields rich perfumes peculiar to itself. The balm, the myrrh, the cassia, and the frankincense come not from the plains of Egypt, but from the mountains of Palestine and the sands of Arabia. Thither the merchant goes to purchase them, at the hands of those who have gathered them on the spot. At great cost he buys them, and seldom sells them pure, so that when he returns back from the wilderness with his fragrant powders and gums unmixed, he is laden with a treasure of vast price. But thither personally the Bride of the true Solomon goes to gather spices for herself, and thence she never returns without the richest stores. You never met the Bride of the Lamb coming out of the desert of trial, of desolation, of poverty, without recognising her at once by the costly ointment bewraying itself. She needed not to tell you where she had been, for the fragrance of which she was herself unconscious announced that she had just come up from the wilderness. Or if the Bride is soon to ascend to the heavenly Jerusalem, how often do all her garments smell of myrrh and frankincense, as one taking a final farewell of the desert!

The *meek and quiet spirit*, which is in the sight of the Lord of great price, is the product of the desert, where no man is, and where Jesus, with his name as ‘ointment outpoured,’ meets the soul in its desolation. Close beside it grows the plant of strong *faith*, of ‘precious faith’ like Abraham’s—which can hope against hope, and retain its savor though plunged in many waters. *Prayer* fills its golden vials full of odours faster in the desert than elsewhere, for ‘in the day of trouble men

call on the name of the Lord.' *Brotherly love* is a balm of the wilderness, for 'the Brother born for adversity' is near, and 'the holy oil flows from his head to all the skirts of his garments.' Saints who were distant in the crowded city of prosperity, draw close together in the desert of distress; the ointment of 'brotherly love' is fragrant on them all, and men say of them, 'Behold how they love one another!' The *spirit of self-sacrifice*, the noble and generous spirit, is oftener acquired in the wilderness than elsewhere; or there at least it attains its richest ripeness, and distils its most fragrant odours; for the 'deep poverty abounds to the riches of liberality;' and the desolate widow, with prince-like freeness, casts 'all her living' into Jehovah's treasury. Nowhere except in the wilderness is the *love of reproof* acquired, which says, 'Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be an excellent oil on my head'; for that which elsewhere would only have 'broken the head,' when found in the desert of the chastened soul is borne away 'as a precious balm.' Even *sorrow* itself is gathered there like myrrh in drops of rarest value; and as the aromatic shrubs of the desert weep their costly odours under the heat of the sun, so the tears drawn forth from the desolate by fiery trials are kept as precious drops in the Lord's own bottle, and preserved for ever amongst heaven's treasures, as the produce of choice exotics such as Paradise itself does not yield. Intense *love for Jesus* is another of those spices; love that bathes his feet with tears, and counts no spikenard too costly to anoint them—love that seeth not yet believeth, and loveth much the Beloved unseen. Finally, the '*good name* that is better than precious ointment,' which often loses its sweetness in the harvest-field of prosperity, usually acquires its fragrance in the desert and in the time of trial; and is never more fresh and rich with attractive odours than when men first ask, 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?'

But who is that virgin coming to meet the King, with raiment rank with the garlic and onions of Egypt? Is that a fitting bride for the Lamb, arrayed with the selfishness, the pride, the covetousness, the vain-glory, the sordidness of earth;

bearing uncrucified and unmortified the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; full of the spirit of the world which is odious to Jesus; adorned with what is highly esteemed among men, but is abomination in the sight of God? Or who else is that, not bringing Egypt in its grossness, the world with all its ill savor, into the presence and the marriage feast of the King, but with a dead fly marring all the ointment? The ointment truly is the growth of the desert, pure and fragrant, but whence came the dead fly that so spoils it all, and turns it into an offense? Not from the wilderness, but from Egypt. Ah! child of God, heir of heaven, bride of the great King, why preserve the dead fly as if it were some precious relic to be embalmed? you cannot carry it through heaven's gates, and why so cherish it here? Oh! search it out and cast it away, though it be like cutting your right hand off and plucking your right eye out! Even if, in order to detect it, you must break the alabaster box, find it out and cast it forth, that your ointment may be fit to pour upon the blessed feet of the Lord!

THE ANGELIC SWORDMEN.

Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war; every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.—What is here termed by our translators a bed, is a *litter* or *palanquin*, and is afterwards called a *chariot* in the ninth verse; where it is so fully described that we need not consider it now, but pass on at once to the guardian attendants. These attendants, though not the most important, belong to the most magnificent part of the procession, and are first described. They consist of sixty chosen warriors, selected for their courage and martial skill out of all Israel, holding swords or holders of swords, and practised in the use of them; for their swords are not now grasped in the hand, but girded and ready on the thigh. They accompany the bridal progress, because the Arabs of the desert were always lying in wait for travellers, and a marriage party was a prized and tempting object for assault. The number is supposed by some to have

reference to David's guard, which they reckon as consisting of thirty exclusive of the chief leaders, and which they suppose to be doubled here for the more ample security. - But the evident reference to the tabernacle throws greater light upon it; for although the number of sixty may be arbitrary and without special meaning, it seems probable that there is an allusion to the six hundred thousand footmen able for war that guarded the tent of the Lord. These sixty are represented as chosen out 'of the valiant of Israel,' one out of each ten thousand of the host aptly representing the whole (Wycliffe).

Passing from the temporary to the true tabernacle not made with hands, we have 'Jesus coming up from the wilderness,' and 'angels ministering to him.' By the numbers, again, there may be nothing special designed; yet it is not unworthy of remark, that in speaking of the angels appointed to attend him, Christ alludes to a number intermediate between these two, when he names twelve legions of angels. The reference might be simply to the disciples, and signify only that instead of twelve weak apostles, his Father was ready to surround him with twelve legions of angels; yet a full legion consisted of five thousand, and twelve legions therefore of sixty thousand, and one in a thousand of these would be sixty chosen ones round the chariot of the King. That angels should be described as men in a figurative song cannot be strange, since they are so designated throughout all the Scriptures. The three angels that appear to Abraham at Mamre are 'three men'—the angel that meets Joshua at Jericho is 'a man'—the 'very terrible' one whom Manoah's wife saw is called by her 'a man of God'—the angels of the sepulchre are 'two men in shining garments,' and 'a young man clothed in a long white garment.' In like manner they are represented as 'expert in war,' for they are 'the host of the Lord;' and carrying swords, as 'the Captain of the Lord's host' appeared to Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand, and the angel of the Lord to David with his sword drawn over Jerusalem. In the forty-fifth Psalm also, the Bridegroom himself, the Prince of Peace, has his sword girt upon his thigh. Let us now note—

1. That from his birth till his death, or rather from his

conception in the womb till his ascension to the Father's right hand, Jesus was attended by angelic watchmen—soldiers of the God of armies. The choir that celebrates his birth with song consists of 'a multitude of the heavenly host praising God;' 'the heavens are opened and angels ascend and descend upon the Son of Man'; the angels 'bear him up in their hands' as the Levites bore the ark of old; and as they waited for him at the gates of earth when he came down, so when he returns they attend him to the gates of heaven, as represented by the 'two men in white apparel' who announce his second advent. Specially, these angels watch 'because of fear in the night;' for, not only when Jesus returns from the desert do they attend him, but when he is in the wilderness tempted of the devil, and with the wild beasts, 'the angels minister unto him.' Satan knows it so well and feels it so keenly, that when he cannot gainsay it, he seeks to turn the very notoriousness of the fact into a temptation; and, unable either to seduce or to overcome those valiant ones, he invites Jesus from the turret of the temple to cast himself into their attending hands. As at his first temptation in the wilderness, so also at the last in Gethsemane, those watchmen of the night are at hand, and in that hour of darkness 'there appears an angel strengthening him.'

The hostes of heaven were moved with his moan,
 Whilst he with tears his Father's grace implores,
 And every period was a bitter groan.
 Even thus the Son of God his Lord adores,
 Father, if thou wilt now remove from me
 This cup—if not, thy will fulfilled be!

Herewith the imperial gates of heaven began
 To open wide, and from the brightsome throne
 Of Him who ruled the world and fashion'd man,
 An angel bright with waving wings is gone,
 And there alights, whereas the God of light
 Lay quite dismayed, and robb'd of all delight.—*Anon.*

'Behold his bed which is Solomon's,' is substantially the announcement of the angels that watch the tomb of Jesus. Around that bed of Solomon the Prince of Peace, the valiant

of Israel watch, and a young man clothed in white invites—‘Come see the place where the Lord lay;’ the night-clothes laid orderly aside, the linens by themselves, and the napkin that bound his temples wrapped together by itself. ‘Behold the place where they laid him’—‘behold his bed.’ But why keep watch beside the bed, when he who slept in it has risen, and is not there?—‘because of fear in the night.’ The hour and the power of darkness is only passing away, and he who sought to destroy as a murderer, now strives as a liar to conceal his defeat, and to say ‘his disciples stole him away.’ Satan who ‘disputed about the body of Moses’ the lawgiver, has much more keenly disputed about the body of Jesus the Saviour; and the angels that excel in strength keep guard around that bed, that these clothes be not disturbed by the prince of darkness, till earthly witnesses have come to see and testify that he was not snatched away by the hands of midnight robbers, but rose as one who had taken his rest and awoke with the first dawning of the morn. But—

2. As it was with the Lord Jesus, so it is with his followers; the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man, and ‘sent forth as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation.’ In the hour when we ‘come to the blood of sprinkling,’ we ‘come also to an innumerable company of angels,’ and our worship mingles with theirs before the great white throne. If they rejoice over the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, they rejoice again over every soul in which ‘Christ is formed the hope of glory,’ over every child that is born in Zion, over every lost one found, every dead one raised; for ‘there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.’ If they are present at the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and at his ascension into heaven, so are they at the departure of every one of his redeemed, and ‘Lazarus is carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.’ And as at the first and the last, so throughout the intervening stages of the pilgrimage ‘they minister to the heirs of salvation.’

It is true, indeed, that both the righteous and the wicked have much to do with the angelic hosts that belong to the opposite camps: and that ‘angels of darkness are employed by

God to try good men, and angels of light to punish bad men.' Yet the slaying of Egypt's first-born on the passover night, the smiting of the gorgeous Herod with worms, the destruction of Sennacherib's host before the walls of Jerusalem, and the binding of all the tares into bundles for the final fire of the Lord, are not the only works of those messengers of his that do his will. Over each of the Lord's ransomed ones 'he gives his angels charge lest they dash their foot against a stone'; and to their appointed interposition, doubtless, we owe many of the providential aids which we are daily enjoying, known and unknown. 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.' Jacob, trembling at the thought of meeting his injured and enraged brother, finds God's host at Mahanaim; God sends his angel into the lions' den, and stops their mouths for his servant Daniel; an angel of the Lord breaks Peter's chains, and guides him through the opening prison-doors into the known streets of the city; and God, whose he is and whom he serves, sends his angel to Paul when driven before the tempestuous Euroclydon. The great day alone will declare what deliverances those girded swordmen of the Captain of the Lord's host have wrought for each of his little ones, in their journey through the wilderness. The Arab of the desert watched of old for a bridal party as a noble spoil for the robber, and the torches that lighted their way by night quickly attracted his sleepless eye. Now the bridal procession of torch-bearing virgins, that go forth through this world's darkness to meet the great Bridegroom, is the special object of manifold assault from him who goeth about as a roaring lion, and the morning alone will reveal what they have owed to angelic protection through night. Yet their ministry is not confined to such as are already called to the adoption of sons, but extends to all who shall be 'heirs of salvation' though still in a state of rebellion—rendering their conversion cause of greater joy in heaven:—

And is there care in heaven, and is there love
 In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
 That may compassion of their evils move?
 There is, else much more wretched were the race

Of men than beasts. But O the exceeding grace
 Of highest God, that loves his creatures so,
 And all his works with mercy doth embrace,
 That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
 To serve us wicked men, to serve his wicked foe!

How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
 To come to succour us that succour want!
 How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
 The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
 Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
 They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
 And all for love and nothing for reward.
 Oh, why should Heavenly God to man have such regard!
Spenser.

To the spirit of man asleep all spirit is locked in sleep, not because other spirits slumber, but because his own is dead, and to the dead all the living are dead. Awaking out of the sleep of death, he is driven to God; he is awake to the Great Spirit, and to it alone and to the spirit within his own breast. 'God is a Spirit' is full of meaning to him now; and he asks, 'whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or flee from thy presence?' The Second Man is a quickening spirit to his soul, the words that he speaks are 'spirit and life,' and 'the life he now lives in the flesh he lives by the faith of the Son of God.' Gradually as his own inward eye opens, the space that was once all void and empty, and that has been filled with the living God and his Christ, becomes peopled also with other spirits. He fights at first 'with flesh and blood' only, in striving against his own sins; but he now learns that he must contend also with living beings in whom sin is embodied; and 'wrestling with principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world,' he is 'no longer ignorant of Satan and his devices.' He has had to do with the providence of Him 'without whom a sparrow falleth not to the ground,' and under him with the sea, and the dry land, and the various visible works of his hand, animate and inanimate. But he now knows that there are other and spiritual elements to be taken into the account, and that when he sought to serve God 'once and again Satan hin-

dered,'—'the prince of the power of the air' thwarting the design. As his eye opens wider he advances one step more, and becomes alive to another army of spiritual powers in the hosts of light. In deadly contest with the haughty 'accuser of the brethren,' he has already shouted—'Rejoice not against me O mine enemy! when I fall I shall rise again'; and now, when his soul is too full to utter all God's praise for himself, he dares to adopt as his own the words of David, and to call upon the heavenly guards that surround him, 'Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength!'

Such angel visits are few, indeed, and far between: such even to the spiritual mind they have ever been and will always be, and our Lord has forbid us to intrude by voluntary humility into things which we have not seen. But few even of the 'hundred and forty-four thousand' virgins, that are thus guarded through the desert by these swordmen expert in war, venture so far as the Word of the Lord would safely lead them. The world and the Church are in too great haste in these days to afford time for such meditations; yet we cannot but admire the deed of an eminent servant of God in another land and in a former age, who, feeling that he had too much neglected this important part of revelation, set apart a day for the practical consideration of the ministry of angels. Unbelief renders men blind to what is moving round about them, and they count as if it had no existence; and unbelief in any portion of God's word makes the believer himself blind to that extent, and he loses the benefit of that revelation. Yet if any man have, through grace, some discovery of this ministry of angels—of this company of valiant ones—expert in war and excelling in strength, that surround Solomon's chariot—he will be oft reminded that he must not 'cast that which is holy to the dogs,' and will hear the warning words—'hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God.'

But take heed that you say not in your heart, what have I to do with angel and archangel, with cherubim and seraphim? If you have nought to do with them in their rejoicing over your recovery, in their ministering to your wants as an heir of salvation, in their carrying of your soul into Abraham's bo-

som, you shall assuredly have to do with them, as the swift messengers and stern executioners of their Lord's behest. When the harvest of your visitation is past and your summer of opportunity ended, and you are not saved, then cometh that harvest which is the end of the world, whose reapers are the angels; and when they 'sever the wicked from the just,' they shall 'gather you, with all things that offend, out of the kingdom, and shall cast you into the quenchless fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

THE KING'S CHARIOT.

King Solomon made himself a chariot—not a wheeled carriage, as we commonly apply the term, but a *litter* or *palanquin* borne on men's shoulders, as the ark was carried by the Levites; or as in some of our older Bibles 'a chaier,' that is, a chair of state, provided for the safe and honored progress of the King and his Bride. It is the King's own workmanship—'King Solomon made for himself a chariot,' of his own design, under his own eye, and the work of his own hands. It was the work of the true Solomon in all his wisdom; the work in which 'he hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence.' It is Christ the wisdom of God, devising the means of conveying lost souls from the wilderness of sin and death safe into the paradise above. For this he became 'the Father's servant whom he upheld'; for this it was 'his meat and his drink to finish the work his Father gave him to do'; for this he 'gave not sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids till he provided a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob,' where he might dwell with his people, and might 'walk together with them being agreed.' Nay, for this he 'sanctified himself,' gave himself as a dedicated offering to God, gave his own 'prepared body' full of all the treasures of grace, 'as the temple which he was to rear in three days for the habitation together of God and his people by the Spirit'—as the tabernacle in which the Lord was to walk and journey with Israel through the desert. For this also 'he despised the shame,' and while engaged in

making for himself this chariot of the wood of Lebanon, 'he answered not again when they reviled him' as fit only to fashion earthly tents, and asked in derision, 'Is not this the son of the carpenter?'

Of the wood of Lebanon He made this chariot, of its fragrant and durable cedar, of the choicest wood which the noblest of forests afforded. The tabernacle was of shittim wood, the temple and this chariot of cedar; tabernacle, temple, chariot, alike represent the wondrous person of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the materials that compose it are derived from earth as well as from heaven, from wood as well as from gold—'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Christ also himself likewise took part of the same.' He became flesh and blood, yet without sin; produce of earth, but the noblest of earth's productions; the chariot made of wood, yet not from the sycamore of the plain, but from the cedar of Lebanon. The Son of Man is 'fairer than the sons of men,' 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners'; the cedar is fragrant and incorruptible—the body of Jesus 'seeing no corruption'—the body of Jesus a fragrant offering to the Father.

He made the pillars thereof of silver.—Silver-socketed pillars in the tabernacle supported the veil that enclosed the holy of holies containing the ark of the covenant; and the tabernacle and the ark were types of 'the Word made flesh.' Pillars of solid silver sustain the canopy and curtains of this bridal chariot. A pillar is the emblem of strength—silver the symbol of purity; when David would represent most perfect purity, he selects for its image 'silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times;' and when most solid strength is set forth, it is under the figure of 'the pillars of the earth.'

Every pillar that sustains the tabernacle of the body of the Lord Jesus and the dwelling-place of his people, is of pure silver, and in its perfect purity is everlasting strength. The word of God is compared to silver—'the words of the Lord are pure words, as tried silver;' the word of God is compared to pillars—'he upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' Now the silver pillars of Jehovah's words are the strong and pure supports of the tabernacle of Christ's body, which is the

prepared dwelling of the Spirit and the Church; 'the words thou gavest me—the promise of eternal life before the world began—the everlasting covenant well ordered in all things and sure.' Well may the Bride of Christ rejoice to be carried through the wilderness in this chariot of salvation with its silver pillars, for it will abide for ever in its strength; and if cast into the fire it can lose nothing, for its silver contains no dross. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever'; the pillars of the earth shall be shaken and give way, but the pillars of this chariot abide firm and pure as God's everlasting words. In these silver pillars, promises exceeding great are yours, O believer! stronger than heaven and earth; and promises exceeding precious are yours, purer than silver seven times refined. Therefore, like the man after God's own heart, you may love them; therefore you may sit securely beneath them, fearing nothing, for they will never give way. Once and again in your journeying through the wilderness, when you have seen the earth tremble and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, you have looked around at the unmoved pavilion of the Lord in which he sojourned with you, and have exclaimed, 'he made the pillars thereof of silver;' and when within it you shall have been conveyed safe to your Father's house above, and shall behold the heavens rolled up like a scroll, and the earth melting with fervent heat, and this pavilion abiding 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' you will raise your shout of victory and your song of praise, saying,—'King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon, the pillars thereof he made of silver.'

The bottom thereof of gold.—It is the seat of the chariot that conveys the Great King;

There silver pillars, beauteous to behold,
Spring from a basis all of burnished gold.—*Francis.*

It is the golden mercy-seat on which Jehovah sat in his journeying through the wilderness with Israel; 'sitting between the Cherubim,' as the King here sits surrounded by faithful guards

Gold was the most precious material of the ark; and if the fragrant wood represents the holy human nature of Jesus, the gold aptly typifies the divine. The frame of the ark was wood, the top forming the mercy-seat was gold; the whole constituted one ark, with the tables of the law and the hidden manna within it; yet the gold covered the law above, while the wood was around and beneath it. The Godhead and the Manhood constitute one Christ; the Godhead in itself above the law, the manhood beneath it, but one Christ with the law within his heart. The manhood—the wood—unites Jesus to us; the Godhead—the gold—unites him to the Father; and upon the golden summit of the ark Jehovah rests, the Godhead of the Father meeting the Godhead of the Son. The golden mercy-seat is ‘sprinkled with blood,’ that the God of justice may righteously make it his throne; and sprinkled with his own blood is the whole person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This golden throne of the King of kings does not exclude the Church. Lowly, indeed, must she stoop before the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, and pray—‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’ But if she is to be borne through the wilderness at all, the whole Godhead as well as the whole manhood of Jesus must sustain her, and convey her safe to her heavenly rest. ‘Come unto me and I will give you rest,’ is inviting not merely to the man but to the Christ of God, nor on the manhood only to rest, but on the whole divine person of Jesus—‘cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.’ The Father in mercy descends to the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant, and rests there—‘God in Christ reconciling the world’; to that blood of sprinkling, also, the Church comes, ascending thither through grace and reposing there—‘reconciled to God;’ and in the end ‘Christ will give to him that overcomes to sit down with him on his throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father on his throne.’

The covering of it of purple.—The curtains or hangings of this travelling couch are of purple, the emblem of royalty, and the image likewise of blood. The reference is to the veil of blue and scarlet and purple that enclosed the holiest of all, which is called, in the very expression of this verse, ‘the cover-

ing veil, and was spread over the ark for a covering when the Levites bore it on their shoulders. There may be allusion also to the rams' skins dyed red, and other coverings of the tabernacle. Purple of old was not so distinguished from its kindred colours as with us, but included a diversity of hues; of which no further proof is required than the fact that the robe with which the soldiers clothed Christ is called both a 'purple robe' and a 'scarlet robe.'

It is fit that the Bride of Jesus should ever have before her eyes her rank and privilege, remembering that she is daughter of the Great King, and the royal consort of the King's Son. This elates you not, Bride of the Lamb! but humbles you, because you are unworthy of so high a calling. Nothing humbles so effectually as to receive honor and privileges of which you are consciously unworthy, and to which you are manifestly unequal. Men are proud, and will not come down to their place in the dust as sinners; men are proud, and will not accept of grace and honor to which they have no title. The humbled sinner is 'less than the least of all God's mercies'; yet he cannot refuse the greatest, because there is no measuring of merit. It is of divine will and of divine gift, and therefore the child says—'Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' The 'high calling' humbles its recipient in the dust, and beneath that royal purple is ever found the meekest and lowliest of all the children of men.

It is meet that the emblem of royalty should be seen by others, as well as by the Bride herself; that the royal purple should be borne aloft and seen afar. It is a suspicious sign of any man when he puts on a garb of disguise, however lowly that garb may be; for it seems as if he meant to act a part unworthy of himself, and desiring therefore not to be known. Nor is there anything more injurious, than when the consort of the King is ashamed to own the purple; to confess the high calling. Many think and call it humility; but it is because they secretly desire not to walk worthy of their vocation, not to be bound to a conversation conformable to their rank, or else not to own the red cross which always pertains to the purple robe. It is true, indeed, that the follower of the Lamb,

by his many sins, dishonors his Lord and his vocation; but the greatest dishonor he can put on either is denial. The bloody right ear of the midnight assailant is clear testimony to Peter's unworthiness to form part of the bridal company that follows the lowly Jesus; yet the wound in the conscience of Peter and the wound in the ear of Malchus are alike quickly healed. But, Bride-elect of Jesus! how sadly altered the case, and how sadly fallen thy state, when thou dost deny that thou wast in the garden with him, that thou didst recline upon the same royal couch along with him at supper, and that the kingly purple on account of which they are condemning him waved also over thee! O deny not thy calling, thy kingdom, or thy King! Be not a hypocrite pretending to a rank that was never thine; but, hearing Jesus and accepting his call, deny not thy Lord and disguise not thy profession, for 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.'

But we must not forget that the covering of kingly purple has been dipped in the King's own blood; that he, who in mockery was clothed with a scarlet robe, does really wear a 'vesture dyed in blood,' his own blood shed for his Church. Purple or scarlet has been the badge of royalty in all generations—a badge strangely significant, for the only king that wears it by fulness of divine right, and wears it for ever, has drawn the royal color from his own pierced side. While the King sits at the passover table with his redeemed, the lintels and door posts of the guest-chamber are sprinkled red with his own blood—'This cup is the new testament in my blood shed for many for the remission of sins.' Bride of the slain Lamb! in all your journeyings through the wilderness, 'bear about with you the dying of the Lord Jesus;' let the rams' skins dyed red be the covering of your tent wherever you erect it in the desert; let the purple veil be the covering of your chariot in all your onward progress. Let your own eyes be fastened continually on the blood of Jesus; let your heart ever find refuge and shelter beneath it; and by friend and foe alike, by Israelite and Ishmaelite, let the blood-red token be seen afar through the desert—a terror to the hosts of darkness, a bright

banner of joy to fellow-pilgrims, a flag of peace and friendship from the great King to all that will welcome it!

The midst thereof being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.—The love that is here described as paving the midst of the chariot must certainly have some external symbol, like the silver and the gold and the purple; and is thought by many interpreters to have been represented by flowers and other emblematic devices, wrought in the lining of the chariot by the daughters of Jerusalem.

The top of princely purple—and
 The midst thereof by his command
 Is richly paved,
 Embost and graved;
 With curious carpets covering them,
 That woven were,
 With cost and care,
 By the daughters of Jerusalem.

Troth-plight Spouse.

To this idea more recent interpreters have added another, which renders it more perfect—that these ‘curious carpets’ were not only ‘woven with cost and care,’ but that verses expressive of love were wrought into their fabric. As, when the Bride rejoices because his ‘banner over her was love,’ she seems to intimate that the royal banner bore inscribed on it tokens of the covenanted love of God toward his people; so here it is announced that the interior of this royal chariot is inscribed with assurances of divine love—as in the words of the Old Testament,—‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love,’ and of the New,—‘God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish.’ In substance, this view of the interior of the chariot is correct; but there is no reference in the description to embroidered work, but to a pavement, which both the oldest translators and the best Hebrew scholars render a pavement of stone (Sept. Gesen.). On this account some of the best interpreters have understood it of a tessellated floor, wrought into hieroglyphic emblems significant of Christ’s love to his Church. But all such views are uncertain, having no scriptural

foundation, and they leave quite unexplained why the floor of the chariot should be termed the 'midst thereof.' The whole is clear and satisfactory when the description is received as referring to the ark of the covenant, the floor of which was paved with the two tables of stone—yet not exactly the floor, but rather 'the midst thereof' so paved. The paving with love may be understood partly in likeness, and partly in contrast, to the writing that covered these stones; which were filled with love as the tables of the covenanting God who had brought Israel out of Egypt, yet full of stern demand as the ten commandments of the law. But the ark of Solomon, the ark of the Prince of Peace, 'the ark of his testament,' the ark of the New Covenant—has the midst thereof paved with pure love and grace for the daughters of Jerusalem,—for all the children of the covenant.

Referring to the ancient ark with the tables of the law enclosed, Jesus the true ark of the covenant says to the Father, 'thy law is within my heart;' within the typical ark on tables of stone, within the true ark on living tables of the heart. The law was within his heart toward his God; toward the Church within his heart was love, the tables of his heart written over with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. Love is the midst and the heart of the whole covenant of redemption. It is founded on righteousness, yet 'through righteousness that grace may reign'; established on sacrificial blood, yet love provides the sacrifice. Wisdom devises, justice acknowledges, power executes, but love moves, redemption; love in the Father, for 'God is love'; love in the Holy Ghost, 'the love of the Spirit'; love in the heart of Christ, 'who loved us and washed us in his own blood.' The height and the depth, and the length and the breadth, of the love of Christ pass knowledge; and this 'love' is the very 'midst of the chariot' that conveys the heirs of salvation to their Father's house. When the exterior of the royal chariot may seem to be encompassed with state, with coldness, or with displeasure, in the midst thereof and in the inner chamber of its secret counsels there burns the warmth of divine love. The swordmen that guard the royal presence may sometimes appear as if appointed to ward off the

daughter of Jerusalem, but let her boldly pass through them all, and she will find the midst of the chariot love. The cedar and the silver, the purple and the gold, provided for the Bride, may by their very glory deter her trembling footsteps; but let her enter, and the instant her foot is placed on the chariot-floor to ascend within it, she rests on 'a pavement of love.'

With love for the daughters of Jerusalem.—It is for every one that will hear the invitation, 'Come unto me and I will give you rest!' It is rest, yet rapid progress—a wondrous secret. The labor of man without grace is running without progressing, wandering in a labyrinth of darkness. Union to Jesus Christ is rest from toil, yet in that rest constant progress—Godward, truthward, heavenward, homeward every hour. Thou hadst no heart for Zion once, thou wast at home in a far country, and when awoke, it was to set thyself to work thy way across the wide wilderness; parched, weary, lame, sick with the journey, and no nearer the new Jerusalem, till at last thy way was lost altogether. What had seemed right was wrong, what had been counted truth was error, and the path that had been taken to lead to heaven had brought thee to the very brink of hell; unable now to walk, for all thy strength was gone; afraid to advance lest thy steps might mislead, for thy wisdom had perished. There were songs of praise from the Bride of the Lamb even in the desert, but they were not for thee; the royal chariot had sometimes crossed thy course, but its purple, and silver, and gold, presented no attraction, for they were not thine. To enter, and have part and lot within it, never occurred to thy thought; and the utmost benefit it could confer was to mark the road which thou must trudge on foot for thyself. Hard was thy race to keep pace with it, but it passed triumphantly onward till its songs of praise had died away from the ear, and the last gleam of its bridal lamps had faded from the aching eyes. To lay thyself down for death seemed all that was left; unwilling to die, yet unable to live. The King's chariot appeared again, approached as if to cross thy path, drew near as if for thee. Impossible!—the King himself can never have come for me! The word proclaimed—'The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was

lost—now is the accepted time—now the day of thy visitation'; and the Spirit moved thee saying, 'Go join thyself to this chariot.' Necessity made thee bold—it was thy only hope of life—either thus to live or else to perish in the wilderness. Hesitating between guilt and fear, the voice of Jesus invited thee from the golden mercy-seat, 'Come unto me and I will give thee rest—him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Thy heart consented, and before thou wast aware, believing, thou hadst entered into rest; thy soul was within the pavilion of the Lord, and 'the midst thereof was paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.' Having received, 'he will never leave thee nor forsake thee, but to hoar hairs will carry thee, and bring thee to Zion with everlasting songs upon thy head.' Will none other join this chariot?—will no weary foot consent to rest within it?—no bewildered wanderer exchange unhallowed working in the strength of self for a holy Sabbath of rest in the Lord Jesus Christ—for a rest that will bear the soul triumphantly onward to the prize of the high calling above?

THE CROWN OF ESPOUSAL.

Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.—The crown that is on the head of Jesus, the mother that places it there, and the day of the coronation, are combined together, and serve to explain each other. 'On his head are many crowns,' but they are his Father's gift. The crown of priesthood is from the Father, who calleth him—'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedee'; the crown of kingdom from the Father, who anointed him—'I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' But it is simply a marriage crown, a bridal coronet, a nuptial chaplet, which his mother places on his head. The first garland with which his mother adorns him is a crown of thorns. The day of his death is the day of his espousals, when he lays down for his bride the ransom of his blood, and she becomes his—not merely in fulness of love, but in fulness of right. Nor is his dying day, with

its unknown agony, separate from the gladness of his heart. This was the day that he longed for, saying, 'with desire I have desired to eat this passover'—longed for with an ardour of desire that could not be augmented. This was the day that he spoke of as his exaltation, saying, 'if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me,' counting that lowest humiliation a glorious exalting. This was the day of his betrothing feast—when he gave the wedding wine-cup to his Bride, 'the cup of the new covenant,' inviting her to drink it. This was the day of conquest and victory, when 'he spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his Cross.' This was the day that ended all his labors, all his sorrows, all his Father's wrath, all his people's sins, when at last he could triumphantly declare—'It is finished.' This for ever is the day that he bears in perpetual remembrance, wearing still the bright print of its nails, and the red seal of its spear. It is 'the day of his espousals,' and dark though it was, yet for ever 'the day of the gladness of his heart.'

'The crown wherewith his mother crowned him' on that day, was the crown of thorns which the soldiers plaited and put upon his head, along with the superscription Pilate wrote—'Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.' God is the Father of Jesus, his only Father; the Father of the Eternal Word, the Father of that Word made flesh; Jesus owns and has no other Father. Yet Jesus ever calls himself 'the Son of Man'; and never calls Mary his mother, nor himself the son of Mary. When, therefore, he entitles himself 'the Son of Man'—being through Mary of the seed of David, of Abraham, of Adam—he virtually calls the human family his mother. His mother's children to whom he was an alien are the members of this human family; and when men who are of his flesh and of his bones crown him with thorns, it is his own mother who places the crown upon his head. 'Go forth, then, ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals.' See Pilate 'bringing him forth wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns'; hear him say, 'Behold the man!—behold your King!' and 'look on him whom ye also have pierced,'

remembering that your hands plaited those thorns, and placed the bloody chaplet on his brow. Yet, go forth and look on him, yea, go and 'kiss the Son'; for it is 'the day of his espousals,' the time of his love, the time of your acceptance and favor. The thorns are the bridal coronet, the shed blood the bridal wine-cup, the broken body the bridal bread; and, standing with them all, King Solomon is waiting with the marriage-ring in his hand, and over every soul that will embrace Him it is the day of his espousals and the day of the gladness of his heart—the day also of your espousals, and the day of the gladness of your heart.

But Jesus owns another mother besides her that crowned him with thorns, and another coronation; or rather, that same mother ransomed and renewed he acknowledges with honor, and is willing to receive another crown from her hands. Not ashamed to call believers brethren, he is not ashamed to acknowledge the Church, their mother, as also his own—'remember thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.' He is the King of the kingdom of heaven, yet born within that kingdom, baptized within it to fulfil all righteousness, and saying of all that do the will of his Father—'the same is my mother.' He is 'the First-born to God among many brethren'—the First-born also of the Church, which 'travails in birth till she is delivered of this Man-child that is to rule the nations.'

This mother crowns him in the day of his espousals, when she travails in birth for souls, and brings them unto him to be a crown of joy in the day of the Lord; crowns him in the day of espousals when she winneth souls for a crown to herself, and casts the crown at his feet saying, 'Worthy is the Lamb!'—the crown in his. There is nothing on earth that brings gladness to the heart of Jesus like a crown of lost souls; and blessed, honored, and happy are they who through grace present him such a crown, for it is ever a bridal token in the day of espousals. Jesus, occupied in winning one lost soul at the well of Sychar, said, 'My meat is to do the will of my Father.' Whoso goeth and doeth likewise does the will of the heavenly Father; of that soul Jesus says, 'the same is my mother;' and

from such a worker of his Father's will he joyfully receives such a crown in the day of his espousals to ransomed souls.

But the final reference is to the great day of the Lord,—the day of solemn, open, eternal marriage—‘the wedding-supper of the Lamb when his wife is ready.’ Never is the Bride ready till then; never till then are all the virgins gathered who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; never till then is the last needle-work of the bride's personal raiment finished; never till then is the last spot washed from every robe; never till then do ‘they that are ready go in to the marriage;’ and never till then is ‘the door shut that they may go no more out.’ Never till then is the prayer fulfilled, that ‘where He is they may be also to behold his glory’; and never till then is the last wine-drop poured into the cup of the Redeemer's joy—till it is full on the day of marriage, even as his cup of sorrow on the day of betrothing. All the daughters of Zion are now summoned to behold him with his nuptial crown, ‘anointed with the oil of joy above his fellows, and most glad for evermore.’ ‘Go ye out,’ then, O daughters of Zion! at the voice of the last trumpet, leaving for ever the chambers of your last sleep; and, coming forth into the morning of endless life, ‘behold king Solomon crowned in the day of his espousals and in the day of the gladness of his heart.’ Hasten, Lord, the day!—Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

Daughters of Zion come, behold
The crown of honor and of gold,
Which the glad Church with joys unknown,
Placed on the head of Solomon.

Jesus, thou everlasting King,
Accept the tribute which we bring;
Accept the dearly-bought renown,
And wear our praises as thy crown.

Let every act of worship be
Like our espousals, Lord, to thee;
Till we are raised to sing thy name
At the great supper of the Lamb.

O that the months would roll away,
And bring that Coronation day!
The King of grace shall fill the throne,
With all his Father's glories on.—*Watts*.

XIV.

PORTRAIT OF THE BRIDE BY THE KING.

THE SPOTLESS BRIDE:

THE DOVES' EYES—THE GOATS ON THE MOUNTAIN—THE SHEEP FROM
THE RIVER—THE SCARLET FILLET—THE BROKEN POMEGRANATE—
THE TOWER OF ARMOURY—THE TWIN ROES.

Behold, thou *art* fair, my love; behold, thou *art* fair: thou *hast* doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair *is* as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gillead. Thy teeth *are* like a flock of sheep that *are even* shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none *is* barren among them. Thy lips *are* like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech *is* comely; thy temples *are* like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks. Thy neck *is* like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. Thou *art* all fair, my love: *there is* no spot in thee.—CHAP. iv. 1-7.

THE SPOTLESS BRIDE.

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.—'From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores'—such the believer is by nature: 'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee'—such the same believer is through grace. The Church in herself, in all her features, and in all her members, is to the Lord Jesus an object of highest esteem for her worth, of intensest admiration for her beauty, and of most ardent love for her exceeding loveliness. She was guilty, vile, useless; and as such 'was cast out into the open field in the day that she was born.' But 'Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water with the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' He looked

on the unlovely with inconceivable pity and commiseration, 'according to the great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins.' But he so loved as to secure through his own blood, that the Church should for ever be distinguished by her own loveliness, even as she had been distinguished by being His beloved. In the final state of the redeemed, every believer will be really and for ever, both in soul and body, what the fair Absalom was outwardly for a brief and thoughtless hour—'so much to be praised for beauty, that from the sole of the foot even to the crown of the head there was no blemish in him.' Meanwhile the Church's beauty, defective and marred, is 'made perfect through his comeliness put upon her'; her 'sin always covered,' herself always 'accepted in the Beloved'; and 'no iniquity seen in Israel, nor transgression in Jacob.'

The Bride of the Lamb is invested with a double comeliness; with the beauty of the Lord her God upon her, with the beauty of holiness in her; by Christ clothing her with righteousness, all glorious around—by the Spirit creating her anew, 'all glorious within.' In the comeliness of Jesus the soul is as lovely in the hour of its acceptance, as Moses or Elijah before the throne above. Of the criminals pardoned but yesterday Jesus declares—'The glory thou gavest me I have given them;' to the sinner newly washed Jesus announces—'Now you are clean through the word I have spoken unto you'—'thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.' This beauty changes not; is never enhanced, is never impaired. This 'garment of salvation' has been perfect from the day when 'the Lamb without spot and blemish was led to the slaughter, and was dumb before the shearers'; spot on that snowy fleece there never was, and spot shall never be found on its accepted wearer. It is all fair, and always fair; without blemish and incapable of blemish; as fair and spotless on the guiltiest transgressor in earth, as on Paul in heaven 'found in Christ and having His righteousness' for ever. The soldiers beneath the cross, with hands stained with priceless blood sitting down and watching there, cast their lots into the lap over the seamless vesture of Jesus; 'the whole disposing thereof was of the

Lord,' but to whomsoever allotted, and by whomsoever worn, it was the unrent earthly vestment of the Man of Sorrows. To have 'part and lot in this matter,' not of earthly spoil but of heavenly inheritance, is 'theirs only for whom it is prepared by the Father.' But to the receiving soul is given the undivided 'Christ, made of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption'; and Jesus, recognising his own garment of salvation, declares—'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.'

Simultaneously with the imputation of justifying righteousness, and the sprinkling of cleansing blood, is the formation of 'the new creature' by the Spirit, in child-like resemblance to the Father, in brother-like similitude to his first-born Son. The adopted child of God 'receives grace for grace' in the only-begotten Son—like him in all his lineaments—infinately distant from his fulness. The new creature 'born of God and sinning not,' is the fair handiwork of Jehovah, and like all his works is 'very good;' but is encumbered with the body of sin and death, marring its beauty, fettering its energies, hindering its growth. Its comeliness, therefore, varies according as it is seen in its own heavenly beauty, and thriving in the midst of all obstructions by earth or hell; or it is found feeble in its energies, oppressed by Satan, and spotted by the world. 'Thou art all fair, my love,' is never withheld by Christ from the believing soul; for he not only says to his disciples 'now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you,' but even when men would have judged otherwise, he says of them 'they have kept thy word.' But it is when they 'walk before him unto all well-pleasing,' that the complacency of the Lord Jesus over his people is full, his joy in them remains, and his heart freely utters—'Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair!'

'As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise'; yet neither Christ's extolling of the Church Catholic, nor his personal commendation of the saint, ever hurts the child of God. The praise of man injures man. The praise of the world injures, the praise of the Church injures; but none is injured by either seeking or obtaining 'the

praise that cometh from God only.' In so far as the commendation is applicable in any individual case, it is ground of gratitude and source of strength; but the praise is Christ's and not ours, for 'it is he that made us and not we ourselves,' and he fashioned us 'to the praise of the glory of his grace.' The rejoicing also is with trembling, for that which is true of us to-day—'Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name'—did not characterize us yesterday, and may not be our character to-morrow. In so far, again, as this is Christ's commendation of the Church at large, or of the normal type of a believer given as a model for all, it furnishes a test for self-examination touching our own likeness to the divine model, and a ground for deep humiliation on account of our exceeding disparity.

'The parts and the comely proportions' of 'the new creature' are described in this Song under seven distinct features, uniting perfection of number with perfection of beauty; and to each of these pictures is attached a separate similitude or emblem. To our darkness the feature is sometimes simpler of interpretation than the emblem, at other times the emblem simpler than the feature, and again, the allegory solves itself by the union of both. The seven features are the eyes, the hair, the teeth, the lips, the temples, the neck, and the breasts; and the seven similitudes the doves, the flock of goats, the flock of sheep, the thread of scarlet, the piece of pomegranate, the tower of David, and the young roe-twins. In living reality, they are all the work of the Spirit renewing; and the discovery of their beauty is the gift of the Spirit illuminating.

To apprehend these graces aright, we must bear in memory, that when Jesus came down to earth to ransom his Bride with his own blood, she had lost both the filial privilege of her Father's house and the grace of her own early beauty; that he found her a wretched slave in the prison-house, blind, shorn, maimed, with leprous lips, with brazen brow, with chained neck, and shapeless bust; that such a Bride he undertook to 'present to himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing'; and that he describes her in contrast with what he had found her, as well as in the comeliness with which she is now invested.

THE DOVES' EYES.

Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks—the eyes of the Bride being likened to the beautiful eyes of Eastern doves. The habitation of the human family had become 'a hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird;' but amidst the owls and the bats Jesus recognises the dove—the bird so distinctively clean, that no other is noticed as presented to the Lord in sacrifice. Alone among these birds of the night the dove with fixed eyes watches for the morning, and this waiting eye is the feature that first attracts the eye of Jesus. Shining through the darkness of the forest, the first feature that meets the huntsman's view is the sparkling eye of the object of his search or of his fear; looking through the night of the lightless hovel where poverty and sickness have taken their abode, the first token of living creature within is the glancing of the human eye; and from amidst the darkness of this world, the first feature that rivets the regard of the Holy One above is the upward gleaming of the watcher's eye, 'waiting for the Lord as for the morning dawn.'

Such a watcher was John the Baptist—such a seer through the gloom of the night. He is entitled the 'turtle-dove,' because the first to announce winter past, and proclaim the approaching summer of grace and truth in the rising of the Sun of Righteousness. But if he had 'the voice of the turtle' to herald the advent of Jesus, he had also the eye of the dove to discern his form. The dove is famed for its power of distant vision, and hence in some of its species has been employed as the messenger of 'news from a far country.' Consider John the Baptist—remember that he is himself among the brightest of the bridal virgins that go forth to meet the Bridegroom—contemplate him after the return of Jesus from the wilderness perfumed with myrrh and frankincense—watch him as he takes a fixed attitude and 'stands with two of his disciples'—see him through the long tresses of his Nazarite hair, with steadfast eye 'looking upon Jesus as he walks'—and hear Jesus in spirit accost him and all the Church,—'Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks.'

The eye is the scriptural term for light or spiritual understanding; the dove the emblem of purity and simplicity. Jesus Christ sent 'to save the lost,' is always represented as coming into the midst of the blind—'I will give thee for a covenant to open the blind eyes—I am come into this world that they which see not might see.' Not least among the injuries sustained by the fall of the human family are 'blindness of heart and the understanding darkened'; aggravated by confident presumption that 'we see, and therefore our sin remaining.' But Jesus anoints the closed eyes with clay, covers and seals them up with thick darkness that may be felt, convinces the blind man of blindness, and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam, whence he returns seeing. 'The eyes of his understanding have been enlightened to know the hope of the calling—he has received the Spirit that is of God to know the things that are freely given him of God.'

Along with divine intelligence, the eyes of all that are illuminated possess a most dove-like chasteness and simplicity. The day after John had testified—'Behold the Lamb of God!' Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him—'Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.' Jesus acknowledges in him the character of his Bride, guileless and 'harmless as doves;' and the Bride recognises in Jesus the glorious King to whom the Church is betrothed—'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel!' This dove-like simplicity of eye is closely connected with mental illumination; duplicity of heart is nearly allied to mental darkness. The double-minded man is next of kin to him that is born blind. The blind gropes for the wall at noonday, and stumbles into the ditch; 'the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,' and cannot escape clear out of the mire. He steps forward, backward, to the right hand, to the left—an onlooker would pronounce him blindfold. But 'the pure in heart,' the simple and sincere in spirit, 'see God,' whom the double-hearted never behold. The singleness of the eye's aim is even more important than the clearness of the eye's perception. 'The light of the body is the eye, if therefore thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light, but if thine eye be evil

thy whole body shall be full of darkness—take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness: If thy whole body therefore be full of light having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.’ Lord! ‘unite my heart to fear thy name!—make it one, simple, undivided toward thee, my Lord and my God!

THE GOATS ON THE MOUNTAIN.

Thy hair is like a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead.
—A flock of goats with their long, silvery, shining hair, and wont to hang on the steepest crag of the rock, are seen grazing on the crown, the brow, and the shoulders of Mount Gilead, where stood the ‘heap of witness’ of an ancient covenant. So hang, flowing from the head over the shoulders, the shining locks of the Bride of Immanuel.

The clusters of thy sable hair,
Like goats on crown of mountain fair,
In thick profusion flow.—*Grad. of Oxf.*

Toward man, the long hair of woman is the symbol of subjection, and ‘if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her, given her for a covering—for the head of the woman is the man.’ In like manner of old toward God, the long hair of the Nazarite was the outward symbol of consecration to the Lord of Hosts—of subjection and dedication to an unseen Head. When the unseen Bridegroom of the Church was publicly manifested and first met the Bride, it was in the person of John the Baptist, with his hairy vestment, and leathern girdle, and his Nazarite locks flowing down his shoulders—‘Thy hair is like a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead.’ While the Bridegroom was present with the Bride on earth, twice over she stooped down at his feet and wiped them with the hairs of her head—‘Ye call me Master and Lord, and so I am’—thy hair is like the goats on Gilead clustered round the ‘heap of witness.’

Look at the Nazarite, with his whole person from head to

foot presented a living sacrifice, and no part to be marred by the hand of man—not a hair of the head touched, as the altar was of stones unhewn, and the red heifer unstained by the yoke. Let Samson serve for illustration. His unshorn locks were a sign to himself, to Israel, to the Philistines, of his unbroken vow; of his accepted and abiding dedication to the Most High. In them lay the secret of his strength, because there waved in every hair the sign of his separation—‘no razor shall come on his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’ His great strength lay in his covenanted union to the God of Israel, but his hair ‘like a flock of goats on Mount Gilead’ was the token of the covenant, and therefore the secret of his strength! The covenant was most secret between him and his God, its symbol most open and visible to all the world, to friend and foe; but they could not divine the hidden link that bound the visible emblem to the mysterious might. They saw the seven golden locks that adorned the strong man’s head; and they saw the new cords that bound him, broken by his arms like a thread of tow when it touched the fire. They saw him seize the moist jaw-bone of the ass—no fool’s weapon but a broad and heavy blade, a hard Herculean club in a strong man’s hand—for to this day the value of the ass is estimated by the size of the jaw-bone; and with this homely sword they saw him slay a thousand of his shouting captors (Note). They beheld both the singularity of his seven locks, and the singularity of his sevenfold strength; but they never suspected the existence of a secret chain that bound these together; and when once discovered they soon forgot it again, while his hair was growing for a greater outburst of victorious power.

Even so is it with the Bride the Lamb’s wife. From the day of her birth into the kingdom of grace to the day of her death, she is a Nazarite to Israel’s God. She ‘presents her body unto God a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable, as her reasonable service.’ She does this openly in the presence of friends and in the face of foes; ‘being bought with a price, she glorifies God in her body and in her spirit which are God’s.’ The world looks on and wonders, threatens, tempts, objects,

interferes. Her 'hair like a flock of goats on Mount Gilead' renders her exceeding lovely in the eyes of the Lord whose love alone she values, but is an offence and affront to the children of this world. They ask why the world should be turned upside down, why any son of man should be so strange and singular, so diverse from the manners and so separate from the society of men.

But again, they see a singular strength in this chaste virgin espoused to Christ, in this Nazarite with his seven locks. They see him breaking bars of iron and fetters of brass—they bind him with their wiles, and their cords are snapped asunder by his arms—they compass him with hostile multitudes, only to witness his triumphant victory. But they know not the secret of his strength, and are unwilling to recognise it. They mark the unshorn locks of consecration and mock, they behold the invincible strength and stand in awe, but the mystery of their union they slowly and faintly apprehend. But the beauty of the Bride, with her hair like a flock of goats on Mount Gilead, is often marred by a sad mutilation. The world whispers, and the heart listens to the suggestion, that there is no need for so complete a separation, or for so evident and marked a union to Jesus. It asks liberty to destroy those locks of dedication; it tempts the believer himself to cut them off. It suggests that, by Christians mingling more with the world, the world will be more drawn to Christians and to Christ; it hints that there may be secret union to Jesus without tokens so visible and so offensive; it asks, hath God indeed said that 'if any man be the friend of the world he is the enemy of God?' and affirms, that God knoweth that in that day of friendship with the world, there will only be the extension of peace and goodwill between God and man. In an evil hour the once cherished symbol is cut away, the token of union to Christ is destroyed, the locks are gone,—and, with the locks, the strength and the beauty gone! 'The Nazarite, whiter than snow, is now blacker than a coal'; the warrior, swifter than the mountain roe, is crippled and lame; the once more than conqueror in Christ, falls helpless into the hands of his malignant enemies, is bound with the cords of sin, and is degraded to a poor blind slave grinding for the adversaries of God and man.

‘Thy hair, O my love, was as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilcad; but thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God when he led thee by the way; the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head; and from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed!’ But thy Lord will ‘heal thy backslidings, loving freely’; he will ‘forgive thee much, and thou shalt love him much’; thy locks will gather strength and grow anew, and thou shalt ‘wash his feet afresh with thy tears and wipe them again with the hairs of thy head.’ But ‘go and sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee!’

THE SHEEP FROM THE RIVER.

Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren [or bereaved] among them.—There could not be found an apter comparison to describe a beautiful set of teeth faultless in form, in color, in number. The flock of sheep even shorn, describes their perfect symmetry without the least unevenness or irregularity; their coming up from the washing is the unspotted whiteness of the teeth as of purest wool; the twins are the upper and under teeth in exact correspondence; and the absence of one bereaved or barren among them indicates that in these double rows there is not one tooth wanting or lost.

Thy teeth are like the flock so white,
Smooth shorn, and bathed in streamlet bright,
A shining even row.
Grad. of Oxf.

The teeth of the Bride are emblematic of *faith*, for Christ says—‘Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you’; and this eating is by faith, for he announces—‘I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.’ The natural man has no capacity for feeding on Christ—he has no teeth wherewith to eat that bread of life. It is set before him in all its richness in the Word read and

preached; but it remains untasted and unbroken, and, for any nourishment it affords him, it might be a painted stone instead of bread. Other teeth he has for other food—the tooth of malice and the tooth of envy to mangle and destroy his brother's peace, or his neighbour's good name. But these are preparing only sorrow for himself, for 'the teeth of the ungodly shall be broken'; and in the outer darkness to which they haste 'shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth' for ever. But 'the new creature' both relishes and 'eats the bread that cometh down from heaven'—'I found thy word and did eat it, and it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' In his beautiful teeth—his precious faith—are found at once the sure symptom and the certain means of spiritual health; and when these are strong and undecayed the whole body is full of life and beauty. Faith is like a flock of sheep feeding on green pastures and lacking nothing. Faith is like a flock of sheep ascending from the river, for it has constant reference to 'the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,' and is never beautiful except it be 'newly come up from the washing.' Faith is 'like a flock of sheep all twin-bearing,' for above all things faith is fruitful; and faith in the soul never lacks its twin and fellow in 'the word of promise,' its exact counterpart and image. The Bride of Jesus is rapidly enriching when she possesses and retains such a flock, for nothing advances so rapidly as faith when it 'groweth exceedingly;' nothing brings to the soul such riches of every grace as faith when it 'increaseth, according to the increase of God'; and never is the Bride more attractive in the eyes of 'the great Shepherd of the sheep,' than when she appears before him with such 'a flock newly washed in the fountain.'

THE SCARLET FILLET.

Thy lips are like a thread [or, as in old Bible, fillet] of scarlet— the lips thread-like in the fineness of their form, and scarlet in the depth and purity of their color. Emblematically, the lip of the leper is the constant type of the loathsomeness of sin. That lip has two characteristic features—it is swollen and

gross—it is white and scurfy. When the disease has spread so far as to deform the face, the sight of leprosy is deeply impressive; once seen it remains long in the memory, and no feature in the defaced countenance is more revolting or more sadly memorable than the turgid and scaly lip.

By the Mosaic law the leper was commanded to abide without the camp, to cover his upper lip, and to cry Unclean! unclean! When Isaiah had revealed to him the glorious, yet awful holiness of Jehovah, he cried, 'Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips'; and he found no relief till the live coal taken with the tongs from off the altar touched his lips, taking away his iniquity, and forgiving his sin. So is it with you, O sinner! leprous from head to foot, yet ignorant of your sad condition, or glorying in it with great swelling words of vanity; till the Spirit of God reveals your state. You hasten now to hide yourself, as filled with a loathsome disease; your leprous lip you cover, not concealing but confessing the plague; you lay your mouth upon the dust, purer than your guilty lips, and cry, unclean! In your shame you have not been driven without the camp, but your own feet have borne you thither among the lepers and the unclean—alone suitable for the defiled soul. 'Without the camp'—and what meets you there? the Holy One of God hanging on the accursed tree—Jesus 'suffering without the gate'—on Calvary, the place of dead men's bones. The one man of 'pure lip' in the human family, the one in whose lips was found no guile, they have thrust out as leprous from the holy city, crying—'away with him!' He is 'numbered with transgressors,' and you have found him'; or rather he has found you, and told you that he is come to 'cleanse the lepers.' You lift upward your eye to the cross, and as you look, the red blood of the Lamb without spot drops on your defiled lips, and with it the assurance—'Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet'—'now you are clean through the word that I have spoken.'

The accompanying *comeliness of speech* does not form a separate feature of beauty, but is the fit fruit of the scarlet lips. Moses complains of 'uncircumcised lips' from which no

comeliness of speech could flow; but God will not hear his objection, because, along with the circumcision of the heart without hands, he pours grace into the lips sufficient for every occasion. Excellent speech is, indeed, 'not comely for a fool,' and the fairest language of fruitless profession is only 'the jewel in the swine's snout;' but when 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,' there is no sweeter music in the ear of the heavenly Bridegroom than 'the speech that is with grace seasoned with salt.' Mark how he promises it in the pledge that 'the tongue of the stammerer shall speak plainly;' how he delights in it when he gives the assurance—'My son! if thy lips speak right things, my heart shall rejoice, even mine'; and how he rewards it, as in that wrestling mother who dwells 'in the borders of Tyre and Sidon'—in places where both language and morals become corrupt. Her heart is set on having the devil cast out of her daughter, and she is quick to discover the hidden presence of the healer. She has strong faith in his love and power, and uses urgent importunity for mercy; but it is 'the comeliness of her speech' that prevails with, and overcomes the Lord. 'The dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs'—is the beautiful speech of unlettered faith; and from him who himself spake as never man spake, the prompt and delighted answer comes—'For this saying go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter!' And not for her only, but for every virgin follower of the Lamb, was the promise given,—'I will turn to the people a pure lip, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.'

THE BROKEN POMEGRANATE.

Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks, or as Wycliffe renders it 'as the breaking of a pomegranate so are thy cheeks.' The pomegranate or grained apple cut open is bright red mingled with white. The temples, or forehead, are in Scripture regarded as the seat of shamefacedness, or of boldness; and their being likened to the redness of the pome-

granate, prevailing over its intermingled whiteness, aptly describes the modesty of the Bride; which is still further enhanced by the temples being 'within the locks,' and partially covered by their flowing tresses.

Like grained pomegranate, white and red,
Thy temples' purpling veins are spread,
Above thy arching brow.

Grad. of Oxf.

The state of rebellious man, even in those who toward their fellows are most sensitively modest, presents the aspect of unhallowed boldness toward God above. This insolence regarding Him who dwelleth in the heavens is universal, and his own testimony is that 'all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted,' or that they are 'stiff of forehead and hard of heart.' Thy brow is brass, is the humiliating truth addressed to every child of apostate Adam; and this brazenness of brow has reached the utmost limit of depravity, Jehovah himself being witness and declaring to us 'thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.' It has rendered us incapable of all penitent or childlike emotion Godward—'were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.' How lovely to Him in the contrast must be the shamefacedness of the Bride of the Lamb, to whom, through the ransom of his blood, God has granted repentance unto life, and whose temples are now like the breaking of a pomegranate within her locks! Hers is now the holy blushing of Ezra, 'O my God! I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God'—of the penitent publican, when 'he stood afar off, and would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven,' but from his smitten heart sighed, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'—of the whole house of Israel, 'We lie down in our shame and our confusion covereth us'—of 'the woman that was a sinner, who wept much because she was forgiven much'—of the accepted believer who 'never opens his mouth any more because of his shame, when God is pacified toward him for all that he has done.'

This breaking of the pomegranate is in beautiful harmony, yet in marked contrast, with 'the tower of David' by which the next feature is characterized. The blushing temples, and the upright neck, are mutually becoming; and each adds grace to the other. The world discovers neither—the holy liberty, the neck like the tower of David, it mistakes for the brow of brass, for unhallowed boldness; the holy shame it looks upon as the fettered neck of the crouching slave. But 'wisdom is justified of all her children,' and Christ will be 'admired in all them that believe.'

THE TOWER OF ARMOURY.

Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.—The tower of David is not expressly known, but it was evidently distinguished for stateliness and strength, as well as for its stores both of arms for war and of commemorative trophies of victory. The neck of the bride is erect and stately like this lofty tower; and the chains of gold and precious stones that adorn her neck resemble the costly shields and warlike weapons which ornament its walls.

The neck has a manifold significancy in Scripture, varying according to its attitudes and relations. There is *first*, the stiff neck of unbroken nature; the neck that will not stoop to bear either the heavy yoke of the law, or the easy yoke of grace—'thy neck is an iron sinew—stiff-necked, always resisting the Holy Ghost.' This 'proud and stretched-out neck' of the daughter of Zion is constantly mistaken for the neck of tower-like beauty, which so becomes the Bride of Christ, and from which it is the furthest extreme of contrast. There is *next*, the bowed and burdened neck of legal bondage. Haughty child of Zion! thy spirit of lawless liberty has been exchanged for the spirit of bondage and fear—'the law has come, sin has revived, and thou hast died.' The yoke is now upon thy neck, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. Bear it thou canst not, and neither canst thou break it—'the yoke of

my transgressions is bound by his hand, they are wreathed and come up upon my neck; he hath made my strength to fall; the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.' But there is *last*, the tower-like neck of holy liberty. Till his word comes, the word of the Lord tries; and then the commandment runs swiftly—'awake, awake! shake thyself from the dust, loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!' What thou canst not do for thyself, thy Lord does for thee, saying, 'I was unto thee as them that take the yoke from the neck'—thy chains break, thy burden falls, thou standest upright and free! Thy neck now, O daughter of Zion! is 'like the tower of David,' erect in holy freedom; see that thou 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has set thee free, and be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage!'

On this tower-like neck 'there hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of mighty men.' A thousand *trophies* of victory taken from the vanquished hosts of darkness, and 'meet for the necks of them that take the spoil,' grace the Bride of Immanuel. They adorn the church triumphant above, the church militant on earth, and the person of every faithful soldier of the Captain of Salvation. 'The strong man armed has been overcome by One stronger than he, and spoiled of all his armour wherein he trusted'; and Jesus has bestowed it as an ornament on his Bride. Through grace thou hast also overcome, O believer! 'Satan has been bruised under thy feet,' and the sword and shield of Goliath thou hast hung up before the Lord in David's tower. A thousand *memorials* of divine help hang beside those spoils of the vanquished enemy. Once and again when thou hast returned more than conqueror, thou hast hung up thine arms in grateful memorial before the Lord of hosts. That 'helmet' with which 'he covered thy head in the battle'—that 'breastplate' against which the polished shaft was shivered in pieces—that 'shield which quenched the fiery darts of the wicked'—that 'sword' which 'turned to flight the armies of the aliens'—these thou hast hung up in everlasting memorial unto the God of thy salvation. But there hang also

in this armoury ‘a thousand *bucklers*’ ready for a thousand battles—‘all of them shields of the mighty.’ New conflicts of faith are before thee, but thou needst not fear—thou needst not bow thy neck—thou needst not crouch before Satan, again to become his slave. Stand fast in thy liberty from the world, from sin, from the law; for ‘thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury’—thickly clustered with thine enemies’ arms taken in war, with thine own weapons of former battles, and with a thousand bucklers besides, prepared for thee by the Lord of hosts for a thousand future triumphs.

THE TWIN ROES.

Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.—‘We did not see here any flocks feeding or young harts leaping, but in other places we had frequent occasion to notice the sheep and lambs browsing on the like pastures, *among* but not *on* the lilies; for while the lily furnishes no acceptable food for flocks and herds, it seems by the shade of its high broad leaves to retain the moisture, and so to nourish herbage wherever it grows. The place of lilies would thus be the place of richest pasture, as Solomon evidently indicates when, using the figure, he speaks of, “the young roes which feed among the lilies.” They grew in almost incredible numbers and luxuriance’ (Bonar). The lilies among which the roes feed seem to represent the white or lily-coloured part of the Bride’s dress with which the breasts were adorned. ‘Girt about the paps with a golden girdle’ is the great Bridegroom of the Church; the Queen’s robe ‘of gold of Ophir’ is encircled ‘with a raiment’—probably a girdle—‘of needle-work,’ and such a girdle these lilies appear to represent.

The twin roes among the lilies have been interpreted by the Jews of the two tables of the law; by some of the Christian Fathers (to the same effect) of love to God and our neighbor; and less suitably but more commonly, of the Old and New Testaments. Without gainsaying these interpretations, we venture

to think that Scripture affords a more direct explanation of the emblem. The Church is by Solomon set forth as 'a bride adorned for her husband,' and her breasts beneath the bridal attire are described as double—as if this were their most marked characteristic. The believer is more than once described by Paul as clothed in spiritual armour; and as in the bride's dress with Solomon, so in the soldier's defensive armour with Paul, the breastplate alone is described as double—in evident allusion to the two breasts of the warrior shown also in the breastplate. We have therefore the key furnished by the word itself in the divine command,—'putting on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*.' Faith and love are the mailed breasts of the soldier of Jesus; faith and love are the 'twin roes' of the bride of Jesus. 'Blessed are the paps which thou hast sucked—yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it!—that hear with the ear of faith, and keep with the heart of love. These twins are elsewhere called 'faith working by love;' and 'faith and a good conscience'—for the keeping of the law is love. Faith without love is hypocrisy, love without faith is legality; either without the other is dead, and either cherished to the injury of the other is nourished to its own hurt. They are 'roes that feed among the lilies,' finding no pasture either amongst the thorns of the world which choke the green pastures of the word, or amongst the barren and prickly briars of contention and strife. These two are 'twins'—born together, feeding together, growing together, beautiful together. If either should seem to increase without the other, its solitude would mark it as an offense, and no longer an ornament. If either sickens the other pines along with it, if either is injured the other suffers the same wound, if either dies the other cannot live—'Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.'

'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.' If, O believer! thine eyes are toward the Lord discerning and desiring him—if the locks of thy consecration are like a flock of goats, and shorn by no tempter's hand—if thy faith is undecayed like a set of perfect teeth—if thy conscience is cleansed

from dead works like leprous lips transformed into a thread of scarlet—if thy repentance unto life has changed the brow of brass into the blushing pomegranate within thy locks—if holy liberty renders thy once burdened neck erect like the tower of David, and if like twin roes feeding among the lilies are thy faith and love—then notwithstanding innumerable sins thy Lord assureth thee, ‘Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee!’

XV.

THE BRIDAL EVENING.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S FAREWELL—THE GARDEN OF SPICES—THE SPICES OF THE GARDEN—THE BETROTHING SUPPER.

Come with me from Lebanon, *my* spouse, with me from Lebanon : look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, *my* spouse ; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, *my* spouse ! how much better is thy love than wine ! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices ! Thy lips, O *my* spouse, drop as the honey-comb : honey and milk *are* under thy tongue ; and the smell of thy garments *is* like the smell of Lebanon. A garden enclosed *is* my sister *my* spouse ; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants *are* an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits ; camphire with spike-nard ; spikenard and saffron ; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense ; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices : a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. 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 pleasant fruits. I am come into my garden, my sister, *my* spouse : I have gathered my myrrh with my spice ; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey ; I have drunk my wine with my milk : eat O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved !—CHAP. iv. 8—v. 1.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S FAREWELL.

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. Thou art all fair, my love : there is no spot in thee. Come with me from Lebanon.—Although for the sake of distinctness we have deferred till now the consideration of the sixth verse, yet much of the beauty of the passage consists in its connexion. The King having passed the day with the Bride, and having extolled her spotless comeliness, intimates that the night is ap-

proaching, and that he must leave her and retire to his own resting-place in the mountain of myrrh till the morning. He has betrothed her to himself, but all things are not yet ready for the marriage, nor can he now take her home to his Father's house because he has not yet 'prepared a place for her.' She discerns no symptoms of sunset, but his watchful heart forewarns her that it is near; and after having given the intimation, he more than repeats all his praise—'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.' It is the assurance that his departure is occasioned by no want of kindness toward her, but that he departs in love, as in love he had come. He then invites her to look from Lebanon on the fair garden he has provided for her, enters it along with her, and ere he goes partakes with her of a bridal or betrothing supper in pledge of his return to take her home.

By the literal interpreters of the Song a regular succession of days, of mornings and nights, has been found or rather has been fancied, for it exists not in the book but in an inventive imagination. There are two distinct nights in the narrative, and expressly called nights; in the whole allegory there is no third night introduced; and the space intervening between the two nights is of necessity day. There is also by implication, as well as by allusion, a morning following the second night, and by implication likewise a night succeeding that morning; but neither has that morning the brightness of the previous day, nor that night the darkness of the night preceding. So also in the first part of the Song, altogether there are various transactions that must have occupied considerable portions of time, but that time is not distinguished into day and night; and we only create confusion by introducing our own conceptions. Properly and peculiarly there is only one day in the entire Song, included between two nights, and the second night much darker than the first. That day, cloudless from morning till evening, shines on the whole narrative of the Third Canticle.

'As long as I am in the world,' said Jesus, 'I am the light of the world.' Immediately before his appearing, the darkness of all the Church's preceding history is represented by

night; and the darkness that follows during his crucifixion is much deeper and more awful. Throughout the Song the King's presence is morning and day, and his absence is night; corresponding to the word and act of Jesus,—‘yet a little while the light is with you; and he departed and did hide himself from them.’ Before leaving earth he commands his disciples to show forth his death till he come again, because only at his second coming will there again be fullness of light. The resurrection of Jesus, however glorious, was neither the abiding nor the full return of the Lord; for he was not seen by the Church in general, and his intercourse with his more immediate disciples was only in transient interviews. At the same time, the resurrection was the dawn of bright morning both to himself and to his Church; and of it in the first instance must be interpreted the breaking of day in these words, ‘until the day break I will get me to the mountain of myrrh;’

That Garden in the Holy Mount,
Where I design three nights to lie,
In spices wrapt, as prophets shall recount.— *Woodford.*

It was the first full rest for the Man of Sorrows from the day of his birth; it was to repose with the rich in his death, embalmed in royal abundance of myrrh and spices. Labor was then to be over and rest begun; the depth of humiliation past, and honor conferred. Jesus told his disciples of the ‘coming night;’ and looked forward with desire to his rest in the grave, with his soul in Paradise, as the commencement of ‘the joy set before him.’

Till the day dawn, my love, the bridal day,
For which thou, less than I, dost long;
Till the night-shadows swiftly flee away,
A while I'll leave thee, a little while be gone;
To the hills of myrrh, and frankincense I'll go,
And fetch the morning as it 'gins to blow:
Yet ah! I cannot leave thee, love, thus soon;
My love thus soon I cannot leave,
Rather a while, my love, let us hand in hand,
To Liban walk and Amana,
Shenir and Hermon, which large views command.

Woodford.

Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.—The reference in Israel's history is to the promised land as the garden of the Lord set before them in its beauty, with invitation to enter and possess it; and the call 'come with me from Lebanon' is probably in allusion to Moses being taken to the top of Pisgah, that he might 'look as from Shenir and Amana' on Israel's heritage beyond the Jordan. So in the earthly history of Jesus, while the deep waters of the Jordan still rolled their dark floods between him and the possession of the promises for his people, he takes three of his disciples 'into an high mountain apart,' and, as 'from the top of Amana,' they see his glory. He begins to tell them of his departure, but not without inviting them to accompany or to follow him into glory—'Come with me from Lebanon!' He 'goes to prepare a place for them,' with the promise of 'returning again to receive them to himself'; and from the top of Lebanon he gives them a foresight of that glory, when he is 'transfigured before them'—taking them to the highest summit of earth, and bringing down the glory of heaven to unveil itself and encompass them around.

Now also it is that the King, for the first time, calls the Bride his Sister and his Spouse, or his Sister-Spouse; because ere the sun has gone down, which already begins to set, he is to institute the bridal supper as the formal and sealing pledge of everlasting union. Sister only implies that oneness of nature, of disposition, and of rank, which is necessary to constitute a perfect spouse. For this end the Eternal Word condescended to assume our nature, that as the first Adam, so likewise the Second, might say, 'This is now flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone.' And it is toward the closing scenes of his life that Jesus begins more especially to 'call his disciples not servants but friends,' and to reveal to them the fullness of his love ere he leaves, saying—'Come with me from Lebanon, my Sister, my Spouse!'

This is an invitation to the Bride to leave the cold heights of Lebanon and its dangerous recesses. The call is similar

in its import to that of the forty-fifth Psalm—‘Hearken, O daughter! and consider, forget thine own people and thy father’s house, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.’ Lebanon is the border mountain between the hostile kingdoms without, and the promised land within; high for earth, but too low for heaven; the confine between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of grace. The Bride of Christ has turned her back on the world and set her face toward Zion; she has laboriously gained the summit of the intervening hills, and he invites her to look on the riches and beauty of the land flowing with milk and honey. He warns her that there is no safety in the borders between the two kingdoms of darkness and of light, of the world and of heaven—that there specially are the haunts of the roaring lion who seeketh to devour, and who unites the deceitful beauty with the swiftness and the cruelty of the leopard.

Such an invitation is given at the first conversion of the heart to God, needed then and serviceable; but too needful and very serviceable throughout the entire pilgrimage, which is a continued looking from Amana, coming from Lebanon, and leaving of the lions’ dens. It is a kindred invitation at death to enter the garden enclosed, the paradise above; quitting then this earth which is but a border land between hell and heaven, and in all its paths infested by every fierce and ravenous beast. So with Stephen—Jesus appears, to conduct and welcome him home from the den of devouring lions around him, and causes his countenance to shine with heavenly lustre, while, leaving earth beneath him, he ‘looks from the top of Amana and Shenir’ to the better country above.

Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.—The King, departing for a season to the mountain of myrrh, is overcome by the earnest look of his betrothed spouse. When he has already turned to leave, he is detained and held as ‘by one of her eyes and one chain of her neck’; and declares that he values her love far above all earthly delights; as his love likewise had been estimated by her. This presents a vivid picture of the character of the intercourse that is main-

tained between Christ and the soul that cleaves to him. He is sometimes detained by the intense entreaty of the whole heart—'I will not let thee go'; but oft when the present interview has been ended so far as regards express supplication, he returns of his own free grace, saying, 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse—thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.'

How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!—than the choicest luxuries or the most reviving cordials that earth can furnish. Christ, who was ever exerting his miraculous powers for the relief of the needy, only once put forth those powers for the production of a luxury; that luxury was wine, the richest of earthly delicacies, and wine more delicious than the produce of earthly vineyards. His design was to 'manifest forth his glory' at the marriage feast—giving to the assembled guests 'the good wine kept till now,' but saying to his own Bride—'how much better is thy love than wine!' 'The Son of Man,' said he, 'is come eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber'; and when he had thus spoken, he sat down to meat with Simon the Pharisee. Amidst the costly viands and the wine sparkling in the cup, his attention was riveted all the while with the contrite love of 'the woman which was a sinner'; his chief joy at the feast was to be enabled to testify that 'she loved much'; and the language of his heart to the weeping penitent was—'How much better is thy love than wine!'—than this banquet with all its luxuries! At the well of Sychar Jesus sat weary and athirst, needing as a reviving cordial that wine which he had freely given to others as a luxury, yet refused a cup of cold water; and by the penitent love of a newly-redeemed soul he was soon more refreshed than by wine—'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.'—'The smell of the ointments and the smell of the garments' in this and the succeeding verse, we shall consider in the 'Garden of Spices.'

Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue.—Bride of Christ! a little while ago 'the poison of asps was under thy lips and thy mouth was full of bitterness.' If it was sweet to others, it was bitter to him

that loved thee and gave himself for thee; and its honeyed accents to present friends were often little else than the words of a 'tongue using deceit'—too easily followed by the droppings of the gall and wormwood that lay at the root. But, through grace, thou hast drunk 'the sincere milk of the word' as a newborn babe; thou 'hast found honey, and the honeycomb has been sweet to thy taste, in the statutes of the Lord which rejoice the heart'; and now, by the word of Christ abiding in thee, 'Honey and milk are under thy tongue, and thy lips drop as the honeycomb.'

For further illustration of the passage throughout, let us turn to the dying thief redeemed out of the jaws of death and hell, who represents in so lively a type the whole Church of the living God, the Bride the Lamb's wife. 'Deliver my soul from the sword, my darling from the power of the dog! save me from the lion's mouth!'—was the cry of the great sufferer for himself and his Church; and straightway he added, 'thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.' In that hour there hung beside him a brand plucked out of the burning, one of 'the great company that no man can number' which constitutes 'the Lamb's wife'; and how appropriate toward him were the words—'Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse! look from the top of Amana, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.' 'A Garden enclosed, my Sister, my Spouse,' and into the garden of God the ransomed Bride was that same day to enter—'to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise! an earnest of all the Church, from that hour till this, saved from the lion's mouth. 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck;' hanging together on the accursed tree, it was literally with but one of the eyes that Christ could be looked upon by the dying believer; and such a sidelong glance affords a lively emblem of the limited and partial beholding of the Lamb by the visible Church, till she shall see him face to face in glory. 'Honey and milk are now under the tongue' which, an hour before, had been full of cursing and bitterness; and when 'they give Him gall for his meat and vinegar for his thirst,' the lips of the newly-betrothed soul are 'dropping

like a honeycomb' sweetest words of truth, meekness, penitence, faith, hope, and love. It was 'the hour and the power of darkness,' and the dense smoke of the bottomless pit was rising around the Holy sufferer; but the fragrant incense that ascended from that grateful heart was more welcome and refreshing than the choicest perfumes—'How much better is the smell of thine ointments than all spices!' Finally, under the heavy hand of his Father's wrath it was not the will of the Father nor his own, that he should be so supported as to impair the truth that 'it pleased the Father to bruise him'; and it would seem that the brightest ray of comfort that shone upon him was the love of this penitent soul in the time of espousals. Words of kindness he spoke to others, words of entreaty in others' behalf, words of sorest agony, and then of calmest resignation; but in the seven utterances of those dark hours, there is one distinguished from all the rest by its bright anticipation of the joy set before him. It was as if a cheering wine-cup had been raised to his lips and presented to him when 'crucified in weakness;' and this wine-cup was the love of a ransomed soul—'Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!—To-day shalt thou be *with me* in Paradise.' 'A garden enclosed' in heaven was awaiting 'his sister, his spouse,' and he gave assurance of safe and immediate entrance into Paradise along with himself; Jesus himself was to be there also on the bright evening of that darkest day; it was 'the joy set before him' causing him for a moment to forget the anguish. Such a gleam of gladness no cup of earthly wine could ever have ministered; and to the dying sinner, now the living bride, the heart of the suffering Saviour says—'How much better is thy love than wine!' Believer! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and thy love is as precious to him as the love of the penitent who bled beside him on the tree.

THE GARDEN OF SPICES.

A garden enclosed (is) my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits; a fountain of gardens, a well of living

waters, and streams from Lebanon—or as it ought rather to be rendered without addition, ‘A garden enclosed, my Sister, my Spouse’; or as in our oldest English Bible ‘a closed garden, my sister, spouse.’ The national historic reference is to the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land abounding with fountains and streams, rich with all variety of fruitful trees, famous of old for its balm and its spices, the glory of all lands. In all its beauty it could be overseen from the heights of Lebanon, or by Moses from the top of Pisgah. ‘Now we are in the holy land, confined on the north with the mountaines of Libanus—a land that flowed with milke and hony, in the middest as it were of the habitable world, and under a temperate clime, adorned with beautiful mountaines and luxurious vallies, the rockes producing excellent waters, and no part empty of delight or profit; watered by many springs and torrents; the soyle about the Jordan of so admirable a nature that fruits which are only proper to cold, to hot, and to temperate countries, there jointly thrive with a like felicity’ (Sandys). Leading Israel through the Red Sea, and trampling over the horses and chariots of Pharaoh (i. 9); bringing their nobles to eat and to drink in the presence of God (ii. 4); calling the people to arise and come away when the spies brought the earnest of the land of promise (ii. 10, 11); the Lord now invites them to enter that ‘garden’ of the earth which he has espied and prepared for them (Wyeliffe). He goes before and invites, yet Israel enters first; for the Ark of the Covenant with Jehovah’s presence carries in the Jordan till all Israel has passed over. Having entered this garden, they now say ‘Let my Beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits!’ He follows them immediately, calls them to partake of the ripe fruits of the land, and discontinues their wilderness supply of manna, now that they have begun to eat abundantly of the produce of his garden—of this land flowing with milk and honey, fragrant with the balm of Gilead, rich with the grapes of Esheol, and abounding in all pleasant fruits.

The garden which, outwardly, was the country of Israel—the promised land with vineyards ready planted and wells ready dug—is, spiritually, ‘the kingdom of heaven,’ the true

land of promise, the rich kingdom of grace. Into this kingdom the Bride is invited to come, invited already when 'the flowers were appearing with the tender grape,' and invited again when all its fruits are ripe.

As we have noted in the summary, the garden is four times described in the Song, and that which marks the present description is the ripeness of all its products (p. 41). Jesus has now 'finished the work the Father gave him to do;' there is no bud to open now, no flower to knit into fruit, no tender grape to ripen; all is ripe, all fit for the great husbandman to gather—'an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits.' In the infancy of Jesus, it was the wine in the tender grape; it is now, 'I am the true vine,' with its pleasant fruit pressed for the bride's wine-cup. The Bridegroom never calls the garden hers but his own; the Bride never calls the garden hers but always his; for 'the kingdom is the Lord's,' his the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of grace; yet the trees of the garden he calls 'thy plants,' for all that belongs to him is hers; for her they were expressly provided, and on her freely bestowed. And as in the garden of flowers, where Jesus is himself the vine with the tender grape, there are also springing up around, many trees of righteousness, which are to be watched 'lest the foxes spoil them'; so Jesus, now saying I am the vine, adds, 'ye are the branches, herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.' It is not as if the vine were imperfect in itself—as if root and stem and branch were not found in Christ himself; for he also is first of all the branches, 'the Branch which the Lord has made strong for himself, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.' But when Jesus has left the earth, his people are the visible branches of the invisible root; all the pleasant fruit which the vine now bears is through them as its branches, and 'herein is the Father now glorified that they bear much fruit.' All the holy fruit they bear, of love, and truth, and wisdom, is pleasant fruit to Christ, pleasant fruit to the Father, pleasant fruit of the Spirit—'thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates and pleasant fruits.' It is only by the fruit-bearing of the branches now, that the fruitfulness of the root can be evidenced—for it is

Christ bearing fruit through us. Men will judge of the unseen Christ by the seen and tasted fruit of his acknowledged branches—see that the fruit be abundant!—see that it be pleasant!—and remember that ‘without him ye can do nothing’; that ‘as the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Christ!’

‘A garden enclosed.’ Within the one great garden of the kingdom of heaven, two gardens special and memorable, were before the Lord Jesus—the garden of Gethsemane and the garden of the Sepulchre. In a garden of light and peace the first man was overcome and fell, and we sinned in him and fell with him in that first transgression; in a garden of darkness and sorrow the Second Man overcame, by strong crying and tears obtaining eternal redemption for his people. But the reference is specially to the garden of the tomb, ‘the mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense’ where Jesus was to repose embalmed in spices. ‘In the place where they crucified him there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre wherein was never man yet laid.’ On the open hill of Calvary Jesus was crucified, ‘a spectacle to the world, to angels, to men.’ But ‘nigh at hand’ was the garden of the rich Joseph of Arimathea—not a place of dead men’s bones, but a garden enclosed, and adorned with pleasant plants; as may be inferred both from the wealth of its owner, and from the circumstance of Mary mistaking him who addressed her for ‘the gardener’—implying that the place was such as indicated the care of one in constant attendance for its cultivation. But, more specially, within the walls of the garden was an enclosed tomb; dug newly from the rock, with its heavy door of stone defying all thoughtless intrusion, and so enclosed that none had ever yet entered to occupy it—‘a sepulchre wherein man was never yet laid.’ This was the lowly rest for which Jesus longed; the quiet enclosure where he was to repose in his death. The newness and security of the tomb were honorable for him; and satisfying also for his sorrowing Bride, because assuring her that by none but himself had the prison of the grave been opened on her behalf.

‘A spring shut up, a fountain sealed’—for ‘they made the

sepulchre sure, sealing the stone.' That spring was Jesus 'the fountain of living waters'; Jesus who at the well of Sychar said, 'if thou hadst known who it is that saith, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked for him and he would have given thee living water;' Jesus who on the last day of the feast proclaimed, 'if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' But he had not yet actually become the springing fountain of life; the fountain was in him, the life was in him; but hitherto it had not been opened, that dying men might drink. Jesus himself declared—'My blood is drink indeed; except ye drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you.' The shed blood, therefore, is the 'fountain' of 'living water' for the perishing; though never separate from the Spirit 'springing up within the soul to life eternal.' While the nails pierced the hands and feet of our blessed Lord on Calvary, the fountain of life was opened; but for a season the opened 'spring was shut up, the fountain was sealed,' when they laid the body of Jesus in the tomb; when they rolled the great stone to the mouth of the sepulchre, and sealed it up. Had Jesus remained there, it had been for ever 'a spring shut up, a fountain sealed'—not shut up for men, but from them; not secured for the Bride, but closed against her for ever. This was what man and Satan desired and designed by the seal. But He lay there whom the Father himself 'had sealed;' and the signet of enemies was employed by the Father to seal this fountain undisturbed, untouched, till the hour when its living waters were to break forth. Then it was 'a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon'—then the imprisoned spring burst forth; then the clear fountain welled up from its hidden depths; then the living waters flowed over, the waters that were to flow for ever. The block of stone was borne away; the seal of earth was broken by the gushing stream, 'springing up into everlasting life,' from 'the well of gardens, the pit of living waters' (Old Bible).

'Streams from Lebanon' issued forth; for though the fountain was lowly, yet its source was lofty. A spring fed by the 'snow of Lebanon'; the cold-flowing water, from the everlasting snows, was never exhausted by the drought, never lost

its freshness by the heat of summer, but was always abundant and always refreshing. But loftier than Lebanon's summit is the source of this fountain, for it is in the throne of God and the Lamb; the well springs up from the earth, but its source is in the highest heaven. It is more enduring also than Lebanon's snow, for it comes from the life of God himself, and springs up into everlasting life in us. It is no longer now 'a spring shut up'—no longer 'a fountain sealed,'—but all are invited to drink. Beside its flowing waters 'the Spirit and the Bride say Come, he that heareth saith Come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely!' But Jesus asks, 'will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field; or shall the cold-flowing waters be forsaken?—because my people have forgotten me;' calling himself this flowing water, this spring from Lebanon. Have you forsaken Him? are you leaving Him? will you refuse to drink and live?

Jesus is for ever 'a spring shut up, a fountain sealed,' because 'no man can come to him except the Father both draw' the man, and 'remove the stone from the well's mouth'; none can drink of the living fountain except the Spirit break the seal, and give wisdom 'to know the gift of God.' For ever Jesus is an open stream of life, because daily, hourly, instantly, he invites all—'if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink!'

There is a fountain filled with blood,
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
 And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
 Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
 That fountain in his day;
 And there have I, as vile as he,
 Washed all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb! thy precious blood
 Shall never lose its power
 Till all the ransomed Church of God
 Be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream
 Thy flowing wounds supply;
 Redeeming love has been my theme,
 And shall be till I die.—*Cowper.*

In a secondary sense, the Church also is 'a garden enclosed,' because it is within the enclosed garden of the kingdom of heaven; and the soul is a garden enclosed for Christ, for him to enter and occupy, reserved for the King's use and not for strangers. The believing heart is a fountain sealed, a spring shut; with the seal of the Great King upon it, with its hidden waters kept clear and fresh for him. It is also a well of living waters, with 'the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook,' with 'streams from Lebanon' watering the waste around. 'A well without water' is the darkest character with which the follower of Christ can be branded—a well useless, disappointing, dishonoring. The history of such a well is always the same—'the heart out of which are the issues of life was not kept with all diligence'—there was no stone on the well's mouth—no royal seal upon its hidden treasures—it was not kept for the King but was open to every wayfarer—its waters were fouled with the strangers' feet—the King could no longer drink them, and cut off the secret supplies that flowed from his exhaustless fountains in the heights of Lebanon. Reader! art thou for thy Lord a garden enclosed? art thou for Christ a fountain sealed?

We are a garden walled around,
 Chosen and made peculiar ground;
 A little spot enclosed by grace,
 Out of the world's wide wilderness.

Watts.

But we would not forget that the garden, which contains all in itself, is the kingdom of heaven with its King and his Bride within it. The kingdom of heaven on earth, while most freely inviting all to enter, is ever represented as an enclosure, with 'salvation for walls and bulwarks,' with 'a strait gate' through which the entrant must pass, with a locked gate at which the applicant must 'knock.' Each successive applicant for admission knocks for himself, and the door is never left open or

unguarded, but is shut behind every entrant. The world hates this kingdom because it is a garden enclosed, admitting no free range or interchange of boundaries with the world outside. They would enter if they could only break down its walls; but since they cannot, they choose a lawless liberty which has its issue in their being 'without' for ever. The Lord hath provided for his Bride an enclosed garden, which admits all for entrance but makes no provision for retreat; which shuts out the lion's den, and the roaring lion that followed her to the gate—which shuts out the world left behind, and shuts out the idols amongst the moles and bats. This garden she delights in because thus enclosed, and she only longs for its upper terraces in the Church above; because the heavenly Paradise is entirely and eternally 'a garden enclosed,' 'nothing that defileth entering' for ever, and its occupants 'going no more out.' Were the enclosed garden a vast hospital, O perishing sinner! it were thy wisdom to enter it before thou hast become the prey of thy pursuer, swifter than the leopard and fiercer than the ravening wolf. Were the kingdom of heaven on earth a dismal prison-house, it should be a welcome refuge for men who have forfeited their lives to justice; but when it is 'a very Paradise of pomegranates and pleasant fruits' (Old Bible), and when it contains nothing but what is 'pleasant to the eye, good for food or for healing medicine, and trees to be desired to make men wise,' why should any man refuse to enter merely because it is 'a garden enclosed?'

THE SPICES OF THE GARDEN.

*How much better is the smell of thine ointments than all spices—the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon—camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.—*There is scarcely anything in the gospel history more closely connected with the death of Jesus than ointment and spices. By the Lord's own institution, the wine that pertained to joy and feasting is for ever associated with his blood;

and almost as intimately have his words associated ointments with his death. The statement may appear too broad, but to our remembrance there were no deeds done toward Christ on earth of which he took any notice, or on which he appeared to set any value, compared with the anointing of his feet and head. Ointments were always prized in the east; and were especially connected with feasts among the living, and with funerals of the dead. At a feast 'the woman who was a sinner' anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair—'seest thou this woman,' he said, 'she loved much and is forgiven much.' At a feast, again, when the 'spikenard very costly' was poured upon him, Jesus expressly connected the anointing with his death; joining the elements of feasting and of mourning as distinctly as in the supper itself—'against the day of my burying hath she kept this: she hath come to anoint me aforehand to the burying.' How greatly he prized this funeral anointing may be gathered both from his willing reception of the costly odours, which if sold would have supplied many poor with bread; and from the declaration, like to which he never made another, that 'wheresoever the gospel should be preached throughout the whole world, that anointing should be told in memorial of her' who ministered it. This fact proves how highly Jesus prized the funeral ointment in which he was to be wrapped by Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and the holy women that followed him—not for its own sake but as a typical emblem. If so much is made of these odours in all the gospels; if the narrative of the anointing of Jesus while living, and of his embalming when dead, is so full and so minute; can we wonder at a large place being assigned to it in an emblematic and allegoric Song?—yet, after all, a place not larger but less than in the historic gospels.

'Thy garments, and the smell of thine ointments'—these expressions do not lead us away from Jesus himself, because all his anointings on earth were furnished by the ministry of the Bride. Jesus made bread for the multitudes, he created wine for the marriage; but spices he received entirely from

others. He gave to men more earthly bread than he accepted from them, more wine than he received; but the only anointing he ever conferred was the real anointing of the Holy Ghost, the breathing and bestowal of the Spirit:—while he prized the outward emblematic gift,—grace in the believer is always fragrant to Jesus; his own anointing returning to himself as a sweet savour, as well as ascending to the Father; and the love also that brought the anointings for the dying and for the dead was most acceptable to the Beloved. But as the final passover was the food which from his youth up he had desired to eat, so the final anointing and the funeral embalming were to him ‘the spices above all ointments.’ The ‘garments’ were not chiefly the Bride’s personal raiment of the soul, but ‘the fine linen bought’ by the Bride in which she wound him with the spices; signifying that within that tomb all fragrance was gathered—all myrrh, cassia, aloes, spikenard, frankincense, calamus—all fragrance of heaven, all fragrance of earth. The Lord Jesus lay embalmed and embedded in odours of infinite cost—the anointed One with all the ointments that were ever to be his. The anointing of his holy conception by the Spirit—the anointing of his birth typified by the eastern odours—the anointing of his baptism when the Spirit descended and abode—the anointing of his death when through the Eternal Spirit he was offered to the Father; all contributed their odours to the tomb. All his own personal fragrance, in joy, in sorrow, in childhood, in manhood, in life and in death, was gathered now. His death possessed a fragrance peculiar to itself—of all justice, all truth, all love, all wisdom, completed and fulfilled. When he lay entombed, it was in the full ‘mountain of myrrh,’ in the high-heaped ‘hill of frankincense,’ not a grain to be added more to all eternity. The outward abundance of odours in the hundred pounds’ weight of myrrh and aloes brought by Nicodemus, and designed to shadow the true anointing, was so great that a modern murmurer has objected that ‘it was enough to embalm two hundred dead bodies.’ Never till then was the bed of spices prepared, for his life itself borrowed odours from his death, while his death had an infinite

fragrance of its own. But thence onward till this day not a grain of myrrh or frankincense has been gathered to the heap, nor will be to all eternity. All was finished then, all full, all perfect—in all variety of precious odours, and in all abundance for earth and for heaven. Not another perfume will now be brought—no small dust of the balance can be cast in along with ‘all the powders of the merchant.’ Nothing can be added to the perfect—nor can the overflowing cup be made fuller. ‘I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, to the hill of frankincense,’ wrapped in garments fragrant as Lebanon, and surrounded by all ‘trees of frankincense.’ If the round globe were one hill of pure frankincense, if all the orbs above were gathered like so many grains to form one vast mountain of myrrh, if the burning heavens were the censer in which to kindle this heap of incense—it would be like ‘Lebanon not sufficient to burn’—it would be as nothing compared with the Word made flesh, the Creator enwrapping himself in created vestments, and presenting himself to the Father as ‘a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour.’

Awake, O North wind; and come, thou South; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.—All is ripe, all full, in the garden of spices; one want only remains in the Breath of heaven to diffuse the hidden fragrance. It is no added balm that the Bridegroom asks, but the Spirit to spread the savour of his name abroad; for throughout the word the wind is the constant emblem of the Spirit, ‘the wind blowing where it listeth,’ the Spirit breathing where he willeth. ‘Ointment poured forth’ the virgins had called his name; ‘awake, O wind, and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out!’ is Christ’s own prayer: ‘I will pray the Father and he will send you another Comforter—he shall glorify me for he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you—Father glorify thy name.’ He prays the Father for the Comforter, and by himself also will the Comforter be sent—‘if I depart I will send him to you’; and ‘awake, O north wind!’ is the voice of a divine call to the Spirit to come. ‘When he is come he will reprove the world’—for it is the North wind that is first

awoke by Jesus ; it is the Comforter coming, but with sharp conviction in the hearts of men ; but the 'South wind' soon follows with the joys of the Holy Ghost—'Come from the four winds, O Breath!' The prayer was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost 'when the rushing mighty wind came from heaven and filled all the house'—not from east or west or north or south it came, but straight down from heaven, containing the four winds within it, and ready to disperse itself abroad to the four corners of the habitable earth with all convincing, converting, and reviving power.

But while we interpret the words primarily of the Bridegroom of the Church, we need not limit them to this application ; because believers are 'trees of righteousness,' and in Christ's absence it belongs to the Church to pray that the Spirit would come, and breathe upon the garden of the Lord. The Father, the great husbandman, the plants of whose planting cannot be plucked up, has promised to fill the garden of the kingdom of heaven with all variety of trees of frankincense, in the members of the Church fragrant with grace, and each with some distinctive excellence. 'I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree ; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together.' From us therefore now, as well as from Jesus while on earth, ought the prayer to ascend,—'Awake, O North wind, and come thou South, and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out!'

The South wind brings heat, clouds, moisture, rain. 'Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds,' asks the son of Barachel, 'how thy garments are warm when he quieteth the earth by the south wind?' and he adds, 'now men see not the bright light that is in [or behind] the clouds, but the wind passeth and cleanseth them ; fair weather cometh out of the north ; with God is terrible majesty.' He saith again that 'cold cometh out of the north ;' and the author of this Song records that 'the north wind driveth away rain.' Mere heat and rain prepare no tree for bearing and ripen no fruit for eating ; mere comfort and refreshment communicate life to no dead soul, and

fruitfulness to no leafy cumberer of the ground. 'Awake, O North wind!' is a solemn prayer; it is calling for that breath of heaven of which we know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, and which we cannot hush again at pleasure like the mere stirrings of our own hearts—for it is the Spirit of searching and keen conviction to which no man can say, 'Hitherto shalt thou come and no further.' The north wind is awake—the covering clouds are scattered—'the terrible majesty is revealed'—the Holy One shines forth 'searching the heart and trying the reins.' The tree that was gorgeous with gaudy blossoms that were never to bear is stripped by the northern blast, and all its untimely flowers lie scattered on the ground. The poor amazed soul cries out in sorrow and almost in despair—'Who can stand before his cold?' But 'by all these things men live, and in all these is the life of man's spirit.' Take courage, then, to pray—Awake, O North wind! awake and nip every deceitful bud, and scatter all that is unreal, though it leave me naked and desolate. The word of life is 'received with much affliction, as well as with joy in the Holy Ghost'; and even after we have known the South wind's genial warmth, we must ask the North wind again to awake; because the mere hot-house plant will never endure to the end, and it is still through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom. For others also as well as for ourselves we must press the petition—'Awake, O North wind'; for the promise is that 'when the Spirit is come, he will convince the world of sin,' that world which no man can convince. 'Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old; art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?' Then would a slumbering world awake, and souls awakened out of dead sleep would cry, 'What shall we do to be saved?'

But there is another prayer put into our lips, 'Come thou South wind!'—with its warmth, reviving the plant that was chilled and seemed dead before. Come, O Spirit of grace! softening, melting, reviving, gladdening the soul. Come with power, come with fullness, come with warmth thawing this

frozen heart, and blow upon this garden that the spices thereof may flow out! Grace will not force; it may be all in the heart and lie there as cold as a stone, as hard, as odourless; it may seem dead when it is only chilled and frozen. The believer needs the Spirit; the present and immediate breath of the Spirit, for every exercise of grace, as much as for its original gift.

But we must not forget that the work of the Holy Ghost is to testify of Jesus and reveal him; and having prayed for the Spirit we must add, 'Let my Beloved come and eat his pleasant fruits!' The following lines interpret the winds too literally—for the Spirit and the Breath of Jesus are one—yet they are not without interest.

But why, O winds! first call I you?
 Let my Beloved rather come,
 More than your gales his breath can do,
 Not show but make my best perfume.
 Why comes he not? O where's the let,
 Now that his garden's in its prime,
 Now that his fruits are fit to eat,
 And may be worse another time?—*Woodford.*

THE BETROTHING SUPPER.

Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.—'Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread when the passover must be killed, the disciples came to Jesus saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare for thee that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, Peter and John, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water, follow him.' This contains the single instance in the whole life of Jesus in which he had expressed an earnest desire to eat, and would not be turned aside. On his return from the desert he was 'an hungered,' and Satan urged him to satisfy his want by turning the stones into bread; but he would not eat, for 'man liveth not by bread alone but by every word of God.' At the well of Sychar his disciples pressed him,

‘Master, eat!’ but he answered, ‘I have meat to eat that ye know not of.’ But now, in the eve of the last twelve hours of his life, he saith—‘With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’ The Son of Man ‘had come eating,’ but now for the first time attaching importance to the feast of which he is to partake. ‘Let my beloved come and eat—where wilt thou that we prepare?’ Now also for the first time he speaks of partaking of ‘pleasant fruits,’ setting high value on what he designates ‘this fruit of the vine;’ for the first time likewise, he takes charge of the arrangements of the feast. Throughout his ministry Jesus is invited by men of various ranks and characters, by Pharisees, by Publicans, by chosen friends like Lazarus; or he comes uninvited, as in the case of Zaccheus; but he takes no charge of the outward arrangements, and eats what is set before him, asking no questions. But now, he sends two of his disciples—not to preach as before, and prepare his way in the desert by publishing the peace of the Kingdom—but to order the banquet-hall, and prepare the feast. The Master saith, ‘my time is at hand, I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples—where is the guest-chamber?—and he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared, there make ready for us—and they made ready the passover.’ Let now my Beloved come and eat his pleasant fruits!—this passover which with desire he hath desired to eat with his disciples—this fruit of the vine which he hath longed to drink together with them. Let him eat now the pleasant fruit of all the years of his life—the supper for which he hath longed during the twelve hours of the day—‘the meat he had to eat’ which others knew not of, and on account of which other food was indifferent. Let him partake at last of ‘his pleasant fruits, the first ripe fruit which his soul desired,’ the feast on which his heart was set from his childhood, the end of his life and the object of it all; fruit pleasant to him on the Father’s account, because the pleasure of the Father was fulfilled in it; fruit pleasant to him on the Bride’s account, because it was ‘all the fruit to take away her sin.’

I am come into my garden, my Sister, my Spouse.—‘In the evening he cometh with the twelve; and when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.’ ‘Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same’; and therefore calls the Church his Sister. For the first Adam ‘an help-mect’ was created out of his own flesh and bone, because there was no sister-spouse for him on earth, since all were inferior. But in the Second Adam it was not a bride raised up to be fit for him as for a brother; but it was the Son of God taking flesh, and humbling himself into meetness for her as toward a sister. Spouse he calls this sister, saying—‘I have not called you servants but friends, for all things that I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you;’ for unlimited confidence and repose, unrestrained opening of the whole heart, is one of the most distinctive of all the privileges of the marriage covenant. Along with unbounded confidence, there was love that knew no limits—‘As my Father hath loved me so have I loved you, continue ye in my love.’ He has confided in the Church with more than the confidence of any husband; he has loved the Church with more than any husband’s love; and from none other were these words ever so full of truth and of meaning—‘My Sister, my Spouse!’

I have gathered my myrrh with my spice.—Even before the drinking of the milk is the gathering of the myrrh; before he ‘hangs on his mother’s breasts and hopes in his God,’ Jesus is conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. He is already in first conception the Holy and the Anointed One; and all the ‘garments’ of flesh, which he begins to wrap around himself, already ‘smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia,’ in the creating power and the indwelling of the Holy Anointing Spirit. From that hour onward, ‘myrrh and spices have been gathered by him;’ in the holy human nature expanding and ‘growing in wisdom,’ and in further ‘anointing by the Spirit,’ as when at baptism the Dove descended and abode on him. Outward myrrh and spices are also gathered, typical of the spiritual and eternal—in the frankincense and myrrh offered him in infancy, in the ointment poured on his feet in the course

of his ministry, and in the spikenard very costly with which he has now been anointed for his burying. Other anointings the Bride has yet to bring for his dead body, and these he despises not; but he has received the last of the myrrh and spices that are to be gathered by himself. In like manner through all his journey in the wilderness he has been 'gathering myrrh' from the desert; making supplication with strong crying, and with tears which on our account are preserved by the Father 'in his bottle;' and gathering costly spices in all his works, and all his temptations. Some, indeed, of the last and bitterest drops of myrrh he has still to gather, but he knows that 'he cannot fail nor be discouraged,' and in the nearness and certainty of the fulfilment he addresses the Bride as if all were already accomplished.

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey—I have drunk my milk.—In the eating of the honey and drinking of the milk and of the wine, there is indicated the true participation of human nature in all its sinless characteristics. When Jesus after his resurrection would prove to his disciples that he was not a spirit, he asked them if they had any meat; and 'they gave him a piece of a honeycomb, and he did eat before them.' So also in the prophecy of his birth, when 'the Virgin is to bear a Son and call his name Immanuel,' it is added that 'butter and honey shall he eat'—exactly as here the milk and the honey. 'I have drunk my milk' was fulfilled when the Eternal Word hung in infancy on his earthly mother, and praised his Heavenly Father saying, 'Thou art he that took me out of the womb, thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts!'

I have drunk my wine—drink, yea drink abundantly.—The cup which the Father gave him none could drink but himself; but when he has drunk that cup we may drink it after him. A cup of judgment it was to him, unmingled judgment, but to us a cup of mercy; yet not in the form of mere mercy, but of judgment finished and full of grace; to him of judgment unto death, to us of death accomplished—'this cup is the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it!' It was he that drank the cup of blood, and not we; the wine-cup filled with his

own blood he drank at the Father's hand, wine changed into blood. The wine-cup also we drink at his hand, but it is blood changed into wine. To him the cup was of wrath in all its fulness; to us the cup is of wrath exhausted, and of love filling it to the brim—'drink, yea drink abundantly!' The cup of sin imputed, he drank; the cup of sin forgiven, he gives us to drink. He drank the cup of the old covenant at the hand of the Father; we drink the cup of the new covenant at the hand of the Son; yet as full of the Father's love as of the Son's for 'therefore did the Father love him because he laid down his life.' He received the cup of curse from his God, the cup of blessing we receive from him:—the cup of condemnation his; the cup of pardon ours.

But it is not merely that the curse endured by Jesus is turned for us into blessing, the penalty into promise,—but that all the milk and the honey of the Word are ours because they first were his. 'The words thou gavest me I have given them,' is true not only of his own utterances on earth, but of every word in the Scriptures of truth; for 'all the promises of God are yea and amen in him,' and in him alone. They are given first to him, and through him given to us; yet not given to him simply to transfer to us; but to him to become his own, as part of himself, and through him to be conveyed to us. There was no milk for us in the word, for us no honey. 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' but 'there was none righteous, no not one'—none walking uprightly whom the word might profit; and it was 'line upon line, precept upon precept, that we might stumble and fall and be broken.' But Jesus came—'that Holy Thing the Son of God—and butter and honey did the child eat, refusing the evil and choosing the good.' He received his Father's word—'My Son! eat thou honey because it is good, and the honeycomb which is sweet to the taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul.' From the hour when he hung on his mother's breast till the hour when he hung on the accursed tree, his soul lived upon the word of God, and he died with the word of God on his lips—'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!' He drank every drop of the sincere milk of the word, greatly de-

lighting in it all his life long in childlike lowliness—‘I have drunk my milk’; and from every cell of that heavenly honeycomb he drew the precious honey drop—‘I have eaten my honey.’ Then he gives us ‘broken’ for our food ‘his own body,’ in which are all the ‘milk’ and all the ‘honey’ of the word and will of God, and says—‘Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you.’ And now, therefore, through him it is to us ‘the sincere milk of the word’; and now to us it is ‘the word sweeter than the honeycomb.’ ‘I have drunk my milk—drink ye as new-born babes the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby! I have eaten my honey—eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness; hear and your soul shall live!’—‘Eat, O friends!—drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!—take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you—this cup is the new testament in my blood, drink ye all of it!’

Thus closes the bridal Supper of the Song—thus closes the covenant supper of Jesus with his disciples. In neither is it the marriage feast, but the feast of espousal, in seal of the future marriage. In both, the Bridegroom takes leave of the Bride before he sits down to eat; and in both, it is the solemn farewell in pledge of abiding union; but in prospect of immediate separation the hour the feast is over. Alike in the Song and in the Gospel, it is the one solemn covenant transaction that takes place between the King and his sister-spouse—between the Bridegroom and the children of the bride-chamber. It is the pledge of the King’s return to the Marriage Supper; but that supper is not celebrated in the Song, for the concluding words of the Bride are, ‘Turn my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices!’ It is the pledge of Christ’s return to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—‘his death shown till he come’; but that Supper will not be spread till ‘the day of his appearing,’ for the last inspired words of the Church are—‘Even so, come Lord Jesus!’

That night in which he was betrayed,
The Saviour of the world took bread;
The symbol of his flesh he broke,
And thus to all his followers spoke:

My broken body thus I give,
For you, for all—take, eat, and live;
Then in his hands the cup he raised,
And God anew he thanked and praised.

My blood I thus pour forth, he cries,
To cleanse the soul in sin that lies;
In this the covenant is sealed,
And Heaven's eternal grace revealed.

XVI.

THE NIGHT AFTER SUNSET.

THE WAKING SLEEP—THE SORROWING SEARCH FOR
THE KING.

I sleep, but my heart waketh: *it is* the voice of my beloved that knocketh, *saying*, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, *and* my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put in his hand by the hole *of the door*, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped *with* myrrh, and my fingers *with* sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, *and* was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I *am* sick of love.—CHAP. v. 2-8.

THE WAKING SLEEP.

The scene is suddenly and completely changed from evening to midnight, from ardent love to cold repulse, from a bridal feast to solitude, mourning, weeping. The bridegroom has bid his betrothed farewell before the espousal supper, with the settled purpose of retiring to the mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense to rest, till the morning dawn. The feast is concluded, and he has gone away by himself alone. But the balmy rest in the bed of spices he has not yet found; cold dark night has overtaken him with its heavy dews, and in sore distress he knocks at the door of his espoused seeking shelter. But she has retired to her own quiet rest, and has fallen asleep; she hears his unexpected voice, but is unwilling to shake off her slumber and receive him beneath her roof. She is afterwards grieved and ashamed for her sloth and selfishness, rises

to open to her Lord, finds him not, seeks him sorrowing through the city, and is unveiled and wounded by the watchmen.

Jesus having often before spoken of his departure, takes solemn farewell of his disciples at the Last Supper, at the Bridal Feast in the very action of giving the cup of espousals—'henceforth I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine till I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father.' He leaves them, going forth to death and the rest of the tomb, he takes three chosen ones further along with him, he leaves them also and goes away alone—'Tarry ye here while I go and pray yonder.' He is in a great agony, he returns to them and finds them asleep, and they hear his voice but 'wist not what to answer.' Retiring by himself again, his sweat is as great drops of blood falling down to the ground—'his head is filled with dew, his locks with the drops of the night.' When he returns, he finds them asleep again—'asleep yet the heart waking,' or, as Jesus says in their behalf, 'the spirit indeed willing but the flesh weak.'

If we duly remember the purely allegorical nature of this Song, we shall find in the last part of this scene as remarkable an accordance as in the first, with the circumstances of our Lord's agony and death. The sleep of the disciples was not chiefly the outward heaviness of the eyelids, but the inward torpor of the soul; and Jesus, knocking at the door of their hearts, was not so painfully excluded by Peter when Jesus said to him, 'Simon! sleepest thou?' as when Peter affirmed with oaths and curses, 'I know not the man.' Then indeed was the door of the heart closed against the Man of Sorrows, and he was counted and called a stranger, whom the first of his followers disowned and rejected. 'The Beloved stretched out his hand,' by his providence working along with the word. In the case of Peter that providence was the crowing of the cock, which suddenly awakened his sleeping conscience, while Jesus employed the instrument as his own hand, along with his look of love on the estranged disciple. Then immediately his 'bowels were moved' for his Beloved, and he went out and wept bitterly.

Throughout the Song, the absence of the Beloved constitutes night; and it was during the dark night of his removal that the disciples came with great earnestness, 'rising while it was yet dark' to open the door of the sepulchre that they might find Jesus and anoint him—'bringing the spices which they had prepared—their hands dropping myrrh.' The fact of their not finding the crucified Jesus occupies as marked a place in the Gospels, as the absence of the Beloved in the Song. He had solemnly warned them of it before—'as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ye shall seek me and shall not find me.' When they did not find him, it is written that they 'stood weeping,' and 'were much perplexed thereabout;' and the disciples on the way to Emmaus speak of it as a still unopened mystery that 'him they found not.' The very terms, 'my Beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone,' are nearly in the words of Christ, 'I go my way to him that sent me.' Then there is the circumstance of smiting and unveiling by the watchmen—fulfilled in its import when one after another of the high priest's attendants lifted the veil of Peter's concealment, and looking steadfastly in his face inquired, 'Did not I see thee in the garden with him?' It was fulfilled also in the letter, when the young men took hold on the disciple who had wrapped himself in the linen cloth, which they took away while he fled from them naked. There is, lastly, the being 'sick of love' brought out both in particular instances of sorrow, and in the general account that 'they that had been with him mourned and wept.'

I sleep, but my heart waketh—neither sleeping nor waking, or rather both asleep and awake, the sleep not lulling watchfulness, the watchfulness not removing all the sleep. Because the Bridegroom tarries, the wise virgin sleeps with her lamp burning beside her, but burning low and sadly in want of trimming. The language of the bride is confessional, yet apologetic; excusing the sleep of the body by the wakefulness of the heart. It is a state in which both are balanced, in which neither overcomes the other; and the soul does not desire that either should overcome, but hold the balance between them. It loves both and cherishes both; it loves sleep and will not

consent to have it broken—‘I sleep’; pleasantly and without self-reproach the soul sleeps—‘yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.’ But it fears and dislikes to be all asleep—‘My heart waketh’; most true, else she could not hear the Bridegroom’s knock and voice. If the knock were becoming inaudible, if the whole man were sinking into sleep, the dread of such an issue would instantly arouse the whole man into life. But all is safe, for the Bride hears the Bridegroom’s voice, and knows that her heart is not asleep. In her present state, she dislikes as much to be all awake as to be all asleep, and thus she holds a nice equipoise between two contending powers within her.

Though flesh be frail, my heart and soul
 Awake to watch with thee.
 The spirit is prompt, the inner man,
 The wiser virgin wakes—
 The voice of my Belov’d I know,
 That knocketh at my gates.—*Troth-plight Spouse.*

O foolish bride of the Lamb! that carnal wisdom will cost thee dear; thou thinkest thyself wise, but thy wisdom is sin; and these sweet waters will soon be as bitter as wormwood to thy soul.

It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.—The Bride is of those who ‘have turned to God from idols, and who wait for his Son from heaven’; she is of ‘the hundred and forty and four thousand who are redeemed from among men, and are not defiled (along) with (other) women, for they are virgins.’ With all her sins, she is not amongst the company who are faultless enough in the sight of men but are called by Christ ‘adulterers and adulteresses,’ because they are in friendship with the world, and therefore at enmity with God. For the love she bare to him, and for the infinitely greater love he bare to her, she is asked by Jesus to open the door of her heart to give him entrance,—‘for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.’ Christ left his Father’s

house and bosom to seek a home in his people's heart; and the Son of Man, not having where to lay his head, desires to rest it on the bosom of his ransomed Church. He stands and knocks, and entreats, as if it were a favor to himself to obtain admission, even as 'God beseeches men to be reconciled.' As one chilled with the cold of the night, drenched with the heavy dews, and overcome with sore fatigue, he begs for an open door; counting every moment long till he is answered; pleading the night-drops that are falling fast upon him. Once and again in the days of his flesh, Jesus 'went out into a mountain alone, and continued all night in prayer to God' till his head was filled with dew. When sheltered under some hospitable roof, he says of himself in the Psalms, 'all the night make I my bed to swim, I water my couch with my tears,' till his head is filled with the drops of the night. But there was a darker night drawing near, of which in prospect he said 'the night cometh,' and on its coming, 'now is the hour and the power of darkness.' The heavy dews that were falling on Gethsemane were light compared with the 'drops of the night' that filled the head and the hair of the man of sorrows, when 'being in an agony, his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground.' Then he sought some opening for rest in the heart of his disciples, his chosen Bride, of whom he testified 'they have kept thy word;' and he charged them 'tarry ye here and watch with me,'—but their eyes were heavy with sorrow. One other night follows, when the sun is darkened at noon as Jesus hangs on the accursed tree; and with the blood-drops flowing from the piercings of the thorny crown, and beneath the heavy hail-drops of his Father's wrath, the Lord of glory, dying, cries—'My head is filled with the drops of the night.'

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

I've laid aside my kirtle fair,
And bathed with care my snowy skin;
To don my vest I scarce can bear,
And soil my feet to let thee in.—*Grad. of Oxf.*

Is it a benighted stranger that is thus coldly driven from thy door? or is it an ordinary friend, of whom thou hast many, and whose hardship is less thought of than thine ease? Nay, it is thy Husband, thy Lord, thy Beloved, thy Saviour that hath come from far to seek thee—thy Redeemer whose raiment is dyed with his own blood, which he hath poured out for thine. And art thou weary of him? art thou estranged from him? hast thou given him a bill of divorce, and been married to another? Nay, thou hast been waiting for him, and hast fallen asleep because he tarried. And is this story of thy well-washed feet and thy doffed tunic a mere pretense, an excuse devised on purpose to keep him out of doors? Nay, thou lovest the sound of his voice in thine ears, and thou wouldst fain he were within. But thy door is shut and must be opened, and opened by thee. Thine eyes are sealed in sleep though thine heart waketh, the act of arising would shake the whole inner man from its slumbers, and thy sleep-laden spirit pleads against so untimely an effort. It is a long night to thy Beloved, for he standeth without; but it is night also to thee, and thou wouldst fain sleep till the morning. The sleep-loving spirit tells thee that there is a lion in the way, the grasshopper is a burden to thee, the exposure of thy feet to the dusty floor seems a prodigious sacrifice too vast for thee to make, the girding on of thy coat a Herculean labor too great for thee to attempt—how can I do it? For the moment, the sore travail of ‘Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister’ seems to thee light in comparison, and his sacrifice small, when ‘he gave his life a ransom for many.’ O vile sloth! O wretched sleep of sin! thou hast made the wise virgins trifling fools, and hast turned into cold aliens those who ‘did not count their lives dear’ for Christ’s sake. O sleep-laden Bride of the Lamb! thou hast repulsed thy Lord for trifles; thou wast holding the balances even, but sleep has prevailed and conquered; and thou hast rejected thy Lord with all his love!

Yet glory not, child of this world! but see your own image in this folly; for this is the dead remnant of ‘the old man’ that is still alive and whole in you, and which constitutes your all. Go therefore, and see the wise virgin’s present and partial

image, but *your* constant and perfect likeness. Esau sells his birthright for red pottage, his spiritual blessing for one morsel of meat; and you are selling your Lord for trifles, for thirty pieces of silver; you are selling your soul for a trifle, if the whole world were the price paid you for it. Soon these baubles, the world, pleasure, comfort, honor, knowledge, power, will be undying worms that will torment you for ever. In your sleep it seems to you impossible to rise, to make an effort, to cast off the world with its snares and the flesh with its lusts, to flee from coming wrath, to embrace a willing Saviour, to open to him that stands and knocks at your door and says—‘If any man open, I will come in to him, and will sup with him.’ Be-think yourself before it is too late—‘Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!’

THE SORROWING SEARCH FOR THE KING.

My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door.—In the external image, the door was so constructed as to leave an opening by which the inmate coming from without could thrust in his hand and remove the bar, unless it was secured by some additional means—locked as well as barred; which proved to be the case on the present occasion. The King, finding both knocking and calling ineffectual to move the slumbering Bride, proceeds to open the door for himself. This last effort, heard by the slumberer within, thoroughly awakens her; and, moved with shame, sorrow, and affection, she rises to undo both bolt and bar, and opens to her espoused Lord.

Then up I start as in a maze
 To ope my door, and lo,
 My hands do drop refreshing myrrhe,
 Which o'er my fingers flow.
 Even pure and holy myrrhe from me
 Upon the door-bar drops;
 Anointing so the sprints and springs,
 Till openeth all the locks
 Of my enclosed carnal heart,
 That did securely sleep.
 But opened, lo, alas for woe!

Troth-plight Spouse.

The hand is constantly used in Scripture for the power of God, as—‘thy hand is lifted up;’ and frequently also for the Spirit of God, as—‘the hand of the Lord was strong upon me,’ and ‘the hand of the Lord was with them;’ and as the moving of God’s Spirit is ever accompanied by his providential dealing, there is no inconvenience in understanding the term of both. Christ puts forth his hand, along with his voice, to remove the bolts that shut the door of the heart—most probably in chastening, as he does in the singularly parallel passage in the Revelation (iii. 14-22). The Laodicean church had fallen into a state similar to that of the Bride. It is neither cold nor hot—she is neither asleep nor awake; it is rich and increased in goods and in need of nothing—she is resting in ease, has put off her coat, washed her feet, and desires nothing but to be left alone. Christ visits it saying, ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock’; Christ visits her and she says, ‘It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh.’ He accosts Laodicea—‘If any man open to me, I will come in to him and sup with him’; He addresses the Bride,—‘Open to me, my sister, for my head is filled with dew’. He designates the true church in Laodicea, ‘as many as I love;’ he calls the Bride ‘my love, my dove.’ ‘I rebuke and chasten,’ is the token of his love to Laodicea; ‘his hand thrust it through the door,’ his token to the Bride. This, along with other Scriptures, warrants us to interpret the stretching forth of the hand as signifying *correction*; and it has been regarded by some as the threatening of entire removal from earth. But, along with the rod of power, there is the hand of the Spirit, removing the inward bar of the soul that the whole heart may be thrown open for his reception.

And my bowels were moved for him.—The Bride is now both fully awakened and effectually drawn. It is never Christ’s will nor way to force an entrance into any heart against that heart’s consent; and the Bride is now most unwilling that the desire to be admitted, and the admission itself, should be on his part alone, without a corresponding affection and opening from her. Her soul is deeply moved within her. She does not yet either discern all the sin that she has just been guilty

of, or suspect all its consequences, but she sees in part. She is moved with shame for having loved her own ease, with sorrow for having slighted her Lord, with alarm for the consequences, and with new affection toward him whom her soul loveth; and she rises to unlock the door.

I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock.—In the literal scene there is a brief interval between the rising to open and the actual unlocking of the door. There is, no doubt, the hasty putting on of the coat that once looked so formidable, but there is also the hasty snatching of the box of ointment to anoint those weary feet that have stood long at the threshold, and that head which is now filled with drops but not of aromatic oil; and, her hands dropping myrrh and her fingers sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock, she opens to her Beloved.

The opening of the door is to welcome and to receive Christ into the heart; it is more than mere desire, it is faith opening the heart for Christ as its confidence, its hope, its peace and joy. The myrrh is the unction from the Holy One which all believers enjoy, the ‘anointing’ which abideth in them, the Holy Spirit with his manifold graces in the heart; and the dropping of this myrrh from the hands and fingers upon the handles, must be ‘the stirring up of the gift’ that is in them, in prayer, in praise, and in all devout affections. It is a present proof to the soul that notwithstanding provocations, ‘the Comforter remaineth’; and that the Spirit, though sorely grieved by the neglect of Christ, has not been ‘quenched.’ In such a case, such proof of the indwelling of that Spirit, which the world knoweth not, becomes invaluable. Yet evidently, the grace thus manifested is too much rested on and gloried in; the Bride builds herself upon it, and takes it as a token, not of mere acceptance, but of approval; nay commends herself on account of it as if well prepared to meet her Lord, and as if her present meetness for him, and the abundant suitableness of the welcome she now prepares, would more than compensate for the previous slight. In such a frame—with such faith, and love, and spiritual unction—she opens the closed door,

never doubting that her Lord will be far within the chamber of her heart the instant that its portals are unlocked for his admission.

Ye gates, lift up your heads! ye doors,
Doors that do last for aye,
Be lifted up! that so the King
Of glory enter may.

Psalm xxiv.

But a sad surprise ensues—a cold blank—a dead silence! The King of glory, with ‘his head as the most fine gold, with eyes as doves by the rivers of waters, with his countenance like Lebanon,’ enters not; there is neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regardeth!

I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.—Strange!—impossible!—it cannot be that he, who knocked when I was sleeping and called when I was refusing, is gone, now when he might not only find an open door, but my whole heart seeking him! It cannot be!—let me hearken—he will call again—he must be here even at the door, though I have not seen him in the darkness of the night—he must be calling even now, though I have not heard him while unfastening the bolts. *Hist!*

My soul failed when he spake—or rather, till he spake—failed for his speaking. She stands on the threshold, still, silent, breathless, lest her footstep, her speech, her very breath should interrupt the voice of her Beloved. With mingled desire and fear, she listens till her soul faints within her. The silence now becomes insupportable, and she breaks it herself.

I called him, but he gave me no answer.—Can it be?—he must have heard, and why does he not reply? he must have heard, and is he angry now at the voice of ‘his love, his dove, his undefiled?’ Christ is not angry because the Bride now seeks and calls, but he was and is provoked because ‘he called and she refused, he stretched out his hands and she regarded not.’ Then why did he not rather leave her when she was slothful, sleeping, and self-satisfied? In loving-kindness and faithfulness he left her not, and for her own safety he would not leave her;

for had he departed then, the slumber would have sunk into deep unconscious sleep, and sleep into death. He did not and would not leave her thus, and had she continued slumbering he would still have continued knocking. But why, then, does he withdraw from her now? because he can with safety, and because he must in faithfulness. The awakened soul may be trusted now—a little while ago it slighted a present, but will now seek an absent, Lord. It may be safely corrected now, for now it ‘can be chastened yet not killed;’ and it must assuredly be proved now whether its profession of love is sincere or superficial. If the love is false, let it perish; if it is real, it will stand the trial.

Reader! are you one of those who never know what it is to seek an absent and withdrawing Lord? or, being one of God’s own children, is your experience always of Christ who stands at your door and knocks, and never leaves you to seek him sorrowing? Have you concluded that you are walking in a way well-pleasing to Him, because there never is any long intermission of some measure of fellowship between your soul and Christ? If you are not deceived in this, it proves acceptance and a state of salvation, but no more; it gives no evidence of approval of your walk, but, possibly, testifies to the contrary. Which of these two does Christ commend most?—we say not, love most, for the love may be held as equal—but approve most, and chiefly delight in? Was it the Bride slighting him in her slumber, or calling to him in her distress? The former was positively offending, the latter giving him intense delight—‘I love them that love me—thou wentest after me in the wilderness.’ Yet mark how he maintains unbroken communion, such as it is, with the offender—most tender and affectionate on his part—most self-complacent and self-indulgent on hers. Mark again how all communion is broken off, the instant that the provocation ceases and the offensive indolence is gone. He knocks no more, speaks no more, stands no more, thrusts no more his hand through the door, answers no more when he is entreated, but is as if he knew not, saw not, heard not, heeded not. And why?—because he loved not?—nay, but because he loved much, and esteemed much.

Will you therefore learn, what few seem to apprehend—not merely that you may be in darkness, and as much a child as when you were in light—but that in darkness and in desertion you may be greatly more acceptable to Christ than you were when enjoying a certain light and fellowship, and may be left long in darkness because your state is now more pleasing to him? Will you further learn, that this benighted sorrow and loneliness may be such as you would for no bribe exchange again for your former light and comfort? Does that trembling, weeping Bride, desire now to return to her couch of sloth, where she reclined as a queen and saw no sorrow—to that royal state in which she kept her Lord knocking in the cold night while she talked with him from within in luxurious ease? If she returned and fell asleep again, would not he certainly return again and knock? Doubtless he would, because such a sleep undisturbed would end in death; and we fear that many of the daughters of Jerusalem are base enough to continue in such a position, or return to it, and even to glory in it, because in their great listlessness they are not wholly without fellowship and comfort. But will the true Bride of Christ, once awakened, be satisfied with so cold, so formal, so distant an intercourse again? to converse with Jesus through the shut door of her heart, with her spirit all but asleep within? or will she consent to find her own partial comfort in his great dishonor?—She would rather far, go out seeking him in the cold midnight; she would rather kiss the hard boards of the door at which his pierced hands had knocked, and the stones of the threshold on which his feet had stood. The lamented absence is better than the partial presence of Christ; yet one wise virgin sleeping at ease, with Christ standing and knocking without, condemns, despises, and pities a sister virgin and one far wiser, who is following Christ in sorrow and darkness and intense desire!

O turn thee unto me, O God,
Have mercy me upon;
Because I solitary am,
And in affliction.

Enlarged the griefs are of mine heart;
 Me from distress relieve.
 See mine affliction and my pain,
 And all my sins forgive.—*Psalm xxv.*

The watchmen that went about the city found me.—The keepers that guard the walls—the ministers and elders of the church appointed by Christ to watch our souls, to maintain the comely order of Jerusalem within, and to guard her walls against foes without—help not the Bride in her distress, and what is worse, ‘they came not to the help of the Lord’ in her refusal of Christ. She had fallen asleep while the Bridegroom tarried, and they did not with holy jealousy for his honor ‘reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine’; but had been ‘dumb dogs that cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber,’ although in their Lord’s absence the serpent was ‘beguiling souls under their charge from the simplicity of Christ.’ Now when they have suffered the Bride to fall asleep, and when Christ comes himself to awake her, and calls earnestly and knocks loudly at the door, they are either themselves asleep and ignorant of all that is occurring, or in indolence or indifference they ignore it all. But now they find the Bride searching through the streets for the Beloved of her soul—seeking in ordinances, in two or three meeting together, in public prayer and the preaching of the word, in intercourse with the daughters of Jerusalem and private Christians, in consultation with ministers and elders. She opens her distress only to obtain relief—she would gladly hide it, but like the ointment of the right hand it bewrayeth itself, in her conversation, her habits, her very gait and visage; for it is a consuming fire that will neither quench nor conceal, a fountain of sadness which the bounds of the inner spirit cannot confine, an absorbing sea of sorrow which swallows up alike all other joys and all other griefs. The secure and comfort-loving watchmen are not ready for such a case; and none, indeed, is equal to it save Him alone who has ‘the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to the weary.’ But the slumbering shepherds neither know how to meet it, and deal skilfully with it, nor can they endure the trouble and the reproof which it brings. They would this

Bride were quietly and safely asleep along with the other souls around her—who are disturbed by no such unseasonable and unsettling searchings of heart; and did she but go quietly home again, they would let her alone. But that will never satisfy—come of it what will, she must attain her object—she is so thoroughly distressed herself that she cares little, too little, for disturbing others, and the quiet of the citizens is broken by the wail of her sorrow.

They smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.—Were it the case of some poor Gentile stranger without Jerusalem's walls seeking even unseasonable admission—were some one, ignorant, careless, or profligate, greatly distressed for a soul lost, and for a Saviour not found, they would give what aid they could. They could in their condition give no very helpful directions by which the Beloved might be found, nor would they thread with their night-lamp the stranger's way through the streets and lanes of the city to the dwelling of the good Physician; but they would at least bid the inquirer God speed, and encourage an indefatigable search. But this case is entirely different—this soul is safe, and what more can be desired? this soul is believing, devout, consistent, dutiful to God and to man. Why trouble itself and others with needless and morbid anxieties which it is impossible either to understand or to remedy, and which contain no element of utility or of health? They have ready on their lips various sound advices, which they try in vain. 'Only believe and be at rest'—'I think I have believed, I think I have opened for Him the door of my heart, but I find no rest, for I find not him whom my soul loveth.' 'Then pray'—'I have done it—I called and he gave no answer.' 'But do it in the Spirit'—'In the Spirit I have sought to do it—my hands dropped with myrrh and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh on the handles of the lock.' 'Then go work, and all will be right'—'I have sought in works and in gifts—I have risen and gone about the city, in the houses of the poor and the needy, I sought him but I found him not.' And nothing better, haply, could be said; but the void continues unfilled, the aching heart uncured; and, grieved and offended,

the watchmen bid her go home and rest and take her ease, till her husband return. But this is just what she will in no wise agree to, but will seek him still—‘Thou art my God! early will I seek thee, my soul followeth hard after thee, and thy right hand upholdeth me.’

My tears have unto me been meat,
Both in the night and day,
While unto me continually,
Where is thy God? they say.—*Psalm xlii.*

There is nothing that is so useless, ungenial, and contrary to a troubled conscience, as a ministry either unconverted or at ease in Zion; and there is nothing that so disconcerts and ‘torments’ such a ministry as a conscience which nothing will pacify but Jesus found and possessed. Ministers without grace, or without grace in exercise, have no sympathy for the wounded soul, for in condemning itself it doubly condemns them. Finding their dealing ineffectual to suppress conviction, they begin to smite with the rod of the mouth; when the smitten soul still seeks, they smite so as to pierce and wound; and when the wounded soul perseveres, they tear away the veil, and expose to shame and reproach, as if the mourner only feigned to be Christ’s chaste spouse. And this follower of the Lamb smitten, wounded, stripped, seeks as she never sought before, admires as she never admired before, and loves as she never loved till now. She has no care how she will put on her beautiful coat now, when she runs in rags through Jerusalem; she has no thought for defiling her delicate feet, when she wades through the miry lanes; she has no complacency in her fingers dropping myrrh, when, with hands bleeding from the watchmen’s blows, she knocks wherever her Lord may haply be found. She is in right earnest now, self and ease forgot, self and comeliness forgot; Christ!—Christ!—none but Christ! is all her desire and all her pursuit.

Already she has more than recompense for the loss of all her former comfort and respect—her self-respect and her respect in Jerusalem; for she is following, admiring, loving, an absent hidden Christ, a thousand times more glorious than the

Christ of her former fellowship. When he conversed with her, and she with him, through her waking sleep and her closed doors, she could never by any effort have described the Lord Jesus Christ as she describes him now—‘the chief among ten thousand.’ So it ever is—the soul in the midst of sorrow is happier in following a greater good than in possessing a less; in seeking a Saviour so apprehended as more nearly to agree with his own majesty and glory, than in finding a Saviour reduced to the meanness and poverty of the carnal mind’s conception. The Christ who stood knocking at the door is widely different from the Christ now lamented after, else he had never been detained there; and the soul would not, if it could, recover simply that Christ again—the very same Christ indeed it would have, but very differently and very gloriously revealed and apprehended. The Bride admires him now when absent as she had never seen him when present; her description is not from mere memory, but from an eye enlightened to discover, and a heart enlarged to love; and nothing will satisfy her but to possess the very Christ now so apprehended, so admired, so loved. The present sorrowing and wistful pursuing is greater wealth than her former embracing.

One thing I of the Lord desired,
 And will seek to obtain,
 That all days of my life I may
 Within God’s house remain.

That I the beauty of the Lord,
 Behold may and admire;
 And that I in his holy place
 May rev’rently inquire.—*Psalms xxvii.*

She passes from Jerusalem’s watchmen, and turns to Jerusalem’s daughters, though we have partly anticipated their intercourse.

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem! if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.—This charge supposes that some of the daughters of Jerusalem may find Jesus sooner than his sorrowing bride. An inquiring soul may have Christ revealed for the first time, before he is revealed anew to the

soul that has forsaken him and grieved his Spirit, and may pray in joy for a guide and instructor who is himself in sorrow. The sickness now, and the sickness at the close of the first Song, though expressed by the same words and resulting in similar effects, are produced by opposite causes. Then, it was fainting under joy—now, it is fainting under grief; then, it was swooning away through a glorious presence more than heart or frame can endure—now, it is sinking and swooning through a lamented absence more than mind or body can sustain; then, the soul was sick of love, loving much and obtaining a greater return of love than it could receive—now, the soul is sick of love, loving much, but void and fainting for want of any response. In both cases, it is the loveliness of the Beloved and the soul's love to Him that causes the sickness; but in the one, it is sickness through excess of delight; in the other, it is sickness through excess of pain. Yet it is the same Beloved—the very same; and the same heart—the very same. The heart that is incapable of the one, is incapable of the other; for they are but different breathings of the same divine affection.

XVII.

THE BEAUTY OF THE BELOVED.

THE WHITE AND RED—THE CHIEFTAINSHIP—THE MOST FINE GOLD—
THE RAVEN'S PLUMES—THE DOVES BY THE WATERS—THE ARO-
MATIC FLOWERS—THE LILIES—THE GOLD RINGS—THE BRIGHT
IVORY—THE MARBLE PILLARS—LEBANON AND ITS CEDARS—THE
SWEETNESS—AND ENTIRE LOVELINESS.

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 charge us? My beloved *is* white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head *is as* the most fine gold; his locks *are* bushy, and black as a raven: His eyes *are as the eyes* of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set: His cheeks *are* as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips *like* lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh: His hands *are as* gold rings set with the beryl; his belly *is as* bright ivory overlaid *with* sapphires: His legs *are as* pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance *is* as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars: His mouth *is* most sweet; yea, he *is* altogether lovely. This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!—CHAP. v. 9-16.

THE WHITE AND THE RED.

My beloved is white and ruddy.—The inquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem in answer to the charge of the Bride, elicits from her the noble description of the Beloved that follows—a description radically the product of previous communion with the Lord, but the immediate fruit of admiring sorrow. White and red are, in colours, the chief characteristics of health and beauty in the human countenance and form, and on this account selected to sustain the allegory. But the inspired writer was not describing any son of man that had yet appeared on earth, but 'him whose name was Ointment poured forth,' of whom David had sung as Jehovah's Anointed King, and his own Lord. It is possible that Solomon meant to express no more by the words, than the perfect beauty of the Messiah; yet

when the prophets testified of Jesus, it is expressly written that 'they spake beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory that should follow;' as if those sufferings entered largely into their descriptions. Who can tell what thought may have occurred to a mind so deeply reflective as Solomon's, while he looked on the red blood of the snowy lambs streaming on Jehovah's altar, and when he pondered the uplifting of Abraham's knife against his only son; how nearly he may have approached in thought to the utterance of Isaiah regarding Him who was to be 'led as a Lamb to the slaughter'; or what his interpretation might be of his own description of 'the beasts which Wisdom killed when she furnished her table'?

The white and the red are given as the two combined yet contrasted elements, by which the Bridegroom of the Church may be recognised and distinguished from every 'other beloved'—all other objects of affection and regard among the sons of men. The Bride is 'the Lamb's wife'; the espousal is 'the marriage of the Lamb'; the wedding feast 'the marriage-supper of the Lamb.' 'The Lamb' is specially the Bridegroom's name; and no other name of Jesus is so intimately associated with his marriage and his Bride. The Lamb, in a word, is the Bridal name of Jesus; but the Lamb is also his sacrificial name, and always associated with his death. His name of marriage, and his name of sacrifice, are one, and that name is 'the Lamb.' Now, what are the characteristics of the Lamb? Meekness, silence, and other features pertain to the emblem, taken in its fullness; but as regards appearance, with which alone we have now to deal, the features are two, and only two. White and red are the uniform and unvarying tokens by which he is to be recognised—'the blood of Christ as of a Lamb without spot and blemish—in the midst of the throne a Lamb as it had been slain.' The Church on earth describes him by 'the blood of a Lamb without spot'—the Church in heaven as 'a Lamb that had been slain'; all the bridal virgins in earth and heaven unite in declaring, 'My beloved is white and ruddy.'

The Beloved of the Church is 'white' in his human nature, 'holy, harmless, undefiled'; in the midst of sinners, yet 'sep-

arate from sinners'; amongst the dark Ethiopians, 'a Nazarite whiter than snow'; with the mire of sin all around him, yet himself 'without spot or blemish.' He is white with the infinite purity of the divine nature, compared with whose brightness 'the heavens are not clean,' and in whose presence 'the angels veil their faces' as uncomely. He is white with the glorious union of both, the divine purity not swallowing up the human, the human not impairing the divine; but the fullness of the Godhead bodily, shining gloriously through the white raiment of a spotless humanity. The Beloved is white as no saint in heaven—as no angel is—'the Lamb without spot.'

But he is also 'ruddy'—red with his own red blood—the only pure and precious blood that ever was shed, or that ever flowed in human veins; for all other blood has the hereditary taint of sin. Every other member of the human family is red with the blood of others—red with his brother's blood whom he has hated—and his sin is therefore red as crimson; but Jesus, free from the blood of all, is red with his own blood 'shed for many.' The spotless whiteness makes the blood precious; and the red in him is as pure as the white, and makes the glory of the whiteness ours—for he could never be 'our beloved,' except he were both 'white and ruddy.' Within the veil there is no other blood—none in heaven save the blood of the Lamb. Angels are white, not white and red; saints are white, for they 'have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,' but they are not white and red. The blood of martyrs has been shed on earth, its voice arises to heaven, but the blood ascends not thither, for no blood is seen within the veil but that of 'the Lamb as it had been slain, in the midst of the throne.'

The dying malefactor, redeemed by the Lamb for his Bride, knew the Beloved by these two tokens, when the red blood streamed before him, consecrating 'the great High Priest' on his head, his hands, his feet, and his side. The penitent recognised the whiteness of the Lamb in his spotless manhood—'he hath done nothing amiss;' in his glorious Godhead—'Lord! remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom'; but it was the flowing blood that emboldened him to look on that

Holy One as his Beloved. The doubting Thomas would not own his Beloved, except he saw him both white and ruddy. The other disciples testified that they 'had seen the Lord'—a glorious one shining in brightness, whom at first they took to be a spirit. Didymus doubted not that they had beheld some being gloriously white, but my Beloved, said he, is white and red, and none other can I own for mine—'except I see in his hands the print of the nails and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' The Beloved answered,—'Thomas! reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side'; and he instantly exclaimed, - - 'My Lord and my God'!—this is my Beloved, for he is 'white and ruddy.'

THE CHIEFTAINSHIP.

The chiefest among ten thousand.—In himself excelling all others, 'fairer than the children of men,' brighter than 'the morning stars' that celebrated his birth; 'the first and the last,' the first and none before him, the last and none after him, none like, none second, none next, none other—'The Beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand.' Among ten thousand kings he is the One Anointed King, 'the King of kings'; among ten thousand lords, the 'one Lord over all, the Lord of lords'; among ten thousand leaders, the one 'Leader and Commander of the people.' Among ten thousand captains in the Lord's host, he is the one 'Captain of Salvation'; among ten thousand conquerors with palms in their hands, the one Conqueror over sin, death, and hell, who proclaims 'I have overcome.' Among ten thousand holy ones, he is 'the Holy One of God'; among ten thousand shepherds, he is 'the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, the Great Shepherd of the sheep.' Among ten thousand priests unto God, he is the 'one High Priest, consecrated for evermore'; among ten thousand prophets, the one Prophet, 'that Prophet' of whom Moses spake. Among ten thousand first-born in the general assembly, he is the one 'First-born of the Father'; among ten thousand born out of death, 'the First-born from the dead'; among

ten thousand holy creatures, 'the First-born of every creature.' Among ten thousand risen ones, he is 'the Resurrection'; among ten thousand living he is 'the Life'; among ten thousand names in heaven or in earth, his is 'the one Name by which men must be saved.' Among ten thousand brothers, he is the 'Brother born for adversity'; among ten thousand friends the 'Friend that sticketh closer than a brother'; among ten thousand kinsmen, the 'Kinsman Redeemer, the next of kin.' Among ten thousand advocates, he is the one 'Advocate with the Father'; among ten thousand judges, 'the Judge of the world in righteousness.' Among ten thousand physicians, he is 'the Physician' of the sick for whom there is no healer; among ten thousand deliverers, 'the Saviour of the lost'; among ten thousand philanthropists, the Philanthropic One, the 'Friend of sinners.' Among ten thousand counsellors, he is 'the Wonderful, the Counsellor'; among ten thousand eloquent orators, it is He that 'spake as never man spake.' Among ten thousand truthful witnesses, 'he is the true and faithful Witness'; among ten thousand martyrs, the Martyr who 'witnessed a good confession.' Among ten thousand meek and lowly, he is 'the meek and lowly One'; among ten thousand valiant ones, He 'stood alone in the breach' in the day of battle. Among ten thousand wise, he is 'the Wisdom of God'; among ten thousand just, he is 'that just One.' Among ten thousand mourners, he is 'the Man of sorrows'; among ten thousand joyful souls, he is 'Anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.' Among ten thousand stars, he is 'the Sun shining in its strength'; among ten thousand trees of righteousness, 'the one true Vine'; among ten thousand branches, 'the Branch of the Lord'; among ten thousand roses in the desert, 'the Rose of Sharon'; among ten thousand lilies in the midst of thorns, 'the Lily of the Valleys'; among ten thousand sheep, 'the Lamb of God.' Among ten thousand faithful servants, he is 'the Servant of the Father'; among ten thousand children, he is 'the Father's Only-Begotten and Well-beloved Son.' 'This is my Beloved and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!—it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, and that in all things

he should have the pre-eminence—he is the Chiefest among ten thousand.’

He ‘is the chief of ten thousand,’ the Bride declares, but she speaks also of another chief of a different character. Through the mouth of one of the first of the virgins she announces,— ‘Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.’ How sad the pre-eminence in guilt!—how shameful to be chief among transgressors! Yet the Chief among ten thousand holy ones came to save the chief among ten thousand sinners. ‘This is my friend and this is my beloved;’—I the chief of ten thousand offenders, he the chief of ten thousand deliverers; and we meet together, for ‘my Beloved is mine and I am his.’ The greatness of salvation and the greatness of transgression, by their very contrast, suit each other; the chief of sinners needing the Chief of saviours—the Chief of saviours sufficient for the chief of sinners, and condescending, as it were, to need an amount of loss in us corresponding to the amount of salvation in him. Are you chief among sinners?—among ten thousand transgressors the boldest, among ten thousand liars the most false, among ten thousand drunkards the most brutish, among ten thousand worldlings the most sordid, among ten thousand formalists the most Pharisaic, among ten thousand slanderers the most malicious, among ten thousand blasphemers the most ungodly, among ten thousand cumberers of the ground the most worthless, among ten thousand triflers with eternity the most foolish, among ten thousand lovers of pleasure the most thoughtless, among ten thousand earthworms the most grovelling, among ten thousand sleepers the most slothful, among ten thousand sick the most incurable, among ten thousand condemned the guiltiest—chief among sinners? The Father sends the Son, the Son presents himself as ‘the Chiefest among ten thousand,’ gives himself for you, gives himself to you if you will receive him, and has ‘come into the world to save sinners, of whom you are chief.’

THE MOST FINE GOLD.

His head is as the most fine gold.—From the analogy of the

word there can be little doubt that the general opinion of divines is just, when they interpret the 'head' of the divine nature of Christ; for 'the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.' In Christ himself that which is superior, greater, higher, is the head; and that is his Godhead—not separate from his humanity, but united to it and one with it, as the head in union with the members. This view is introduced by the very first promise of the coming Messiah, in the doom threatened to Satan through the promised seed—'It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.' It is the serpent that is addressed, and the head of the serpent is Satan; the greater, the superior, the spiritual partaker in this work of temptation, is the Devil; and this 'head' is to be 'bruised,' while bruising the Messiah's 'heel.' The heel, again, of Satan was the serpent, Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate, the world. In the conflict, Messiah bruised not that heel; but in temporary triumph it was lifted high against him. But the 'head' was bruised in that hour; Jesus 'through death destroyed him who had the power of death—triumphing over principalities and powers in the cross.' But while he bruised not the serpent's heel but the serpent's head, Satan bruised not the head but the heel of the Messiah. All in him that could be bruised was bruised by the Father according to eternal purpose, and by Satan as the instrument of execution. The Godhead was not and could not be bruised; the human nature could be bruised, and it was; the head could not be, but the heel was bruised. Yet it was not the separate bruising of the heel, but Christ bruised in his heel; Christ suffering in his human nature; Christ, the Eternal Word, 'crucified in the flesh.'

This 'head,' then, is Godhead, and this head 'is the most fine gold.' Some take it to be the golden crown which he wore upon his head, as the gold rings on his hands:

His head the finest gold excels,
 Here wisdom in perfection dwells;
 And glory like a crown adorns
 Those temples once beset with thorns.—*Watts.*

But this rather seems to suggest the image than to contain

it, and it is preferable to explain the emblem of the head itself, rather than of the crown that adorns it—'this head of gold' representing all that is excellent. Taken thus, however, there is no reference to the colour of the head, but simply to its excellence. This head is gold most *precious*, contrasted with which the highest and noblest of creatures are only brass and iron and clay. They are all common and earthly; the glorious angels themselves have no attraction for the desolate Bride; weighed in the balances they are altogether wanting, for His head is gold. It is gold most *pure*, as well as precious, the most fine gold—without the least mixture or alloy of any other metal; 'light and no darkness at all, love and no malice at all, truth and no shadow of turning.' It is *vast* also in its pure preciousness; not a pure grain but a pure globe of gold, the head one mass of finest gold; the infinite greatness of Deity pure throughout—golden wisdom, golden truth, golden righteousness, golden peace, golden love, golden Godhead.

Such is Christ's head. The bruised heel pertained to this golden head, it was the heel of this head; the golden head pertained to the bruised heel, it was the head of that heel. The head was bruised in the heel, and the heel exalted in the head. When the sinner accepts of Jesus, all this head of gold is his. 'Thirty pieces of silver,' the value of a slave, was the price put upon his head by his foes—'most fine gold' his head is, in the estimation of his friends. 'To you that believe he is precious'—or literally 'he is price'—is preciousness itself. In believing, all the gold is yours—'Buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich.' You come to Jesus the Son of Man—you embrace—you receive him—and he is yours; in that hour the head of most fine gold is yours; and being a member inseparably united to that golden head, you are above all want, above all poverty, above all fear for ever.

THE RAVEN'S PLUMES.

His locks are bushy, and black as a raven.—

His head the finest gold,
 With secret sweet perfume;
 His curled locks hang all as black
 As any raven's plume.—*M. Drayton.*

As the head of fine gold is descriptive of the divinity of Jesus, so in the 'locks' we have the emblem of his humanity. The *bushiness* of the locks is in contrast with the long flowing hair of the Bride, which is twice likened to 'a flock of goats on Mount Gilead,' and in both instances by the King himself—the token of subjection to Him. The 'head uncovered,' not concealed by head-dress or veil or long hair, denotes dominion. The 'head of the Church, the head of every man, is Christ,' and Christ is 'the image and glory of God.' The first Adam was on earth 'the image of God,' with no token of subjection on his head; subject to God unseen, subject to none on earth, but all obedient to him. The Second Adam is the 'Man of whom God is mindful, the Son of Man whom he visiteth, making him a little lower than the angels, crowning him with glory and honour, making him to have dominion over the work of his hands, putting all things under his feet—all beasts of the field, fowls of the air, and fish of the sea.' Jesus standing on earth, is the lowly servant of the Father, but over all creation; with the 'bushy locks' of headship, with his head wearing no token of subjection to any creature; ruling the earth, and the beasts thereof yielding themselves to bear him as King and governor; ruling the seas, and the fish thereof paying him the tribute which, to avoid offence, he delivers to those who ask it.

The bushiness of the locks is emblematic, also, of manhood in its manliness, as distinguished from the weakness and effeminacy of the long hair which 'is a shame' to men. It is a feature of character which the world admires, though often sadly mistaking the brass for the gold—in counting pride, foolhardiness, and ungodliness itself, to be manliness. Godliness is not the destruction, but the true foundation of manliness. Never on earth has there been a character so manly as that of Jesus Christ. There has been none so generous as he—pitying the hungry though not starving thousands, and providing them with abundant food, supplying the marriage-feast with flowing wine, standing over the treasury and extolling the widow's two mites amongst the heaps of gold and silver. There has been none so sincere and frank—'Simon! I entered

into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, thou gavest me no kiss, my head with oil thou didst not anoint;' none so open—'whom seek ye?—Jesus of Nazareth—I am he!' none so firm in refusing to let men abuse his openness—'by what authority doest thou these things?—I also will ask you one question, which if ye answer me I will answer you.' There has been none so scrupulous in not interfering with other men's matters—'who made me a judge over you?' none so self-denying and regardless of his own comfort, hungering and thirsting, yet counting the good of men more than bread or water; none so superior to his own sufferings in compassion for others—'daughters of Jerusalem! weep not for me!' There has been none so fearless of the face of man—'woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!' none so unmoved from his path by tyrants' threats—'get thee out, or Herod will kill thee—go tell that fox, that I walk to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected!' There has been none so vigilant for the poor and helpless—'ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers;' none so mindful of the life and wellbeing of his followers—'if ye seek me let these go their way.' All that is manly, noble, generous, or great, in human character, was found in Jesus. The 'uncovered head' of human authority was his; and, beside him, no dignity rested on any son of Adam's family. The 'bushy locks' of noble manhood were his, and in comparison all men have been mean, selfish, unmanly, ignoble. How happy, then, is the soul that can say, 'This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!'

The *blackness* of the locks indicates the youth of the wearer.

His noble, gold-encirled head,
 With clustering ringlets is o'erspread,
 Black as the raven's wing.

Grad. of Oxf.

It is the token of the perpetual and everlasting youth of Jesus—'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, thou hast the dew of thy youth.' Jesus has it from the first, and keeps it to all eternity, everlasting as his priesthood. The morning, the first freshness, the earliest dew of youth is

for ever his; not one dewy drop that rested on him 'from the womb of the morning' is lost for ever. His 'locks were filled with the dark drops of the night' in their deadly cold; but they are exchanged for the bright pearls of the dew of the resurrection morning, which now sparkle in his head eternally. 'Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age—O my God! take me not away in the midst of my days!—thou hast shortened the days of his youth.' In the ripeness of youthful and vigorous manhood Jesus is taken away, and in that youthful maturity he abides for ever. It is perfect maturity, maturity of wisdom and of grace; but it is not maturity of age, for of that he had no need. In him is the ripeness of every grace in the full maturity, of youthful and perfect manhood. The 'locks are bushy,' not one hair has fallen from his brow; the 'locks are black as a raven,' not one hair has begun to change its hue. Jesus 'saw no corruption,' no corruption of death, no corruption of sickness or of age, no corruption of one hair of his head turned into the whiteness of years—'his locks black as the raven.' In the corresponding description in Revelation 'his head and his hairs are white like wool, as white as snow,' with no shadow of blackness in one of them. That is Christ in heaven—this is Christ on earth; that is Christ from eternity to eternity, 'the Ancient of days'—this is Jesus of Nazareth ascended to the Father's right hand, 'the Son of Man which is in heaven.' The union of the two delineations sets forth one perfect Christ—with eternal whiteness of hairs as of wool from everlasting to everlasting, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; with unfading blackness of locks as of a raven's plumes in his holy manhood, fresh with undecayed youth.

Jesus alone of all the sons of men on earth retains the freshness of youth to the end; in every other there have been 'grey hairs here and there;' in every other some token of the 'almond-tree flourishing,' some failure, some decay, some cooling of love to God or to men. But Jesus addresses his Father—'My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?' and adds—'Thou art he that took me out of the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly.' With the same freshness with which 'he

hoped in God when he hung upon his mother's breasts,' does he hope when he hangs upon the cross—'My God!' in both—the raven locks of youth unchanged. 'Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus'—and 'whom he loved he loved to the end—the same yesterday and to-day,' with 'the dew of youth resting' still on his raven locks. The youth of every other beloved changes and passes away. It is the misery of the world that the objects of its admiration cannot retain their youth; but first the grey hairs are sprinkled here and there, then quickly follow the waxing old and the vanishing away for ever. With what surprise will the children of earth, when all their idols have faded, behold the Church 'leaning on her Beloved with his locks black as a raven,' and hear her announce—'this is my Beloved and this is my friend!' But along with the fading of age in their objects of affection, the greyness of years comes on men themselves. They would fain recover youth but cannot—they would retain it but it slips silently yet irresistibly away; the white blossom of the almond has supplanted the glossy plumage of the raven—they are young no more, and to the days of youth they can never return. But Jesus has not only the dew of youth for himself, but confers it on his followers; who are all like 'the dew-drops from the womb of the morning.' Their souls are new born, everlastingly new, for ever young; and soon their bodies will rise again after the night of death with the fresh dew of the resurrection morn, every one in the image of the first-born Brother, every one with the raven locks of everlasting youth.

These words may contain, further, an implied answer to the reproaches of the enemy. Jesus covered with our imputed transgressions, 'laid on him' and made his own, is ashamed to look up and confess that these 'sins are more than the hairs of his head.' He looks dark and defiled to his foes in that hour; but he is never more lovely in the eye of the Bride, never more beauteous and attractive. Those sins are none of them his own; his own hairs are all white as wool, whiter than snow; and the blackness of our transgressions that covers his head deforms him not in her eyes. If his locks are counted

dark by his murderers, they only shine to his friends with the glossy brightness of the raven's wing—'black as a raven.'

THE DOVES BY THE RIVERS.

His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set.—It is preferable with many of the best critics to omit the italic words, and to read as in the original 'his eyes are as doves by the rivers of waters;' for the eye appears to be compared to the dove itself, the blue dove of the East bathing itself in the clear waters. The 'milk' is either a new image of the whiteness of milk corresponding to the white of the eye that surrounds the pupil; or rather it is still the bright water trickling over the dove as it bathes itself in the river, and sparkling with a shining whiteness. Further, 'the eye fitly set' may either be a comparison of the eye, fitted in the socket, to the gem in the setting of a ring; or, more probably, the original figure is continued, and the fullness of the eye expressed by the dove sitting in the fullness of the stream.

His eyes like tender ring-doves gleam,
Which, bathed within a milky stream,
A clearer radiance fling.

Grad. of Oxf.

The chief idea conveyed by the image, is the tender compassion and love of the Lord Jesus Christ, along with the light of knowledge which the eye indicates. The whole significance of the emblem is brought out by Ezekiel in these words—'None eye pitied thee; and when I passed by thee I saw thee and looked upon thee, and thy time was the time of love'—it is the quick observation, and the tender pity of divine love. 'The Lord seeth not,' is the first thought of man; 'the Lord regardeth not,' the first imagination of the heedless sinner. 'He that formed the eye, shall he not see?' is now brought home with power to the mind and the conscience. But what an eye is his!—'his head and his hairs were white like wool, and his eyes were as a flame of fire—his face was the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like lamps of fire.'

‘Whither shall I go from thy presence or flee from thy Spirit?’ is now the inquiry; ‘I fell at his feet as dead,’ is the issue. But he says, ‘Fear not! I am he that liveth and was dead’; and when the face is raised again to look on Jesus, his eyes are no more beheld as burning lamps of fire, but ‘as doves by the rivers of waters,’ full of love and tender pity.

The eye of love is in Jesus—‘I looked, and thy time was the time of love’; the eye of gentle leading—‘I will guide thee with mine eye’; the eye of quick perception—‘the eyes of the Lord running to and fro through the whole earth.’ The eye of Jesus is the eye of the Man of sorrows mourning for the lost, and ‘with strong crying and tears making supplication’; weeping over Jerusalem with ‘his head as waters and his eyes a fountain of tears, as doves by the rivers.’ How attractive this weeping eye is to the perishing!—how attractive to the redeemed, whose sins its tears have washed from the book of God. The eye of Jesus is the eye of gentle but resistless reproof—‘Jesus turned and looked on Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly.’ It is the eye of compassionate kindness, resting on aught that is lovely in any man—‘Jesus looking on the young man, loved him and said,—One thing thou lackest.’ It is the eye of sorrowing friendship—‘Jesus wept—behold how he loved him!’ The Bride, mourning for her absent Lord, remembers all his looks as well as all his words—‘his eyes are like the doves by the rivers of waters.’

It is sad indeed, that men who might have resting upon them this eye of pity, this eye of love, this eye of guidance, are refusing to look on Jesus; and that hereafter they shall only know that on earth his eyes were as doves by the rivers of water, while for themselves they shall hear the words, ‘Mine eye shall not spare, nor have pity, but destroy them.’ What eye shall not pity?—‘the eye like the dove in the waters’; what eye shall not spare?—the eye that wept rivers of tears for the lost. Listen to him calling now—‘look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth!’ reply to him now—‘Lord look upon me, and be merciful to me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name!’

THE AROMATIC FLOWERS.

His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers.—The cheek is the seat of beauty, which also the Hebrew word is understood to signify (Gesen.) The face as well as the head was anointed with fragrant oil—‘oil making the face to shine;’ and the ‘ointment flowing down the beard’ rendered it fragrant like a bed of aromatic plants—the head of Jesus anointed, and his cheeks as a bed of spices. His cheeks are beautiful like loveliest flowers, and fragrant like roses, excelling both in perfume and in colour—‘as spices, and as sweet flowers.’

The Father saith that ‘no man can see his face and live’—can look upon the fullness of the beauty that shineth there. But the Son seeth the face of the Father, reflecteth his image, and ‘we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’ The ‘face’ is the beauty of the Father; and the beauty of the Father is seen ‘in the face of Jesus Christ,’ the divine beauty shining through the human. Compared with his no other face is beautiful; yet ‘we saw in him no form nor comeliness that we should desire him.’ Smiting on the cheek was amongst the greatest of all indignities—‘they have smitten me on the cheek reproachfully;’ and never was the insult offered with such aggravation as in the sufferings of Jesus, when ‘he giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, and is filled full with reproach.’ ‘Smitten on the one cheek, he gave to them the other also; he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.’ Judas kissed him on the face with the kiss of the betrayer; the servants spit in his face, they smote him on the face with the palms of their hands, and in him probably they fulfilled also the prophecy of ‘smiting the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.’ These smitten cheeks are to us the fragrant ‘beds of spices,’ these smitten cheeks the ‘sweetest flowers’ to us. They were lovely and fragrant in themselves; but we saw no beauty to them, and inhaled from them no perfume. Some beauty, some comeliness, some desirableness we saw in Barabbas; we ‘desired the murderer’ and petitioned, ‘Give us Barabbas!’ If we loved him not, we could at least endure him; but we could neither accept nor

tolerate the Holy One of God! But now we 'look on him whom we have pierced,' and all have pierced; our insults have enhanced his beauty, our smiting has drawn forth his fragrance, and his cheeks are now like aromatic plants and fairest flowers—'sweet flowers and beds of spices.'

THE LILIES.

His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.—Like red lilies are his lips, bright and pure; like lilies, soft and gentle; like lilies, dropping sweet or freely-flowing myrrh. Or rather, it is probably not the lilies, but the lips themselves, that drop the myrrh—myrrh which was greatly esteemed among the ancients and highly fragrant. The lips of Jesus were *pure*; there was no guile in his mouth, no deceit in his tongue; the lip of truth was his—his the only human lips that knew no guile. Adam's lip was pure as it came from his Creator's hand, but when it touched the forbidden fruit it was filled with guile and bitterness—'the woman thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree.' Our lips have inherited the leprosy, are impure and untrue, but the lips of Jesus were pure as scarlet lilies. The lips of Jesus were *gentle*—the soft tongue that breaketh the bone was his; 'when he was reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not'; from his birth to his grave the softness of the lily marked his lips, and distinguished him from all the human family. Burning lips were in his disciples—'shall we call down fire from heaven?—ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of Man came not to destroy but to save'—his lips like lilies. Burning lips were in his foes, set on fire of hell—'all they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head;' but his lips were still like lilies—'Father forgive them for they know not what they do!' His lips were like lilies in his speech, his lips were also like lilies in his silence; his were softest words, and his was gentlest, holiest silence.

Dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.—The lips of Jesus were full of wisdom—dropping fragrant myrrh. In their own free opening they overflowed with the most odorous myrrh—'the Spirit

of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' The officers sent to take him returned without him, and their apology was, 'never man spake like this man;' because his lips dropped myrrh around him, they came within its fragrance, and could not touch the man to whom those lips pertained. But his enemies would force his lips open—He can speak well and wisely of his own free choice, selecting what to utter; but there is gall of asps under every man's tongue, and though we see it not, it must be lurking beneath—and they urged him 'to speak of many things.' But the 'well-spring of wisdom from his mouth was a flowing brook,' and his lips, pouring forth rapid and continuous replies to their urgent and incessant demands, dropped only sweetest myrrh. His keenest enemies found nothing whereof to accuse him; the fountain that was beneath the tongue they had resolved to test, and they tested it to the utmost; but every drop that passed his lips was purest myrrh, and every drop in the hidden source within. 'His lips are like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh' the same now, the same gentle lips in heaven as on earth; and exquisitely fragrant are the drops of myrrh that fall down to the earth, and for the children of earth, from the lips of Jesus—Jesus 'at the right hand of God' speaking ever for us there, speaking ever to us thence.

THE GOLD RINGS.

His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl.—The rings are not an image to which the hands are likened, but an ornament with which they are invested, and by which they are distinguished from the hands of others. 'His hands gold rings set with the beryl,' these rings characterize them; or if we add an expletive, 'his hands *have* gold rings set with the beryl,' or as in one of the old Bibles, 'his handes are full of golde ringes and precious stones.' The ring was worn either on the finger or on the wrist, but the Scriptures, without reference to this distinction, speak of it uniformly as 'a ring on the hand.' The beryl is the ancient chrysolite, allied to or identical with the modern topaz, a brilliant gold-coloured gem, and in its finer specimens of so rich a hue, that it was said by the ancients to

impart a silvery paleness to the gold in which it was set. The beryl was one of the twelve jewels on the high-priest's breast-plate, one of the precious stones that garnished the foundations of the New Jerusalem of the Revelation, and is employed to portray the appearance of the glorious one described in the tenth of Daniel. The gold rings set with the beryl may be regarded as characteristic both of the Person and of the Church of Christ.

1. As respects his Person, the gold ring is emblematic, *first*, of freedom, sonship, dignity. A slave, in later times at least, was not suffered to wear a ring, or only a ring of iron and not of gold. The prodigal son, restored to his father's house and favour, not treated as a servant but welcomed as a child, has a ring immediately put upon his hand. The shoes, and a robe of some kind, were both urgently needed, but the ring went beyond the present necessities of use, and was a pure token of restoration to sonship. Of all that have ever trod God's earth, Jesus the Son of Mary is alone entitled to the gold ring on his hand; for it was Adam's and he lost it, nor was there any to claim it again till the Second Adam appeared, and his it was peculiarly and pre-eminently as the Son of God. 'He took on him the form of a servant,' was sold for the price of a slave, and died the death of a slave with the iron nails piercing his hands; but in asserting that he was not liable to the tribute-money for God's temple because 'the children are free,' he declared that he alone of all men was a Child, a Son, alone of all men free. Most suitably therefore does the Church affirm that he is 'more than any other beloved,' because he only is entitled to the 'gold ring upon his hand.' But yet also because he is the Son, those whom he is not ashamed to call brethren are sons along with him, and he takes from us the iron ring of the slave, and invests us with the gold ring of the child and the freeman—'the Son making us free, and we are free indeed.'

But the ring is, *next*, the emblem of authority and power, the 'ring set with the beryl,' the ring enclosing the precious stone with the engraven signet. When Joseph, an eminent type of Christ, was brought out of the prison-house, the king of Egypt took off his ring from his hand, put it upon Joseph's

hand, and said; 'I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.' Pharaoh's signet-ring with his name or memorial, subjected to him all his people, all except Pharaoh himself who put them under him, saying, 'Only in the throne will I be greater than thou.' In like manner, in the universal kingdom 'the Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment to the Son, hath given him authority with all power in heaven and in earth, and hath put all things under his feet.' Of this Son it is written that 'him hath the Father sealed,' and John says of him in vision 'I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God,' that is, having the signet-ring of the living God. This signet is engraved with the Father's name, for the hundred and forty-four thousand that are sealed with it are described as having 'the name of the Father' written in their foreheads (Rev. vii., xiv). Such a signet-ring, then, does the Church's Bridegroom wear; it distinguishes him in her eyes from all other lords and all other objects of affection; and she rejoices greatly to look on it, because her own forehead bears its impress from that hour 'when after she believed, she was sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.' And if on his hands are many rings, it is just as 'on his head are many crowns'—both representing his manifold authority, dominion, and power over heaven, earth, and hell.

But, reader! he who holdeth in his hand the seal of the living God crieth with a loud voice,—'Hurt not the earth till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads!' He is restraining judgment from thee, 'holding the winds from hurting' thee, giving thee space for repentance, granting thee time for sealing, and not refusing to impress on thy forehead the signet with his Father's name engraven. The man 'that cometh to him he will in no wise cast out,' and to the returning sinner that cometh to be sealed he will in no wise refuse sealing grace. Art thou denying or delaying to submit thy forehead to the blessed brand?

But *further*, as the Father gives to Christ his signet, his name, authority, and power; so Christ gives his own signet-ring to his Bride. To every believer he makes a gift of his Name, to employ

on all occasions for all holy ends, in every adversity, in every difficulty, every enterprise. In illustrating the universal power of a gift, Solomon compares it to a precious stone 'prospering whithersoever it turneth;' probably referring to a signet gem with its owner's name engraven, which would insure success within the whole circle of his power and influence. That circle has but a narrow limit to earth's mightiest monarchs, yet within that limit their signet-rings have delivered their friends who have been able to produce them in their hour of need. But in the case of that name which is 'above every name in heaven and in earth and under the earth,' its success whithersoever it turneth embraces an immeasurable range in heaven above, in the deep beneath, in the heart within, in the earth around. The power of that name reaches upward to heaven—'whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you;' downward to hell—'in my name ye shall cast out devils;' inward to the heart and conscience—'ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus;' and outward unto all mankind—for 'whosoever shall give you a cup of water in my name, he shall not lose his reward.' That signet-ring presented averts the uplifted axe of eternal justice, opens the dungeon's iron gates to the prisoner, stops the mouth of lions, and paralyses the proudest enemies. Bride of the Lamb! Jesus having given you his name and signet, says, 'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name, ask and ye shall receive.' Child of death! Jesus, having oft plucked the signet-ring from his right hand and bestowed it on the dying to deliver his soul, has still another ring for you and every returning penitent, for 'his hands are' full of 'gold rings set with the beryl.' Therefore the Church admires him, and therefore also should he be precious in your eyes.

2. But these rings of gold on the hand may next be considered as emblematic of the Church, in its close connexion with the person of Christ. The corresponding description in the first chapter of Revelation regarding the Hand of Christ establishes these two important points—*First*, that in such a portrait, full of images, some parts may notwithstanding be described simply by what is worn on the person without a

comparison. The hair is like wool, the eyes are like fire and the feet like brass, but the hand is not described by what it resembles but simply by what it holds—'seven stars.' This has been overlooked by many excellent expositors, who have perplexed themselves to discover a resemblance between the hand and the golden ornaments, instead of finding in the rings themselves a badge or characteristic of the wearer. The *Second* point proved is, that a description applying chiefly to Christ's person may, notwithstanding, contain in it parts which refer expressly to his Church or his ministers. The 'stars in the right hand of Christ' are his ministers, or his ministers along with his members; and in like manner the 'rings on his hand' are to be interpreted of the ministers and members of the Church. This has no inconsistency with the previous interpretation of these rings being signets, because Christ both makes his chosen 'like a signet,' and employs his ministers in a very special manner for the calling and 'sealing of his elect'; and it is confirmed by the language of the Bride herself, when she prays to be 'set as a seal upon his arm'—to be made one of those signet-rings with which his hands are adorned.

'The seven stars in the right hand,' and 'the golden rings set with the beryl,' both mutually illustrate each other, and shed light on other passages of Scripture. The holding of the stars in the right hand cannot mean that they are held in the hollow of his hand; for although Christ in Isaiah describes himself as having been thus 'hid' before his manifestation to men, it is under the image of a polished shaft and an arrow, concealed till it is drawn forth like a sword from the sheath, or an arrow from the quiver. Such a holding within the hand is of all things least applicable to stars, whose very nature is brilliancy and visibility from afar. But the gold rings on the hand of Christ suggest a simple solution, the stars being the brilliant gems on the rings—the star-coloured beryls; and in Revelation (i. 20) they are expressly termed in the original 'the seven stars which thou sawest upon my right hand.'

The beautiful image in Isaiah 'I have graven thee on the palms of my hands' is probably to be explained in the same manner; for the common explanation of the name being pun-

tured on the hand itself, implies an image contrary to express divine command. But the figure is simple and natural as well as beautiful, if we understand it of the name of Jerusalem being engraven on Jehovah's signet-ring; and the seal, either according to occasional usage or in distinction from ordinary custom, being turned to the palm of the hand, so as to be ever before the eye.

And now, believer! consider the safety, the acceptableness, and the honour attached to thee, in being compared to these jewel-set rings on the hand of Christ. Consider thy *safety*. The hand in Scripture is the constant emblem of power, and the hand of Christ designates all his power and all his Father's power, for the Father and he are one. 'All his saints are in his hand;' and of all his sheep he saith, 'I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; my Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' But there is nothing more firmly grasped in the hand than a ring, or than a gem in the palm of the hand embedded in a ring. The hand itself must be shattered before such a treasure can be plucked away by force; and so long as the hand of Christ retains its power, his people who are as rings upon that hand can never be plucked from it. Again, there was nothing of old so jealously guarded as the signet-ring, and accordingly, in the case of the king of Judah, God speaks of the plucking of such a ring off as that which none other could do, and which would be done by himself last of all—'though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim were the signet on my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;' that is, though he were in the place from which least of all in the world he could be plucked. There is therefore for thee no position in the universe so safe, so safe against all enemies, so safe for all eternity, as to be amongst those 'gold rings set with the beryl on the hand' of thy Lord. To all who inquire of thee 'what can thy Beloved do more than another beloved?' thou canst answer—Earth and hell combined against my Beloved, they parted his raiment and cast lots for his vesture, they took his life away—for he laid it down for me, and through his hands

they drove the iron nails, but they were not able to pluck me from those hands. Had he cast me off, or let any pluck me thence, the Father's cup would have passed from him. But he died, having me as 'a signet on his hand and on his arm'; they buried him, but I was 'buried together with him' in 'the place where my Lord lay, graven on the palms of his hands'; and he rose from the grave holding me in his right hand and saying to me, 'My Father is your Father, and my God your God!'

Then, in *acceptableness* and *honour* thou art always in his sight, 'engraven as on the palms of his hands,' and ever before him. 'In that day will I take thee, O Zerubbabel my servant! saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet, for I have chosen thee.' Because he hath loved thee and chosen thee, therefore he makes thee as a signet on his hand; and thou canst never be out of sight, never out of mind. But remember, thou art there also in a place most privileged and most conspicuous—honourable for thee if thou art an ornament to him, for he hath chosen thee to 'be unto him for a name, for a praise, and for a glory, if thou wilt hear;' but if thou art not amongst the stones elect and precious, but art only brilliant glass, though thou shouldst, in privilege and profession, be like the signet on his right hand, he 'will pluck thee thence,' and thou shalt not 'be his in the day when he maketh up his jewels.'

When, therefore, thou art asked what is thy Beloved more than another beloved? thou hast this reply, 'His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl.' He alone wears the gold ring of sonship and freedom, and he hath given it to me and made me a son and not a servant; he only wears the jewelled signet-ring of all authority in heaven and earth, and he hath bestowed it on me, so that to me also 'all things are possible.' All other beloved ones—'the world and all that are in the world'—will die, and all who cleave to them will be plucked like a ring from a dead man's finger; but he alone, through life and death, and in triumph over every foe, has held his Bride 'as a signet in his hand, as a seal on his arm;' and he will own me 'on the day when he maketh up his jewels,' and set me as a star on his right hand forever.

THE BRIGHT IVORY.

His belly [or body] is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.— This body, as an old Bible better renders the word, is described by the appearance of the breast, neck, and arms, or as much of the person as was not covered by the robes. This mode of description is clearly brought out in the glorious person seen in the tenth of Daniel, whose ‘body was like the beryl,’ where it is expressly stated that ‘he was clothed in linen.’ The sapphires are probably the precious stones that adorned either the robe or the girdle. The robes of Eastern monarchs sometimes glitter all over with costly gems, and the Eastern female girdle is described ‘as about four fingers broad, which all who can afford it have entirely of diamonds or other precious stones.’ In Revelation, Jesus is described as ‘girt about the paps with a girdle of gold,’ as here with a girdle of sapphires.

His body is as bright ivory, or wrought ivory—‘a body hast thou prepared me. It is ‘the stone cut out without hands,’ the immediate workmanship of the Holy Ghost; it is not any human form, but one expressly prepared by God for the indwelling of the Eternal Word. It is the ‘ivory palace’ in which ‘the King of glory was to abide’; Jesus comparing his own body to the white marble of Jehovah’s temple, the Church comparing it to a temple or palace of white ivory. The smoothness of the polished ivory represents the body ‘without wrinkle,’ the absence of all defect or poverty, the fullness of grace and truth. The whiteness of the ivory denotes the spotlessness of Jesus; as without wrinkle, so ‘without spot’; not a blemish, not a speck, not a flaw upon the polished surface; the ‘Nazarene—a Nazarite whiter than milk, purer than snow; the holy, the harmless, the undefiled.’

It was on such a body, on this body, that the Father ‘laid the iniquities of us all, when Jesus bare our sins in his own body on the tree.’ Pure as ivory that body behaved to be, without the least spot of its own, for the spots of all his people were to be gathered and laid on it. Like Jacob’s flock of old, the speckled and the spotted formed all the flock of the Good

Shepherd. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?' but the Father took the dark stain of the Ethiopian, and the many spots of the leopard, and laid them on the spotless ivory of the body of Jesus; and so, bearing our iniquities, the Lamb of God 'took away the sins of the world.' Bright ivory the Bride calls the lovely body of Jesus, in admiration and in knowledge, yet in partial ignorance; for Jesus tells his disciples that this ivory temple is to be broken in pieces, and they exclaim—'that be far from thee, this shall not be unto thee!' They could not bear that a scar should deface the polished surface of the ivory they so greatly and so justly admired; but Jesus compares himself to white bread, made to be broken, and beautiful in the breaking—'I am the bread of life; take eat, this is my body broken for you!' Unbroken, it had been to us but a beautiful stone to admire, and no bread to eat; but when broken, the life that is in the bread is united to the beauty that is in the ivory. Let us also remember, that if we are his we are fashioned in his likeness, that the neck of the Bride 'is like a tower of ivory;' and let us be continually washing in his blood, and living in his Spirit, that no spot may deface his image in us. He hath taken our spots and sins, that we may in him be 'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing?'

Overlaid with sapphires—'girded about the paps with a golden girdle'—'righteousness the girdle of his reins and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.' The sapphire robe or girdle suggests *first*, the heavenliness of the Man of Sorrows; the ivory represents the purest of earth's productions—a body fairer than the earth, yet of the earth; the sapphire is employed in Scripture to represent heaven—'under his feet a pavement of sapphire, as it were the body of heaven in its clearness.' Jesus in all his lowliness, in all the lowly beauty of his manhood, and in all the humiliation of his sufferings, is still 'the Son of Man which is in heaven.' About his ivory body there is ever cast the sapphire mantle; in the earth and on the cross he still is 'the Son in the bosom of the Father,' and 'the heaven in its clearness' is still as a bright robe around him. The girdle of sapphires suggests *next*, the infinite riches of the Lord Jesus Christ—rich not with gems of earth, but with treasures of

heaven, 'which cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx and sapphire.' It was, indeed, no girdle of sapphire with which Jesus was outwardly arrayed on earth: but, taking the form of a servant, 'he laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself and washed his disciples' feet.' This, however, was exchanging girdles with us. As Jonathan the king's son took off his robe and girdle and gave them to David, who had come from following his few sheep in the wilderness; so Jesus, the Son and heir of the King of kings, 'knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he was come from God and went to God,' takes our place of service and our girdle of a servant, and gives over to us his girdle of sapphires, of riches, of glory, of kingdom. 'Ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' Let us not refuse to be 'made rich' in Him, who has been 'made poor' for us, and whose reward is in seeing us 'clothed with his garments of salvation.'

THE PILLARS OF MARBLE.

His legs are as pillars of marble—Of white marble the legs appearing beneath the robe, as of white ivory the breast above it; exactly as in Daniel the man clothed in fine linen has arms and feet 'like in colour to polished brass,' corresponding to the colour of his body 'like the beryl,' which is a gold-coloured jewel.

Strength and steadfastness, are indicated by the legs like marble pillars.—A pillar, as we have seen in the King's chariot, is the emblem of *strength*, and of strength, likewise, the legs are significant. The Lord 'taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man,' or in his strength; and when 'the grinders cease because they are few, the strong men bow themselves,' or the legs bend beneath their burden. In type of the unfailing strength that is in the Lord Jesus, his legs were not suffered to be broken on the cross. The legs of the railer that was crucified beside him were broken, for all the arm and power of the wicked shall be broken in pieces: the legs of the new-

ly-ransomed penitent were also broken, for his own strength was weakness, and all his help in another. But 'they brake not the legs of Jesus'; for while bruising him, the Father would ever grant some token of his love and care, and would leave in him a type of everlasting strength remaining in the midst of weakness. On those 'pillars of marble,' on those 'legs unbroken' even on the cross, the whole of our redemption leans. On Jesus is laid the weight of all the sins of all his elect from the beginning to the end of the world—can he bear them all?—'his legs are pillars of marble.' On Jesus are laid the persons of all his redeemed, to carry each 'lost sheep' back to the heavenly fold—can he carry them all?—'his legs are pillars of marble.' On Jesus is laid the earthly provision for all his Church, the 'daily bread,' to be given to 'the children whom God has given him'—can he sustain the weight?—'his legs are pillars of marble.' On Jesus are cast all the burdens of all his followers, of the lame and the blind and the sick—all their cares, all their fears, all the numberless burdens of each, and the burdens of all the countless flock. He invites them all to cast their burdens on himself, and promises relief to all—'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Thousands have come and laid their heavy loads upon Him, thousands are coming now, and if thousands more shall follow, he can endure the weight, for 'his legs are pillars of marble.'

But the image is that of *steadfastness*, as well as strength. 'The unequal legs of the lame' have been those of all other men from Adam downward—halting, stumbling, falling in the way. But the legs of the second Adam, are marble pillars—upright, even, steadfast, immovable. Satan must needs prove them, for if he can overcome this one man he is master of all; he has conquered the first man and all that were in him, he must attempt the conquest of the second and all His members. Jesus walks wearily from the wilderness, 'an hungered' with long abstinence, and 'his knees weak through fasting;' Satan tries whether those upright limbs will not bend before him—'if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,' stoop, eat, and thou shalt find bread for thine hunger.

He stoops not, he halts not, but walks right onward, saying, 'Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God'—'his legs are pillars of marble.' Satan takes him next to a pinnacle of the temple, and suggests, 'Cast thyself down, for the angels will bear thee up in their hands'; Jesus standeth still and moveth not—'thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'—'his legs are pillars of marble.' Once more, Satan makes a last effort to bow those marble pillars, an effort almost desperate and all the more daring, for nothing will suffice him now but the prostrate bending of those pillars in obeisance—'All these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' It is in vain! the pillars move not, the knees bend not—'get thee behind me Satan!' and Satan has fled confounded, and has added his reluctant testimony that—'his legs are as pillars of marble.' 'His legs are as pillars of marble' still, for 'he standeth at the right hand of God, an high-priest for evermore.' 'I see heaven opened,' said Stephen eighteen hundred years ago, 'and Jesus standing at the right hand of God'; from that day he hath never sat down, and were our eyes opened like Stephen's, we should behold the High Priest standing unmoved on the very spot, upright, in the very attitude in which he was revealed to the dying martyr, and we should exclaim with the Bride—'His legs are as pillars of marble!'

Set upon sockets of fine gold—The golden sandals that adorned the marble feet—the sockets of the marble pillars. Golden from head to foot is 'the chief among ten thousand'—'his head the most fine gold,' his feet 'sockets of fine gold'—for they are the feet pertaining to the golden head; like that head, and worthy of it. The feet of Jesus are beautiful in themselves, but possess a divine and golden beauty through their union to the Head of gold. The Bride confessed them to be 'sockets of fine gold' when, once and again, she stooped down and kissed those feet. 'Sockets of fine gold' the sea said they were, when it yielded its troubled bosom as a sapphire pavement for those feet to walk on; 'sockets of fine gold' the heavens saw them to be, when 'his feet were like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace,' 'sockets of fine gold'

the earth acknowledged them, when he came with 'his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' with 'feet beautiful upon the mountains, publishing good tidings,' and 'was glorified of all.' 'Sockets of fine gold' hell itself was compelled to confess them, when she drove the nails of iron through them, and those feet, as fine gold cast into the fire, were not consumed, but walked calmly forth from the tomb with the iron nails plucked out in triumph, but with 'the print of the nails' as an everlasting memorial—an imperishable seal that the gold of heaven, yea, the 'tried gold' of earth, had triumphed over the bloody iron of the old murderer, and unlocked the iron gates of hell, within which the strong one had kept his captives.

LEBANON.

His countenance is as Lebanon.—The Bride has already portrayed the great Bridegroom of the Church in his various glorious features from head to foot; from the head of most fine gold to the golden sandals that adorn his feet; and she now proceeds to a more general description of his appearance—of the exquisite beauty, human and divine, that shines through his whole form. The countenance is not here considered as looking on us, but rather as looked upon; the original term embraces not the face only, but the entire aspect and stature; and by using it, the Bride compares his aspect to Lebanon, and his person to the cedars.

Considering, first, the resemblance to Lebanon, we shall find it readily suggesting one general and two specific ideas. The general idea of this comparison, as well as that of the cedars, is *majesty*—the dignity of true greatness. It is in harmonious contrast to the likeness of the cheeks to sweet flowers; the one being the attractive beauty, the other the awful glory, of the Messiah; the one belonging to the Lamb that was slain, the other to the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The whole has been well described as delineating 'a sweetly venerable majestic appearance' (Harmer), and well paraphrased—

His eyes are glory mixed with grace;
On his delightful awful face,
Sit majesty and gentleness.

Watts.

The majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ resides in his whole person, both in the human nature and the divine. It resides in the *human* nature partly from its own transcendent excellence, but principally from its immediate and constant union with the Godhead, for that humanity never had, and never can have, a separate existence. It is Immanuel from the first conception in the womb—‘that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God;’ it is the ‘Son of man which is in heaven, throughout his lowly life; and in the last humiliation of the grave it is ‘the place where the Lord lay.’ He is ‘the King that trusteth in the Lord,’ of whom it is written that ‘his glory is great in thy salvation, honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.’ But still more does the majesty of the Lord Jesus dwell in his *divine* nature, and becomes visible by its union with the human—‘God manifest in the flesh.’ In the transfiguration, it is neither the reflection of another’s glory, nor a glorious garment of created beauty like that of Moses or Elias; but Christ’s own divine glory appearing through the raiment of flesh that veils the divinity, making his face bright as the sun, shining through the very vesture that clothes the humanity, and rendering it also ‘white and glistening so as no fuller on earth can whiten.’ This divine majesty of the Lord Jesus is the same as his Father’s, not greater nor less, but the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person; but it is nearer to us, more visible, and in that respect more overawing. ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,’ has not, indeed, the overwhelming glory of ‘that face which no man hath seen nor can see;’ but has in it more majesty and terror than a general view of the unseen Jehovah. When the invisible God by his immediate presence stilled the waves to Jonah’s mariners, they prayed and offered sacrifices; but they seem not to have been so overawed as the disciples, when Jesus hushed the wind with his word—‘and they were beyond measure astonished, saying,

What manner of man is this? The veiled majesty of Jesus admits of comparison to Lebanon, and suffers itself to be seen; while the nearness and apprehensibleness more enhance the majesty than the veil obscures it. It is not God hid, but 'God manifest in the flesh.'

Reader! hast thou seen for thyself, and with thine own eye of faith, this Lebanon-like majesty of Jesus Christ? He has furnished thee with a test by which to try thyself, when he said, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me;' which lifting up, while it refers to the crucifixion, loses not the original idea of being set on high, exalted, extolled, magnified. It is inherent in all friendly majesty to be attractive, drawing all men toward itself. Men may deny majesty and despise it; but they cannot own it, and come within its circle, without being irresistibly drawn to it. As the serpent by its gaze is said to draw the charmed bird nearer and nearer to itself even at the cost of life, so does majesty fix and rivet the regards of men towards itself, awaking an interest, and drawing its subject as if bound by cords. If to thee Christ has been lifted up, if before thee his majesty has been unveiled, and thou hast beheld it like the glory of Lebanon, and come within the circle of its influence; be sure that it has bound thee and drawn thee with cords which thou couldst not and wouldst not break, and it will draw thee bound with golden chains nearer to itself for ever. If thou hast not been so interested and so attracted, be sure that thou hast never 'seen the glory of the only begotten of the Father.'

But besides the general idea of majesty, the likeness to Lebanon suggests the two specific ideas of the dazzling *whiteness* of the summit, and the lofty *greatness* of the whole mountain mass. There is first, the 'head of Lebanon, the snow of Lebanon,' the splendour of its snow-crowned summit, and thence, like the European Alps, deriving its name of Lebanon, or white mountain. 'His countenance like Lebanon' was seen in its awful brightness by the Satanic hosts when, before he opened his lips, they cried out, 'We know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God'; the glory of that countenance struck them with such fear that they could not be silent, till he subdued them

into quietness by his word of command. It was seen, but more dimly, by human as well as Satanic enemies, as in the three several attempts to take him. In Nazareth when he discoursed of dread sovereignty—which men nowhere can endure—of one cleansed leper out of many and one sustained widow; and when, ‘full of wrath, they led him to the brow of their hill to cast him headlong,’ Jesus ‘did not strive nor cry,’ but walked in his own majesty ‘through the midst of them’—the dignity of his countenance and bearing overcoming them so that they feared him; he fearing not them. So again, ‘the officers sent to take him’ came without him, because, indeed, ‘he spake as never man spake,’ but, doubtless also, because of an inexpressible glory investing him, through which they durst not break. In the closing scene of all, worn and wearied as he was with his midnight watching and bloody agony, that countenance, once dazzling with glory, now darkened, and seen only by the gleam of the torches, yet shines with a majesty so great, that the armed men fall before him on their faces to the ground. So also, his disciples saw that countenance, when they ‘beheld his glory full of grace and truth;’ when they testified by the teaching of the Father ‘thou art the Christ the son of the living God;’ and ‘when the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his face shone as the sun.’ The other mountains of Judea were earthly and dark, Lebanon was resplendent with heavenly brightness; and so are all other objects of admiration but vessels of earth and miry clay, in contrast with the snowy brightness of the Bridegroom of the Church. Believer! there is also in you a majestic reflection of the glory of Messiah’s countenance; as the face of Moses shone, reflecting the light he beheld within the veil; and Stephen, when he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God, reflected the Lebanon-like glory of his countenance, so that they who sat in the council ‘saw his face as it had been the face of an angel;’ you also, beholding his face like Lebanon, are ‘transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.’

But the comparison to Lebanon suggests lofty *greatness*, as well as snowy brightness. The most unvarying remark, that

is made on all great objects, is probably that of first disappointment succeeded by an admiration which constantly increases. This is specially true of mountains, down even to those mountains of man's formation the Pyramids of Egypt, but chiefly of the great mountains of the earth, like Lebanon. The Peak of Teneriffe is a hill of nearly the same height as Lebanon, and its first distant appearance from the sea disappoints the hopes of many who have been bringing within them the glowing fancies of infancy to meet the realities of nature. The true Peak seems broader in the base, rounder on the summit, and altogether lower and tamer, than the Peak of fancy. But as the eye begins to scan it more carefully, as it surveys, rising from the sea, a vast mountain equal to the highest that Scotland can claim, then a broad belt of clouds encircling another portion of mountain almost equally high, and then above that a third mountain as high as the first, with its lofty dome soaring clear into the heavens, the mind becomes gradually, but surely and deeply, impressed with the majesty of the object before it. A tall disproportioned church-spire of rock would more have met and satisfied your crude imagination at first, but you would not now exchange nature's mountain, or rather God's, for your own. While you linger a few days beneath its shadow, it still grows upon you hourly; and when the trade-winds are bearing you away swiftly and steadily from the last faint linnings over which your eye had fondly lingered, the mountain seems loftier and more majestic than ever.

As it is with the mountains so it is with Christ, whose aspect is 'as Lebanon.' A disproportioned man, of iron mixed with miry clay, has sometimes at first more astonished his followers. But Christ's greatness is 'like Lebanon' in its vast proportions, with a grandeur not at all agreeing with our preconceptions, with a majestic quietness which his enemies despise, and with which his friends are not confounded. He calls unto himself whom he will, they obey the call and follow—overcome more by the mysterious power and quiet mastery which they feel to be in Him, than by a full perception of his greatness. He is, like Lebanon, too great for their apprehension, and the elements of greatness are too well mingled and

proportioned to repel or terrify them. From time to time they are astonished at the 'manner of man' with whom they are holding reverent fellowship. When 'the net is filled with fishes' by his secret 'dominion over all that passes through the sea,' Peter feels as if he had been wrong in his familiar association with him, and, standing back overawed, exclaims, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!' The aspect like Lebanon begins to be apprehended, and it grows continually, as it will grow for ever. When he is seen in his majesty in the Mount, they are as men beside themselves, they feel themselves to be foolish in his sight, and 'wist not what to say.' When he goes up to Jerusalem, they follow him 'amazed,' unable to refrain from following, trembling for the result, yet not daring to interrupt his determined progress toward 'the whited sepulchre' that yawned for the Prince of the prophets. When he rises from the dead, and kindly invites them to 'come and dine,' 'they durst not ask who he is, knowing that it is Jesus.' Had they thought him any other they could have asked, and their believing him to be Jesus does not check the desire, but so subdues them with awe that they dare not ask, Who art thou? Finally, John the loved and loving disciple, who leans on his bosom at supper, when he beholds the same Jesus in his heavenly majesty, 'falls at his feet as dead.'

So it is with all his followers in their growing knowledge of Jesus—'his countenance is' to them 'as Lebanon.' His greatness, little apprehended at first, gradually unfolds itself, so that the cheeks 'which are as sweet flowers' at first, are afterwards succeeded by the countenance 'like Lebanon' in glorious majesty. He deals so condescendingly with us that we are little aware of his greatness, till he unveils himself from time to time. The youngest believer will often say 'his cheeks are as sweet flowers,' admiring his beauty; the oldest will add, 'his countenance is like Lebanon,' revering his majesty. Yet this hinders not, but helps, a nearer apprehension of his love, for it is immediately added, 'his mouth is most sweet.' In every other beloved, in all idols of every kind, in all mere creatures however glorious, there is a limit to beauty and to majesty; and their warmest admirers must at last say of

them, 'I have seen an end of all perfection.' But the Lebanon-like development of Christ to our apprehension will continue for ever, and the saying of his forerunner hold for ever good, that 'he must increase'—the martyred Baptist reverencing more this day, as he beholds the Lamb, than in the hour when his spirit fled from its prison into heavenly freedom.

EXCELLENT AS THE CEDARS.

Excellent as the cedars—not in the countenance exclusively, but in the whole aspect and appearance, as the word implies. Christ, compared to Lebanon which was glorious among the mountains, is next compared to the cedar, which was excellent among the trees. The comparison comes fitly from the mouth of Solomon, who 'spake of trees, from the hyssop growing on the wall to the cedar in Lebanon'; who cut down the cedars of Lebanon to build and beautify the temple of the Lord, 'when a man was famous as he lifted up the axe against their boughs;' but who, remembering that there is a 'time to plant as well as to pluck up,' and that it is fit that even the trees of the field should not suffer by the work of the Lord, rested not till he had planted more than he had cut down, and 'made the cedars as the sycamores in the vale, for abundance.' In all these things the *excellence* of the cedar is acknowledged, and this excellence the Church ascribes to Christ. 'His visage so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,' is the world's estimate of Christ; 'his countenance like Lebanon, and his form like the cedars' is the Church's estimate. We all naturally regard him as 'a tender plant and a root out of a dry ground;' not to be numbered among the trees, a mere 'heath of the desert'; not to be numbered among the sons of men, 'a worm and no man.' But to the believer he is 'fairer than the sons of men,' more excellent than all the trees of the field—noble and lofty above all men, as the cedar is above the bramble, the thistle, or the hyssop. These are the extremes—from the bramble to the cedar is Jotham's contrast, from the thistle to the cedar Jehoshua's, from the hyssop to the cedar Solomon's; and gladly does the Bride accept them all, and

declare Christ to excel all others, as much as the cedar excels each of these. Christ loves to call himself the Father's vine-tree—in humility, in dependence on the Father, in fruitfulness; but he is vine and cedar both, and the Church calls him the cedar, in lofty superiority above all men and all creatures.

Then also, in *duration* Christ is likened to the cedar; for 'his name shall endure for ever.' Amongst living things on earth, a tree is by far the most lasting, and amongst the trees the cedar is famed for durability. The wild beast passes by and treads down the thistle, and even untrodden it would have quickly perished. 'All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass.' Like grass every other beloved withereth away, but 'the Son abideth for ever—excellent as the cedars.'

The cedar, further, is excellent in perpetual *greenness*—'the trees of God are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted.' This tree of God is full of sap, this cedar of Lebanon which he hath planted; 'the green tree' as Jesus calls himself; the one green tree among the dry trees that are fit only for fuel; the one green cedar among the brambles and the thorns. But the trees of the field rejected the cedar in its glory and its greenness; 'not this man; away with him!' we all cried; and we chose the murderer's bloody knife, the bramble, the pricking thorn fit only for the fire—'give us Barabbas!'

The *fragrance* of the cedar we shall not consider, because the quality of fragrance has been already so frequently noticed. But we cannot omit to note, that amongst the other excellences of the cedar which render it a meet emblem of Him who is altogether lovely, the Spirit expressly sets forth Christ as a *refuge*, under the image of the Cedar, in the following remarkable passage in the seventeenth of Ezekiel:—'Thus saith the Lord God, I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent; in the mountain of the height of Israel

will I plant it, and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing, in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.' It is a 'tender twig,' mean and weak, yet is cropped 'from the highest branch of the high cedar;' sprung from the royal race of Judah, and from a root higher than of all earthly kings. In the humble birth, in the lowly life, and still more in the humiliation unto death and burial, of the Lord Jesus, this cedar twig is planted in the mountain of the height of Israel, in mount Zion, till it brings forth boughs and becomes a goodly cedar. Christ is compared to 'a handful of corn on the top of the mountain,' which dies in the earth and springs up with such abundance of fruit, that the tall corn is likened to the waving cedars of Lebanon—two images blended into one. But here, though the cedar itself is represented as fruitful, the single image is retained; because the fruit is not for man but for birds, and the tree affords both rest and refuge to 'all fowl of every wing.' What a goodly emblem of Christ and his kingdom!—like the mustard seed becoming greatest among herbs, and the birds lodging in its branches. Perishing sinner! what an invitation for you; how attractive an object is before you! All fowl of every wing are called, great and small, swift and slow, clean and unclean—'O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood beneath her wings!' Some come not, being secure, as if they needed no refuge; others come not, being afraid, as if there were no refuge for them. But blessed is he who understands and believes, that it is for 'all fowl of every wing;' and tarries not until the words are his own, not in threatening but in love,—'O inhabitant of Lebanon, who makest thy nest in the cedars!'

THE SWEETNESS.

His mouth is most sweet.—The tenth and last feature of the Beloved is the mouth—seven features being described in the Bride, and ten in the King; each a perfect number in its kind, but the King's a greater and more glorious perfection. 'His

mouth,' the Church declares, 'is most sweet'—literally, *is sweetness*, consists of nothing but sweetness, and contains all possible sweetness. The *words* having been already included in the lips from which they flow, are not principally now designed by the mouth; yet the mouth can never be severed from the words, and assuredly the words of Christ's mouth are 'most sweet.' All inspired words are equally true, and equally the foundation of our faith and hope; but it is no disparagement to the servant, to confess that the Father hath put special honour on his Son in his words, as in all things else. There is unutterable sweetness in all the words of Jesus—'I am the bread of Life—I am the true vine—I am the good shepherd—Come unto me and I will give you rest.' Even amongst inspired words, those that flow from the Beloved's own mouth are the sweetest. Along with the words of Jesus, the *kiss* of his mouth is most sweet—the friendship, the fellowship, the communion, more than words can utter. It is Christ Jesus in the bosom of the Father communicating himself to the soul, giving his whole heart to the heart that trusteth in him. It is in some respects more than all the other features that precede, for it is the communication of them all to the soul; it is the love, the affection, the grace—all the love, grace, and kindness communicated—of Him 'whose head is fine gold, on whose hands are gold rings, whose cheeks are sweet flowers, whose countenance is like Lebanon.' 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for his mouth is most sweet'—the soul is passive; it embraces not, but is embraced; the King eternal, immortal, invisible, not only reveals his own loveliness, but communicates his own love to the soul. Such communication is 'most sweet,' is sweetness itself, and renders all other sweetness insipid; it is 'peace that passeth understanding, joy unspeakable and full of glory, consolation exceeding great and abounding.' Saints err in not 'coveting more earnestly such best gifts' of the love of Christ.

But the mouth implies, further, the *breath* of Jesus, which is most sweet. Jesus 'breathed on the disciples and said,—Receive ye the Holy Ghost!' and from that hour this breath has filled the earth with its sweetness. It is the breath of Him

who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and anointed without measure with spiritual fragrance; the breath of him who rose from the mountain of myrrh and stands on the hill of frankincense, containing all the fragrance of that infinite frankincense and myrrh. 'With the breath of his lips he slays the wicked,' and the righteous answer, 'True and righteous are thy judgments!—his mouth is most sweet.' With the breath of his lips, in keen conviction, he pierces through the self-righteous soul, yet even then, 'his mouth is sweet' to that soul. You had 'woven the spider's web'; the airy fabric, that 'could never become a garment' to cover you, shone beautiful before your eyes as the web of the spider in the morning sun; Jesus drew near and breathed upon it, and your works and your hopes perished like a vision of the night. Yet even in that hour 'his mouth was most sweet;' such a fragrance from his breath filled the air around you, that you rejoiced in the very breath that scattered your former hopes; and soon you saw and knew Him whose balmy breath it was. 'His mouth is most sweet!'—how it fills the soul!—how it fills the assembly of the saints with exquisite fragrance!—how the least moving of his breath transforms all into life, joy, and praise!

'His mouth a triple heaven reveals,
His word, his breath, his kiss:
A triple doom to all it seals,
Who spurn the proffered bliss.'

THE PERFECT LOVELINESS.

Yea, he is altogether lovely.—There is, first, nothing unlovely in Him, nothing that the believer would desire to have removed. Men desire that their objects of affection should be lovely, they invest them with imaginary beauty, and their very blemishes they often admire and love. But Christ is altogether lovely—with nothing to be removed, nothing to be altered, nothing unlovely. Men conceal, and rightly cover, the failings of their friends; but there is nothing in Jesus to conceal, to disguise, to excuse; for he is altogether lovely. The Bride glo-

ries in an object that can stand the utmost sifting. The world hates Christ, and though it dare not express the hatred, it would remove much from his character if it had the choice. 'Blessed is the man,' saith Jesus, 'that is not offended in me'—who finds nothing in Christ at which he stumbles. There is, *next*, nothing lovely that is wanting in him. All that is lovely in the Creator, all that is lovely in the creature, all that is lovely in heaven, all that is lovely in earth, all contrasted elements of loveliness, all assembled features of grace, all loveliness possible, and all loveliness conceivable, are found in him. Let all the universe seek out and bring some rarest element of loveliness, or, searching without discovering, let them express the want; and they will find it already in all its fullness in Jesus. *Further*, there is the utmost loveliness in him throughout. Every part, every feature, of Jesus is lovely and is altogether lovely; his character and person are composed of elements which are each faultless and most lovely; and all are combined into the utmost loveliness in one glorious whole.

Christ is altogether lovely in both his natures, in all his person, in all his character, in all his words, in all his works, and in all his ways. He is lovely in his birth, lovely in his infancy, lovely in his boyhood, lovely in his youth, lovely in his manhood, lovely in his mourning, lovely in his rejoicing, lovely in his feasting, lovely in his fasting; lovely in his speech, lovely in his silence; lovely as a prophet, as a priest, as a king; lovely as a shepherd, as a saviour, as a husband; lovely sitting on the throne of grace, lovely seated on the throne of judgment; lovely as a Son, lovely as a Brother, lovely as a Servant. Christ is lovely when without a pillow whereon to lay his head, and lovely in the mansions of his Father; lovely in his rebukes, and lovely in his consolations; lovely in his cross, and lovely in his crown. He is lovely in himself, lovely in his ordinances, lovely in his saints; lovely yesterday, lovely to-day, lovely for ever—yea 'he is altogether lovely.'

All the saints partake of the loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but none of them has been altogether lovely; and it appears to have pleased the Father to suffer their defects to be most visible in the very graces for which they have been

most eminent. Noah, who alone in the old world was moved with fear of things unseen, sinks into the heart of things seen and temporal, plants a vineyard, and is overcome of wine; Abraham, the father of the faithful, distrusts God in Egypt; Moses, the meekest of men on earth, hastily slays the Egyptian, and is provoked with Israel; Job, the most patient of men, curses the day of his birth; the man according to God's own heart commits sin most offensive to God, and more contrary to His heart, than the sins of other saints; Peter, noted for courage, sins by cowardice, denying Jesus, and dissembling for fear of the circumcision; and John, distinguished by love, asks liberty to call down fire from heaven on his fellow-men. The most remarkable sins of the most eminent saints have often not been 'sins easily besetting them,' but contrary to their whole character, and sad failings in the very graces for which they were distinguished: as if the Lord would have us see the unloveliness that is in the loveliest of men; as if he would debar us from looking to any other in earth or in heaven; and even, by the saddest falls of saints, shut us up to Him alone who is 'the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.'

This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!—'This is my beloved,' whom I love, whom my soul loveth,—how wondrous that he suffers me to love him, that he desires me to love him, and that I, so unlovely, should have one so glorious for the object of my love! This is my Beloved, O daughters of Jerusalem!—can ye inquire why I love him? But 'this is' also 'my Friend'—who hath loved me—who doth love me—who will love me for ever; who hath befriended me when I was friendless, who 'will never leave nor forsake' me, who calls me his 'friend' now, and 'will confess my name before his Father and his holy angels.'

Ye ask me, daughters of Jerusalem! 'What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?' and ye repeat the question, as if ye would inquire both what my Beloved is, and what my Beloved has, more than another beloved, and ye have the reply: 'My Beloved is both white and red, he is the chiefest among ten thousand, his head is the most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven, his eyes are as doves by the rivers of

waters, his cheeks are as spices and sweet flowers, his lips are lilies dropping myrrh, he has on his hands gold rings with engraven gems, his body is like ivory and his girdle of sapphires, his legs are pillars of marble on golden sockets, his countenance is like Lebanon, and his aspect like its cedars, his mouth is most sweet—yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend.’ Amen! and Amen!

All over glorious is my Lord,
Must be beloved, and yet adored;
His worth if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole earth would love him too.

Watts.

XVIII.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S BRIEF RETURN.

THE MORNING TWILIGHT—LAST PORTRAIT OF THE BRIDE BY THE KING—THE BRIDE'S PORTRAIT BY THE QUEENS.

Whither is thy beloved gone? O thou fairest among women! whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee. My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I *am* my beloved's, and my beloved *is* mine: he feedeth among the lilies. Thou *art* beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as *an army* with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair *is* as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead: thy teeth *are* as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and *there is* not one barren among them: as a piece of a pomegranate *are* thy temples within thy locks. There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled, is *but* one; she *is* the *only* one of her mother, she *is* the choice *one* of her that bare her: the daughters saw her, and blessed her; *yea*, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who *is* she *that* looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as *an army* with banners?—CHAP. vi. 1-10.

THE MORNING TWILIGHT.

Whither is thy Beloved gone? O thou fairest among women! whither is thy Beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.—In the time of the Bride's deepest distress, the inquiring daughters of Jerusalem become most interested both in herself and in her Beloved. They, first of all, inquire what her Beloved is more than others, partly in doubt and partly in desire; but at the same time they see her beauty in the midst of her sorrow; and, notwithstanding her wounds by the watchmen, they call her the 'fairest among women.' In the soul that is earnestly lamenting after the Lord, there lies hid a deep power

of attraction, which seldom fails to draw others toward its object. A state of mere spiritual unhappiness and discomfort, arising often from want of a close walk with God, works little else than harm in the world, and makes men dislike religion for its sadness, while it has no compensating strength. But true longing after Christ in darkness and brokenness of heart, has power in the inner man, power with God, and power with the world around; and in such a soul the heedful onlooker sees a dignity and beauty, far above all that the world can boast. Having asked who the Beloved is, they now inquire whither the Beloved has gone, with the design and resolution of seeking him—not yet their own Beloved, but one whom they desire to seek from more than mere sympathy with the desolate Bride.

Thou fairest of us all!
Whither is thy Lover gone?
Tell us and we will goe with thee,
Thou shalt not goe alone.

Drayton.

In the dark night of Christ's crucifixion and burial, the daughters of Jerusalem begin to join themselves to the children of the bride-chamber. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus now mourn for Christ along with his disciples, openly associating themselves with his professed followers; and there must have been hundreds of others both among the thoughtful men of the city, and amongst the daughters of Jerusalem who followed Christ with tears to Calvary, whose hearts were now moved with various convictions and desires, which were soon to break forth in the cry, 'What shall we do?' In all probability, the rich men who embalmed him with costly odours were not singular in the expression of their sympathy with the bereaved, and their sorrow for the departed. But neither in the sorrow of that day, nor in the darkness of the deserted soul, can any of the children of men bring back an absent Lord.

Fairest of maids! we wish thee well,
And would ourselves thy search attend;
But none of us, alas! can tell,
Whither thy Lover's footsteps tend.

Grad. of Oxf.

My Beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.—The body of Jesus was resting embalmed in the garden of the sepulchre, ‘in the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense;’ and his soul had departed to the Garden of Paradise above, to the beds of everlasting spices. In the last verse of the Song, the prayer to come down from the ‘mountain of spices,’ shows that ‘the hill of God, where Christ standeth an high-priest for evermore,’ is now ‘the hill of frankincense and the mountain of myrrh.’ But there were no mountains of spices above, except in purpose and in earnest, till Christ had gone to

‘That Garden in the Holy Mount,
Where he designed three nights to lie
In spices wrapt.’

There are various mountains mentioned in the earlier part of the Song, but no mountains of spices. There are lions’ dens and mountains of leopards—there are mountains and hills on which ‘the Beloved comes leaping like a roe or a young hart,’ but they are ‘mountains of Bether,’ mountains of division, and not mountains of myrrh. The first mention of such hills is in the Bridegroom’s taking leave of the Bride, when he tells her that he must depart ‘to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense till the dawning of the day.’ He went to that mountain at his death, and returned from it for a brief moment at his resurrection; and it is very remarkable that what he calls ‘getting him to the mountain of myrrh,’ she calls ‘going down to the garden, to the beds of spices’—the garden in the Holy Mount where he lay entombed. Now, the hill on which he stands at God’s right hand is the hill of frankincense, whence the Bride entreats him to descend for the final marriage of the Lamb.

And to gather lilies.—When the Beloved went away, his soul was ‘feeding in the garden of Eden’—resting and refreshing himself amongst the redeemed in Paradise. But he did not depart without ‘gathering’ for himself one lily in token and earnest of the countless lilies he should now commence to cull for heaven. From beside him on the cross—from the very

heart of the thorns, he plucked a snowy lily, and took it with him as a flower for his bridal garland, saying to the doing penitent, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!'

His 'going down to the garden' does not imply such restricting of himself within its walls as not to be gathering choice flowers to plant within it; and 'the gathering of lilies' implies, *first*, the calling of ransomed souls out of the desert into the garden of grace, the seeking out of lost sheep and bringing them into his fold among the flock, the gathering of new-blown lilies among the thorns, and planting them together in his garden. This blessed work of the Lord is the first comfort of the deserted Bride—that though she seems to be forgot, he has not forsaken his Church—that though he is neither standing before her late-opened door, nor tarrying for her in the streets of Jerusalem, he is caring for the souls of men, and gathering fresh lilies for his garden. His creative power has made them spring in the desert, his eye has seen them blossoming there, and his hand has transplanted them within the walled enclosure of his kingdom. There is no joy greater to Christ than this; the Bride knows it well, and has no higher delight than that he should be thus engaged. It implies, *next*, the transplanting of them into heaven; gathering them for the Paradise above. These two works are sometimes separate, at other times simultaneous. In the hour of his own weariness, he gathers that rare lily at the well of Sychar and plants it in his garden on earth; after Pentecost, he gathers many lilies into his garden on earth, and gathers Stephen and James into his garden above. He gathers some in the same day into both; as when he gathered the lily from the cross beside him into the garden of grace, and within a few hours into the garden of glory. Let us not grudge too much when he gathers his own lilies for himself, however great our own loss may appear! Thorns too many, and lilies too few, are found on our earth; yet let us rejoice when the Lord has lilies to gather for the garden of Eden; let us give thanks if he finds such flowers in the midst of us; and let us seek for ourselves to 'grow like the lily,' that when he stretches his hand to gather us also, we may be as fresh and fragrant flowers for his gardens above!

Yea, in his gardens is my gracious Lord,
 Culling his lilies with judicious hand.
 For beauty and delight he leaveth some,
 Or future solace, to the souls he loves,
 But oft he cuts them in their beauteous prime,
 Oft in their opening freshness, when he sees
 The coming storm, or hot meridian beam,
 Too trying for the frail and bending stem;
 Home then he takes them, and their bloom is there,
 Where mortal vision penetrateth not.—*Meditations.*

It must not be overlooked in this narrative, that the smitten soul that is sick of love is the first to discover where Christ is occupied in the vineyard of his kingdom. He is, indeed, always returning thither; but any special manifestation of his presence in the Church in the quickening of his saints and the calling of sinners, such a soul is ever the first to observe if it be near, and to hear of when distant; for the heart and sympathy of the true Bride are with her Beloved and all his goings. Such a soul is the first to rejoice in Christ's manifestation to others, though it is not itself enjoying 'the light of his countenance'; and nothing more surely marks a true heart toward God than the quick apprehension of his presence, and unfeigned delighting in it wherever manifested.

My heart seems to tell me my Love has descended,
 To the garden of sweets to inhale their perfume;
 The lilies to which his dear hand is extended,
 When plucked, in his bosom immortally bloom.

Grad. of Oxf.

There is, further, a most instructive answer from the Bride to the daughters of Jerusalem, who ask whither her Beloved is gone that they may seek him with her. She has not forgot the holy lesson she had learned, of bringing the King into her mother's house; and, in her own sorrow, she tells these inquiring daughters that he is 'gathering lilies,' in order that they may go to the garden and themselves be gathered among them. But some inquiring soul will object—I can never be numbered with those lilies, I have not kept myself from the snare of the destroyer, I have lost what external innocence I

possessed, I have brought guilt upon my conscience and have yielded myself slave to divers lusts and passions—O that it were with me as in the days of my youth! But there are no lilies that grow in the field of nature; there is no whiteness, no innocence, no purity retained from childhood. Real innocence you never possessed, and you have contracted dark guilt besides. But who are those lilies? ‘what are these which are arrayed in white robes? These are they which have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ Come to that blood, and ‘though your sins be red as crimson they shall be as wool, though they be like scarlet they shall be whiter than snow.’ While Jesus is yet in his garden seek him, ere ‘the gathering of the lilies’ is over; before him ‘the desert rejoices and blossoms like the rose,’ and vile though you are, you will be a fair flower in his hand, another lily gathered.

I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.—The heart is now assured, though the King's presence is not restored. The state of mind corresponds exactly to that of the Apostles when they entered the deserted tomb, and, by the sight of the orderly arrangement of the linen clothes and the napkin, were assured of the resurrection of Jesus. ‘Simon Peter went into the sepulchre and seeth the linen clothes, and the napkin wrapped together in a place by itself—then went in also the other disciple, and he saw and believed.’ They had not yet found the Beloved, but they were assured now that he was not lost to them; ‘they saw and believed,’ and could comfort themselves with the words—‘I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine!’ He is feeding now among the lilies, he is returning to his flock on earth; for the angel had assured the holy women at the tomb that Jesus had gone before them into Galilee, and there they should see him—‘feeding his flock like a shepherd.’

‘I am for my Beloved and my beloved is for me.’ In the second song the order is reversed—‘my Beloved is for me and I am for him’; for Christ had then called her to come forth as a ‘dove out of the clefts of the rock,’ and, by the very call, assured her that He was for her. To that call she responded; resting on it, she said, ‘My Beloved is mine’; and, proceeding

to affix her own seal to the covenant, she added 'and I am his.' Now also it has been Christ first, as it ever is—'the voice of my Beloved that knocketh;' but a long dark interval has ensued during which she has called, and he has given no answer, and therefore she dares not say in the first instance 'My Beloved is mine and for me.' But now she begins to have quickened hope and faith, as well as intense desire. Christ declares 'I love them that love me;' she knows, and cannot deny, the existence of this love in her heart toward him; nor can she longer refrain from the conclusion that it must be mutual and is reciprocated—'I am for my Beloved and my Beloved is for me—I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine!' She is so for him as to be his, for him, unto him, his own; and he is so for her as to be hers, for her, unto her, her own.

Having considered this mutual possession already, we shall not enter on it again, but only remark, that this is the sense of union renewed, after being lost or interrupted. The Bride could declare that her soul loved the Anointed King even to sickness and fainting; but feared to assert till now that her Beloved was hers. Actual fellowship is not yet renewed, but sense of union is restored, which is the last step toward restoration of communion. It is good indeed for the seeking and sorrowing heart to strengthen itself thus—'I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine.'

E'en like two little bank-dividing brooks,
That wash the pebbles with their wandering streams,
And, having ranged and searched a thousand nooks,
Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames,
Where in a greater current they conjoin:
So I my best Beloved's am; so he is mine.

E'en so we met; and after long pursuit,
E'en so we joined, we both became entire;
Our firm united souls did more than twine;
So I my best Beloved's am; so he is mine.

If all those glittering monarchs, that command
The servile quarters of this earthly ball,
Should tender, in exchange, their shares of land,
I would not change my fortunes for them all:
Their wealth is but a counter to my coin;
The world's but theirs, but my Beloved's mine.

Nor time, nor place, nor chance, nor death can bow
 My least desires unto the least remove;
 He's firmly mine by oath; I his by vow;
 He's mine by faith; and I am his by love;
 He's mine by water; I am his by wine;
 Thus I my best Beloved's am; thus he is mine.—*Quarles.*

THE KING'S LAST PORTRAIT OF THE BRIDE.

To the mourning yet now reassured Church Christ Jesus suddenly appears, saying, 'All hail!' and he sends them forth united like Jerusalem, and as a well-ordered army with banners, giving them power to cast out devils and overcome the hosts of darkness. At the same time, he preserves a greater distance and majesty than before; he says to them, 'touch me not!' and when the eyes of the disciples are opened to know him, 'he vanishes instantly from their sight'—or, in the language of the Song, he tells them 'turn away thine eyes from me!' In this passage also, the King rehearses his former words to the Bride; and Jesus says to his disciples, 'These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you.' In both cases the Bridegroom is no longer 'with' his Bride, as he had been before; but in a passing though glorious interview. He has in neither case returned for the marriage, but with the assurance that he will remember till the great day that pledge of his espousals, which he had commanded them to preserve till he should come again for the marriage.

Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah.—These words refer more naturally to the Church than to the single believing soul; in their fullness they must be so applied, and then to individuals as partaking of the beauty and power of the Church. It is the first response of the great Bridegroom to the long, intense, sorrowful, and patient search for his presence, during which he has more than forgot all his displeasure. Tirzah was the royal city of one of the ancient kings of Canaan, and afterwards for a time of the kings of Israel. The word signifies pleasant, and the situation of the city, as well as the town itself, was probably remarkable for beauty—'Thou art pleasant, O my love, even as lovelynesse itself' (Old Bible). The Bride is afterwards compared to 'the morning,' and here also the

image may refer to the city and the surrounding scene as beheld in the sun's dawning rays. It has been dark and solitary midnight; with break of day the Bridegroom of the Church suddenly meets the longing soul, and his first congratulation is, 'Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah!' The same Bridegroom says elsewhere to the same Bride, in terms not widely different, 'Ye are a city set upon a hill,'—for such a city Tirzah appears to have been. Let us remember the inference, that we must do nothing either to deface or to conceal the comeliness of an object at once so beautiful and so conspicuous; 'beautiful as Tirzah,' but on account of its beauty set upon a hill and incapable of being hid. Mar not that beauty, because it is not thine but thy Lord's, for thou hast just confessed that thou art His. Deface it not, for it is not thine own; conceal it not, for it is not thine own; it is both his and the reflection of his comeliness, and wilt thou hide from men the beauty of him who is fairer than the sons of men? 'Beautiful as Tirzah'—how gracious the address to the slothful, sorrowing, smitten Bride! but 'whom he loveth he loveth unto the end,' though we change, He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

Comely as Jerusalem.—Jerusalem, with its lofty walls—Jerusalem, with its noble palaces—Jerusalem, the emblem of brotherhood, a 'city compactly built together'—Jerusalem, with the divine tabernacle soon to be replaced by the temple—Jerusalem, 'the city of the living God'—Jerusalem, 'the joy of the whole earth.' The Bride is here compared to Jerusalem, and in vision the Apostle John gives the converse of the image, and compares the coming Jerusalem to the Bride—'I saw the holy city New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together, and much of the beauty of the Church consists in its union. 'Behold how good it is and how pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity!' How comely the sight of a united church built together and growing up together an holy temple to the Lord; with 'salvation for its walls and bulwarks,' impregnable by all the assaults of earth and hell, Comely with strength and majesty—'on this Rock I

will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!’ But equally privileged is each believer—‘I have made thee a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land—they shall fight against thee but they shall not prevail against thee.’ So had they fought, but they had not prevailed, against the sorrowing Bride of the King; the watchmen had smitten but they had not overcome, and their strokes had not even marred her beauty; for, after all their wounding, and the more on account of it all, the King declares her ‘comely as Jerusalem.’ She had been reproached for his sake, and ‘the Spirit of glory and of God was resting on her.’

Terrible as an army with banners.—The reference to a city is probably still pursued, but it is a city full of armed men, not merely strong with inaccessible ramparts, but terrible by a bannered host appearing on those ramparts, ready to go forth against the foe. ‘The Lord giveth a banner to them that fear him, to be displayed because of truth and righteousness’; he giveth Himself for their ensign and standard, and permits and emboldens them, to call Him ‘Jehovah-Nissi—the Lord my banner!’ ‘Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the great King; God is known in her palaces for a refuge; for lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together—they saw it and lo they marvelled—they were troubled and hasted away; fear took hold of them there!’ The connexion in the Song is the same as in the Psalm; David sings of Mount Zion ‘beautiful for situation,’ and adds that ‘the kings saw it and hasted away’; Solomon sings of the Church ‘comely as Jerusalem,’ and adds, ‘terrible as an army with banners.’ The Bride has gone through a fiery trial in a thrice-heated furnace, but now she has obtained the promise, ‘Resist the devil and he will flee!’ Satan had tempted as the subtle serpent, and had seduced the soul into carnal security and spiritual torpor—‘I sleep but my heart waketh, I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on.’ Through grace the temptation is overcome; the poisoned sleep is shaken off, and the soul rises victorious over it. But ‘his name is legion, for he is many,’ and he comes next as an enemy, a persecutor, a re-

viler, an accuser, seeking to drive the soul from its hope; the powers of darkness are wrestled with and overcome, and in the conflict with fear, with reproach, with suffering, faith is victorious. A third temptation remains in the trial of patience, often the severest of all—in quiet waiting till the Lord shall return; and never is Satan more busy, and seldom more successful, than when ‘the Lord delayeth his coming.’ When the heart is tempted to say, ‘this evil is of the Lord,’ he whispers ‘wherefore should I wait on him any longer?’ But in the end Christ always gives to him that overcometh; and during the conflict he announces the animating watchword of battle—‘Resist the devil and he will flee from you!’ Yet that veteran warrior seldom flees at the first shock of resistance, for he knows that many bend their bow against him without a second arrow in their quiver. The great Captain of our salvation resisted once, and Satan, though baffled, fled not, but repeated and diversified the assault; he resisted a second time, and the assault was still both renewed and varied; but when he resisted the third time, Satan instantly fled, and departed from him altogether ‘for a season.’ So the Bride has patiently resisted his successive assaults, and, being victorious, she is not only invincible like Jerusalem, but ‘terrible like an army with banners.’ In wrestling with unseen principalities, thou must ‘take unto thee the whole armour of God,’ and thou hast nobly done it; thou hast ‘stood in the evil day against the wiles of the devil’; thou hast risen from sleep, and girded thy loins about with truth, and gone forth after thy Lord ‘faint yet pursuing,’ ‘seeking’ and not finding; thou hast ‘taken the shield of faith and quenched the fiery darts of the wicked’; thou hast ‘taken for a helmet the hope of salvation,’ saying ‘he is gone down to his garden and is gathering lilies;’ thou hast overcome the adverse hosts of darkness; they have seen thee ‘terrible like an army with banners,’ ‘fear has taken hold on them, and they have hasted away.’ Sing therefore now unto thy Lord—‘Blessed be the Lord my strength, who teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight; thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip; thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation; thou hast subdued under me those

that rose up against me; therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, and sing praises unto thy name.'

Oh, I have seen the day,
When with a single word,
God helping me to say,
'My trust is in the Lord;'
My soul has quelled a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose.—*Cowper.*

Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.—This is the sequel to the Bride being 'terrible as an army with banners,' so as to prevail not merely over the devil and the flesh, but over the Angel of the Covenant himself. 'To him that overcometh will I give,' was the inscription on his banner, and it called for victory not merely over the hostile ranks of darkness, but also over the befriending Prince of Peace; for 'the kingdom of heaven,' with its king and all its treasures, 'suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' The image of the bannered host is the same as the 'company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots;' and its application is not materially different, for in both cases it is the earnestly seeking soul overtaking and overcoming the Lord of glory; but here, the siege of the kingdom is more protracted, and the conquest more fully described. Yet it is the victory of a lowly suitor, it is 'thine eyes have overcome'; for in that night of sorrow those 'eyes have been ever toward the Lord.' 'As the eyes of a handmaid toward her mistress, so have they waited on Him till he should have mercy,' and 'more than they that watch for the morning' have they looked for the light of the King's countenance. More surely also than the morning sun rises at length to the midnight watcher, has that Sun of righteousness dawned on the benighted soul. And now, Jesus in infinite condescension speaks not as if supplicated and refusing, but rather as if asking to be released from the power of the petitioner; employing words in their sense exactly the same as those he uttered to the wrestling and victorious Jacob, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh!—turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me!—O woman great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt!'

Virgin follower of the Lamb! man of God exercised unto godliness! such words, though rare and most precious to your soul, are not the language of an unknown tongue. The day has been when, in your deep repentance, words not unlike these were in your lips toward your God. One eye alone in the universe you could not meet, the eye of Him whom you knew best and loved most; and to him thus was your speech, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned—hide thy face from my sins—turn away thine eyes from me!' But again, in the night of long distress, you looked, and asked, and sought, and knocked; you looked till your eyes failed with looking long, asked till your throat was dried with thirst, sought till your spirit swooned within you, knocked as if your puny hands would break the locked gates of heaven asunder. At length you seemed to behold your King, but as if with a countenance half averted; and with an eye intently fixed on him you stood, while your lips cried 'O turn to me thy countenance!' The Holy One turned toward you, saying 'Mary,' you answered 'Rabboni;' and there, within the veil, face to face and eye to eye, you met your Lord. But you had sought too sorrowfully and too long to give up your suit hastily; although at other times Jesus had looked on you, and you had too quickly turned aside, yet now your eye was 'not satisfied with seeing;' and, with waiting and suppliant looks, you gazed, till he gave you all your request, and added, 'Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me!' Lord Jesus! thy name is Wonderful!—wondrous also, and awful, is thy love!

Thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them. As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.—This description of the beauty of the Bride is the same as in the fourth chapter, but is no vain repetition in such an hour; for it is a new betrothal of the soul by the Lord, after sin and separation. Thou hast these commendations from thy King again, and never didst thou need them more. 'Thine eyes were once as doves' eyes within thy locks,' but, in the day of thy sinful sleep, thou didst not 'give all diligence to add to

thy faith virtue, temperance, patience, godliness—fortitude, self-control, endurance, prayer.' Lacking these things, thou becamest 'blind (or blear-eyed) not seeing afar off;' and no wonder that thou couldst not discover thy Beloved, though he was not distant from thee. But thine eyeballs are cleared again; and he saith 'thine eyes have overcome me!' Sleeping in self-indulgence, thy Nazarite locks were secretly cut by the tempter; thou saidst thou wast thine own, and the token of thy subjection was removed; thou didst arise, with Samson, to 'shake thyself,' but Delilah never lulls the Nazarite asleep without removing his locks before he awakes; and thy strength was gone, for thy Lord was gone. But now thy locks have grown anew, and thy hair is beautiful again 'as a flock of goats from mount Gilead.' When the watchmen smote and wounded thee, the white teeth of thy precious faith 'were broken as with gravel-stones'; but they are restored again 'as a flock of sheep coming up newly washed from the river, every one with twins and none bereaved among them.' Thy modesty and shamefacedness had left thee, and had been exchanged for pride and self-complacency in that hour when thou saidst 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on'—thinking thyself some great one and counting lightly of thy Lord; and, though without justice, yet not without occasion, the midnight watchmen, taking off thy veil, reproached thee as if 'thy brow was brass.' But now, thy Lord acknowledges that 'thy temples are as a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.' The words are the same as before, yet not the same in their utterance; the eyes are the same, yet not the same, for they had become dim and are cleared again; the locks the same, yet not the same, for they were cut and have grown again; the teeth the same, yet not the same, for they were broken and are renewed again; and the blushing temples the same, yet not the same, for they had grown hard and uncomely, but 'thy flesh is fresher than a child's' again. Blessed rehearsal!—thou wouldst not be satisfied with less, and what more canst thou desire? Thy God is reconciled again, he hath blotted out thine iniquity and not remembered thy sin, he hath 'washed thy feet anew' in token of having part with him, he hath

‘presented thee again to himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.’

There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines [or secondary wives—Old Bible] and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one.—This portion of the parable appears to refer to the glittering crowd of witnesses assembled at the marriage or espousal of the Messiah’s Bride; and the representation is, in substance, the same as in the forty-fifth Psalm, though here the assembly is more numerous and imposing. In the Psalm there is only one queen among the spectators, the daughter or the queen of Tyre, and here there are threescore queens; in the Psalm there are kings’ daughters or princesses, and here there are fourscore concubines, kings’ wives of secondary rank, or princesses; and for the honourable women in the Psalm, there are here virgins without number. These, as assembled witnesses, look on the Church, the Bride of the Lamb; and who are these queens and princesses and daughters? There is, we conceive, an allusion, which we shall presently consider, to the multitude of wives of earthly monarchs in contrast to the one Bride of Messiah; but the first reference certainly is to the many rulers of the world, whether civil or religious, in contrast to the single Bride of the great King (p. 60.) In such an allegory, where prophets and apostles are represented as virgins constituting the spouse, it is impossible to represent kings and rulers and chief priests otherwise than under such images as queens, and concubines, and daughters. There is no other mode of describing them without destroying the allegory. There are few topics to which Christ more frequently alludes in addressing his disciples, than the lordship exercised by the kings, and rulers, and great ones of the earth; and he sets in contrast, not only the humility that characterizes his followers, but the unity. ‘It shall not be so among you, for all ye are brethren,’ is oneness as well as lowliness; and the unity is the foundation of the lowliness. The world consists of many, and one man gains power and exercises lordship over other men; but the Church is one—‘that they all may be one’—and therefore the relation is that of love one to another, and not of lordship. This distinguishing truth is set

forth in perpetual remembrance by the Lord's Supper—'We being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.'

The Lord Jesus Christ, the true Solomon, the long-expected King, comes not surrounded with the earthly pomp of the kings of the earth, Jew or Gentile; and he comes restoring the marriage covenant to its original oneness and simplicity. They had contravened both the primitive institution, and the special command to Israel's kings not to multiply wives, yet were so permitted on account of the hardness of their hearts. But the Second Adam brings men back to the simplicity of the first, and announces again that 'a man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one'—not many gathered together, but two united in one. Restoring the early institution, and bestowing on it the honor of the first display of his glory, he seems to announce that, in contradistinction to kings and their courts, the Bride of the Messiah is One. The promised King appears in his glory at a marriage feast, typical of his own marriage; but his Bride is to be one and undivided, not many as in the courts of earthly kings.

The numbers of 'threescore' and 'fourscore' appear to be arbitrary, and without any more special ground than in the expressions 'he shall be with thee in six troubles, and in seven no evil shall come nigh thee;' or, in Solomon's own words, 'give a portion to seven and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be on the earth.' There are, and let there be in earthly courts, 'threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number; yet my love, my undefiled is but one'—not one of these, for they look upon and praise her—not all these combined, but a single one, an only one, in contrast to their multitude. Now, it is true that the Bride of the Lamb consists of an exceeding great multitude which no man can number. His virgin followers are 'a hundred and forty-four thousand,' with their Father's name written in their forehead; in whose name the Bride in this Song entreats, 'Draw me, we will run after thee,' following him whithersoever he goeth. But in this holy company there is the most

perfect unity, and they constitute together only one 'King's daughter all glorious within,' one 'chaste virgin espoused to Christ,' one 'Bride whom the Bridegroom hath,' one 'wife of the Lamb who has made herself ready' for the marriage supper, one 'queen standing at his right hand in gold of Ophir.'

Each redeemed soul says, indeed, 'he loved me,' as truly as the whole assembly sing 'to Him that loved us;' each is 'betrothed in loving-kindness' and 'married to him that is risen from the dead,' as if there were no other besides; each believer, being 'joined to the Lord is one spirit with him,' so that they two are one spirit. Wondrous, mysterious truth!—it is no divided heart that the Lord Jesus gives to thee, thou ransomed soul! for he loved thee and gave himself for thee, himself expressly for thee—not part of himself for thee and part for another, but himself, his life, his all for thee! He loved thee—not with a measured and restricted love, but with a 'love stronger than death, which many waters could not quench'; and he glories in thee saying 'my love, my undefiled is but one.' But as he gives, so he requires an undivided love, and demands 'give me thine heart.' See then that your heart be not double—that you offer not part to him, and reserve part for another. Reserve not part for yourself, for of his 'none liveth to himself,' but every one 'denies himself,' disowns himself; reserve not part for father and mother, and brother and sister; for except you 'forget your father's house,' and hate it in comparison of him, he will not have you, nor 'desire your beauty;' reserve not part for the world, for then he calls you an 'adulteress,' and being 'a friend of the world you are the enemy of God.' 'My love, my undefiled is but one!'—single, simple, sincere, faithful. Lord! each of us would pray with the man of thine own choice, 'Unite my heart to fear thy name!'—make this double heart single, this divided heart one—a unity within itself, having all its desires united in thee—a unit of love and devotion which shall admit of no division—say thou of me 'my dove is but one!'

But it is remarkable, that alike in the Old Testament and

in the New, when the Church collective is described, composed of innumerable betrothed ones, it is invariably represented as a single bride or wife; quite as much as if it were but a single soul, and never once otherwise. The persons referred to are many, and are addressed as many, 'Turn, ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you.' But when the marriage relation is specified, the expression is always singular, 'I have called thee as a wife of youth when thou wast refused'—never wives; 'as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee'—never brides. So, in the New Testament, it is, 'the Spirit and the bride say Come'—it is, 'his wife hath made herself ready'—it is, 'the bride the Lamb's wife.' When the plural number has been used, the change is immediate and marked—'husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it,' or for her; and even the term virgin is singular, the moment it is connected with espousal. The ten lamp-bearing virgins are the bride by profession, and the five oil-bearers are the true bride of Christ, for there is no other bride save themselves in the parable; and again, 'a hundred and forty-four thousand spotless virgins' constitute the Lamb's bride. But as soon as the marriage covenant is expressed, even this term follows the same rule as the wife and the bride, and becomes singular. Addressing many believers, the apostle Paul says, 'I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgini to Christ.' The virgin bride is one, even as the divine husband is one—'there are threescore queens and fourscore concubines, but my dove, my undefiled, is one.'

The Church is 'one bread and one body,' and can no more be divided into many, than the head and hands and feet of one can be severed, and made to stand for so many several persons. The attempt is death, and each divided part, set up by itself, is no longer a living member joined to the head, but a limb cut off and dead. The soul, or the church, that says 'I sit as a queen,' I am the bride,—by the very act, disjoins itself from the living body, and, in refusing to be a part, ceases to belong

to the one spouse of Christ. 'I pray,' said Jesus, 'that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us!'

She is the only one of her mother, the choice one of her that bare her—or 'deare unto her that bare her' (Old Bible). She is not one of several because the *choice* one of her mother, even as the fact of Jesus being the Beloved Son does not set aside his being the only begotten of the Father; nor is she one of several because she has 'a little sister,' for that sister is a member of the same body with herself, and denotes those 'other sheep' whom Jesus said he must bring, not to make two churches, but so that 'there shall be one fold, one shepherd,' one bride, one Bridegroom. 'Jerusalem which is above, which is free, is the mother of us all'—the mother of all the members of the Church, therefore the mother of the Church considered as composed of these members; and the contrast to the free Jerusalem is 'Mount Sinai which answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.' This mother may therefore be regarded as the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of grace within which all believers are born. The Bride, the Lamb's wife, is 'the choice one, the only one' of this mother, for she has borne no other daughter besides. Nor is the distinction a mean one for the Bride of the Lamb, because it cannot equally be affirmed of other dispensations and other covenants. The covenant of works, in one or other of its forms, has various children. As formed with our father Adam, its children are lost and dead, and it has none living. As formed with the sons of heaven, it has principalities and powers and thrones and dominions, it has angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim, for its living offspring; but it has also Satan, Beelzebub, Mammon, and their legions, for its children lost and dead. But this covenant and kingdom of grace, this 'Jerusalem which is free,' has no lost child, no dead child, no multitude of children like individual angels, no other child. It never had nor will have another save the Bride, the wife of the Lamb, 'the only one of her mother, the choice one of her that bare her.' How blessed are those who are partakers of this new covenant, children of the promise, members of the

one true Church in heaven and in earth, the one Bride of the Lamb—having one Lord, one faith, one baptism!

There may be dignities, a lofty few,
 Gifted and talented, and they of earth
 Will bow before them, and as queens they shine;
 There may be noted ones of less degree,
 Attractive, amiable, of blameless life.
 But, saith the Lord, my dove, my undefiled
 Stands single and supreme o'er all of these;
 The queens, the concubines, the virgins here
 May vie with her pretensions. But to stand
 Unswerving in whole-heartedness for Christ,
 And in herself a unity—girt round
 With the bright sterling zone of charity.
 Even the worldling would not dare contemn—
 Thousands would look and bless.—*Meditations.*

THE BRIDE'S PORTRAIT BY THE QUEENS.

The daughters saw her and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.—They blessed her, or 'saide she was blessed' (Old Bible); and 'who is this that looketh forth?' in the following verse, is the expression of their admiration; and is connected by some of our old translators and many of the moderns—'they praised her, saying, who is this?' (Fenner). This admiration of the queens, and concubines, and honourable women, is not greatly different from the honour with which Jesus is received, when it is written—'As many were astonished at thee; his image was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men—so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him, for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider' (Isa. lii). Jesus is Jehovah's king, and the kings of the earth, first stumbled at his humiliation, are next astonished at his glory. The Church, after a night of sorrow and affliction, comes forth as 'the queen in gold of Ophir;' and as those who express their wonder at the King Messiah are the kings of the earth, so those who marvel at the Bride are represented as queens and concubines and maidens of their courts—

the great and honourable ones of the earth. When the Bride, in the person of John the Baptist, went forth to meet the coming Bridegroom, the queens and the concubines, Herod and Herodias and her daughter, saw her and knew that she was blessed; and, while they hated her, they trembled before her 'as an army with banners.' They saw her and wondered again, when Drusilla and Bernice beheld Felix and Agrippa, their lords, 'trembling' before the prisoner Paul as if he were an army with banners, and 'almost persuaded' to yield themselves captives to the cross. The queens and the concubines—the leaders of the earthly Jerusalem, rulers and elders and scribes, and Annas and Caiaphas, and John and Alexander—saw and 'marvelled' at Peter and John; they saw them pure, brilliant, terrible, they asked 'who is this?—whence have these men learning?—and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus,' that it was the Bride, the Lamb's wife. They beheld that Bride again in the person of Stephen, 'when they could not resist the spirit and the wisdom with which he spake,' and when 'looking steadfastly on him they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel—fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.'

A wonder, a mystery, and a terror is this Spouse of Christ to all the queens and princesses of earth, yet also, in the day of their visitation, a praise and a blessing. 'Kings shall bring presents unto thee—every one shall submit himself with pieces of silver.' Often 'afflicted and not comforted,' thou Bride of Jesus! going forth in the midnight to seek him, and inquiring 'saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' thou hast been reproached and wounded for thy pains; yet 'the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory'—the nations, the kingdoms, the cities shall see, shall bless, 'shall praise thee, because of the Lord thy God when he shall have glorified thee.' But take heed that thy heart waver not; seek that thy Lord may still say of thee 'my dove, my undefiled, is but one;' envy not, and imitate not the queens and princesses of earth, of rank, of wealth, of intellect, of taste—but, as one Bride, be thou true to thy one Lord, and in the end they will see, they will bless, and they will praise thee.

It is intensely interesting to observe not only the intrinsic beauty of the images throughout the Song, but their admirable fitness in their relative positions. There is much resemblance in general feature between the descriptions of the Bride in the fourth and in the tenth verses; and though both are brief, they are the most magnificent portraits that are given of her throughout the book. But mark the distinction between them—the first portrays her by the noblest objects in earth—Tirzah, Jerusalem, a bannered army; the second portrays her by the noblest objects in heaven—the morning, the moon, the sun, and the host of stars. And why? because the first is by the King who is always superior to the Bride, who always speaks as one ‘come from God and going to God, as the Son of Man which is in heaven,’ and from his position looks down, and compares the Church to the highest objects of earth. The second is by the queens of earth, by the thrones and dominions of this world; and from their lower level they look up to the Church as above them, and describe the Bride not by objects of earth under their own control, but by objects in heaven beyond their power, and exceeding themselves in glory.

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?—The Bride of Christ is now emerging from the darkness of night into the greyness of the dawn, and stands doubted at first by others who she is, and in what her history will end. ‘Now when the high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests, heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.’ It was light rising from an unexpected quarter, and to them unwelcome light, which they seek to ‘cover with a bushel.’ Gamaliel counsels them that if it be of man’s kindling, it will of itself sink back into its own darkness; but if it be the light of God’s sun, they cannot suppress it. He reminds them of the false lights in Theudas and Judas of Galilee that had gone out, and assures them that ‘if this counsel or work be of men it will come to nought, but if it be of God they cannot overthrow it.’ In the allegoric language of the Song, it is the Bride issuing from the obscurity of night, while the queens and the concubines, the great ones ruling in the Lord’s forsaken temple, are perplexed and ask, ‘Who is

this that looketh forth as the morning?' The earthly rulers at first always conceive that the Bride of the Lamb is not unlike themselves, and that if she cannot be crushed by power she can be seduced by flattery, and will count it an honour to be numbered among the princesses and the daughters. But when they discover that she stands single and alone, 'an only one' that can neither be corrupted nor crushed, one not of earth but of heaven, they stand aside and exclaim, 'Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?'

So is it also in the first dawning of grace in the soul—doubtful to the Bride herself, doubtful to others, and the world wonders what new power is at work in the man. Men predict that it will soon vanish again, yet fear that it may increase; they stand in awe at the first faint rays of the light of heaven—rays visible where all was darkness before, and rays from heaven close beside them—'Who is this that looketh forth as the morning?' what new thing is this, what manner of man is this becoming? So also, the newly-called or newly-restored Bride of Christ marvels if this can truly be the light of the morning, and not merely an illusion of the night as in times past. Yet fear not, but 'arise, shake thyself from the dust and loose the bands of thy neck, O daughter of Zion!—arise, shine, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!' This light will never vanish or expire, for it is 'the path of the just shining more and more unto the perfect day.'

Fair as the moon—the light of which is brighter than the first light of the dawn, before the sun has risen. But the comparison is not so much to the respective amounts of light shed on the earth, as to the luminous objects themselves. 'The morning,' in the image, is not the light shed down from the sky which the still unrisen sun is brightening, but the dawning brightness in the sky itself; and 'the moon,' signifies not the light yielded by her beams, but the moon herself in her silvery beauty; for the placid ruler of the night is both brighter and lovelier than the faint light of the clouds in early dawn. Such is the progress of divine illumination in the soul and in the Church. The faint and scattered rays upon the clouds were

cheering and beauteous after the midnight, but on the bosom of the dark night itself how lovely, how glorious, is the moon with her silvery disk! So attractive an object was it in Eastern countries, that Job describes the progress of idolatry by 'the heart of man being secretly enticed,' when he sees 'the moon walking in brightness,' till 'his mouth kisses his hand' in adoration. The Bride of Jesus is walking in brightness within, yet above, a benighted world, 'fair as the moon' in the midnight darkness of earthliness, error, and sin. Nor is her beauty to be disparaged, or her light despised, because borrowed and reflected; for it is the sun's own light, so reflected that men may look calmly on it. In the absence of the sun, the moon assists to ripen thousands of harvest-fields every year—thousands of travellers it guides on their path—and thousands of mariners it rescues from a watery grave. Christ, the sun of righteousness, is not personally here, and the world can see his light only as reflected by his Church. They have light of truth in the letter of his word—saving inward light only from his Spirit—but embodied outward light only in his people. The 'word is the lamp' of light, but through man's blindness covered with a bushel; the 'Spirit is the power' of light removing the covering from the word; and the Church is the light-bearer, 'holding forth the word of life' to a dark world. But let us remember that it is only when 'our eyes are toward the Lord,' and our face kept steadfast toward his countenance, that we can catch his rays, reflect his glory, and walk in brightness 'fair as the moon.'

Clear as the sun.—As we have already noted, it is not exactly the progress of the day that is described in the imagery, but increased measure of light in objects possessing various degrees of illumination—the grey dawn, the silvery moon, the dazzling sun. 'The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day—clear as the sun.' The dimness of the dawn, and the changeableness of the moon, are succeeded in the believer by the steady and glorious brightness of the sun. It is his in privilege, and it ought to be his in experience. Behold 'a sign in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun;' putting on the Lord Jesus Christ; a glorious cloth-

ing—'the life hid with Christ in God,' hid, not in darkness, but in the bosom of light. The tiny glow-worm is said by its phosphoric lamp to attract an insect enemy which it has no power to resist—a creature of the night that loves the darkness, and hails the luminous spark only as marking out its prey. But He who gives wisdom to the ant teaches the glow-worm discretion; and when so assailed, it extinguishes not its midnight torch in order to escape, but, making light its refuge and its armour, sheds forth a shining flood all around, till the deadly foe is bewildered and baffled by a brightness which it cannot endure. Child of the light! thine armour, as well as thy beauty, is to be 'clothed with the sun;' this is thy wall of defence, which stupifies the powers of darkness and defies their assault.

Terrible as an army with banners—or 'dazzling as the hosts of heaven'; for the bannered army here referred to consists, no doubt, of the stars of heaven; of those visible hosts of light which 'the Lord names and numbers,' and concerning which the Shuhite of old inquired, 'Is there any number of his armies; and on whom doth not his light arise?' Alike from the seen and the unseen armies of heaven—from the stars and from the angels—does Jehovah take his title of 'Lord of Hosts'; and the Bride, having been compared to the moon and to the sun, is now likened to the brilliant and countless army of the stars. The two ideas of dazzling light and marshalled armies are occasionally blended in Eastern deserts: A modern traveller mentions that 'caravans of a thousand persons sometimes traverse the desert by night marshalled in companies, each preceded by its standard, and the individuals all carrying torches, so that the country is illumined for miles around'—glorious emblem of the armies of light marching through this benighted wilderness.

But why are the twinkling stars put after the moon in its brightness, and the sun in its glory? Is it not so always in the word of God, and are not the stars the final and everlasting emblem of the ransomed ones? There is one sun in the heavens and no more, there is one Sun of righteousness, one Light of the world; with this light the Church is 'clothed,' and she is therefore herself 'clear as the sun.' So

also, indeed, in the heavenly state 'the Lamb is the light thereof,' and in him alone, even as branches in the vine, do we live and abide for ever—mere branches still, from one single root Jesus Christ. Yet in that upper world all sin is gone, all darkness that was in us; and 'to the praise of the glory of his grace we shall shine' with individual lustre 'like the stars,' for as 'one star differeth from another star in glory, so is the resurrection of the dead.' While 'his countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength'—'they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.' So the father of the faithful is taken forth abroad, asked to count the number of the stars, and assured that 'so shall his seed be;' but the complete fulfilment is in their final state, in the children of faith and of the promise, bright and countless as the stars for ever. So also the moon-supported, sun-clothed, and star-crowned woman in Revelation; the moon is beneath her feet as past, the sun around her person as present, the stars above her head as future, her state final and everlasting. The Church Patriarchal resembled the faint dawn, when she 'looked forth as the morning;' the Church Levitical was 'fair as the moon,' with light imperfect that was to change and pass away, with types and ceremonies to change like the moon by whose fluctuating seasons they were ordered; the Church Evangelical, now that the darkness is past and the true light shineth, is 'clear as the sun'; and the Church Triumphant in the resurrection will be 'dazzling as the hosts of heaven—terrible as an army with banners'—'the stars' promised to Abraham; 'the exceeding great army' promised to Ezekiel; not without an earthly, but with a more glorious heavenly fulfilment.

But while the Church is, in her successive stages, 'fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and glorious as the hosts of heaven'; both here and in the Apocalyptic vision, she must also be regarded as adorned with all these lights at once. 'The moon is under her feet' as pertaining to time past, but she is still 'fair as the moon,' for she has lost no beauty that she ever possessed. The types and ceremonies are past for ever, and, either as her clothing or as her crown, they are 'beggarly elements bringing again into bondage,' but not so if under the feet of the

Bride. There they shine, as a glorious footstool on which she stands—not subjected to them, but standing on them, as on a beauteous and shining pavement with emblematic characters engraved, illustrating all her history; and ‘the feet of the Prince’s daughter beautiful with shoes,’ because ‘shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,’ are always more lovely and attractive when the ‘moon is under those feet’—retaining the fairness of the moon, along with the brightness of the sun. By quenching that silver moonlight of types and shadows, which was once all her fairness, she would sadly tarnish her present lustre. Yet with the moon for her footstool, she has the sun for her garment; the fairest robe is on her now, raiment white and glistening so as no fuller on earth can whiten, ‘the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints’—the Bridegroom’s raiment hers, and the Bridegroom’s name,—‘the Lord our righteousness.’ And even now, she is ‘glittering as the hosts of heaven’; even now, her Lord holds his messengers as ‘stars in his right hand’; and she wears already on her head a ‘crown of twelve stars,’ ‘more than a conqueror’—in bright anticipation and earnest of everlasting conquest and kingdom.

There are, however, no two things on earth more exactly alike than the morning and the evening twilight; the dawn of morning before the sun has risen, and the dusk of evening after the sun has set, are not visibly different. Yet, while no two things are so like in appearance, none are so really different, or in their issues so contrary—the one having its progress and end in noon-day brightness, and the other in midnight darkness. Many comfort themselves because, although they are not ‘light in the Lord,’ they have some dim twilight in their souls, which they expect to ‘shine more and more unto the perfect day.’ But, friend! read the other half of the wise man’s proverb; for thousands are perishing by reading only one half of the word of God. Solomon, who in his Song likens the Church to morning light, in his Proverbs compares the path of the just to the morning twilight shining out of grey dawn into perfect day; but, in the same breath, he compares the path of the wicked to the twilight of evening, darkening

more and more into midnight blackness—'the way of the wicked is as darkness.' The end of the righteous is light with no darkness at all; the end of the wicked is the blackness of darkness for ever. Now, if it is dim twilight with you, which of the two twilights is it?—morning dawn, to issue in light; or evening dusk, to issue in darkness? Which is increasing as the hours pass away?—is the light growing, or is the darkness growing?—are you nearer to Christ, or further from him?—more spiritual, or less spiritual?—more conscientious, or less conscientious?—loving the word more, or caring for it less?—with light augmenting, or light diminishing in the soul toward God, toward heaven? Is your twilight the dawn of morning, or the dusk of evening?

XIX.

THE GARDEN OF NUTS—THE CHARIOTS OF AMMI-
NADIB—THE TWO ARMIES.

I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, *and* to see whether the vine flourished, *and* the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me *like* the chariots of Ammi-nadib. Return, return, O Shulamite! return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.—CHAP. vi. 11-13.

THE GARDEN OF NUTS.

The words undoubtedly belong to the Bride, because throughout the book the Bride is the narrator. The Bridegroom never speaks in soliloquy as she often does, 'my Beloved is mine and I am his'; and, while she constantly tells of her transactions with the watchmen and others, he never introduces any narrative except what forms part of a direct address to the Bride.

'The garden of nuts' into which the Bride now descends is the third of the gardens of the Song, and is marked by very peculiar features. The first garden is in spring, full of flowers and tender grapes with nothing mature; the second garden is in autumn, full of spices and ripe fruits with nothing imperfect; and this third garden is in the end of winter, but with the immediate prospect of a new spring. There are no spices, for these have all been gathered; there are no pomegranates nor pleasant fruits, for these were plucked and eaten at the bridal feast; but there are nuts from the previous autumn, either stored at the gates, or still hanging on the trees. It is still winter, but the winter is on the very point of bursting in a new spring, and the Bride descends into the garden of nuts

to watch the first sproutings of the valley, the earliest blossoming of the vine, and the budding of the pomegranate.

To pruned orchyades I was gone downe,
 Green valli-plantes to see;
 To see if that the vine were flour'd,
 Budded the grannet-tree.—*Fenner.*

Jesus having given the disciples their commission to go forth 'as an army with banners,' leaves them and returns to his Father; and they descend from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem to 'wait for the promise of the Father.' They 'go down into the garden' to watch for the fresh outbreak of a new spring, the instant that 'the Spirit is poured out from on high.' And if ever on earth was a 'garden of nuts,' it was in that upper room in Jerusalem, where they tarry in prayer for the budding of spring. The whole word of God was a new treasure to them. Jesus had 'expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself; and had opened their understanding to apprehend all things that were written of him in Moses, and the Psalms, and the Prophets.' But in so brief a space there could not be communicated the explanation of each separate type and promise; but rather the principles of interpretation, illustrated by numerous examples through all the Scriptures, along with the inward gift of the Spirit to give light in all the mysteries of the word. There were therefore at once innumerable kernels in the word of God to be extracted from their enclosing shells, and power and promise for reaching the hid treasures—a whole garden of unopened nuts—a whole 'garden of nuts' freely opened for the eater.

While gathering and breaking those treasures of the past, they were all the time watching for the first breath of summer, when 'suddenly there came a rushing mighty wind from heaven.' The Spirit was expected in itself, yet it came at an unexpected moment, in an unexpected manner and with unexpected power; which could not be described more exactly than in the words of the Song, 'or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.'

Then the Bride is addressed by the daughters of Jerusalem

as the Shulamite, or Solomonite, as the spouse of Solomon the Prince of Peace. And surely it is not a little remarkable, that the narrative in the Acts twice mentions Solomon's Porch as the place where the Pentecostal Church assembled; 'they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.' This was their place of daily meeting, and since they had not yet received the specific name of Christians, many would probably call them the people that met in Solomon's porch—the Solomonite or Shulamite. The real name has a far higher origin; it is the Bride of 'the Prince of Peace'; it is the daughter of the God of Peace; it is the daughter of Zion publishing peace.

The incident that follows is given almost in the very words of the Acts of the Apostles—'Return, return, O Shulamite, that we may look on thee,' is the language of the Song; the words of the history are, 'as the lame man that was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together in the porch called Solomon's, greatly wondering.' The people were intensely desirous of seeing the Apostles; the lame man held them as they passed forward through the porch, and the people ran to them, unwilling that they should enter the temple, but virtually asking them to return that they might look on them; more, indeed, than asking, for the one was holding them back from advancing, while the rest ran up to them. 'What will ye see in the Shulamite?' is the answer of the Bride; 'Ye men of Israel, why look ye so earnestly on us?' is the answer of the apostles. Ye will see in this Shulamite 'as it were the company of two armies' is her account of herself; 'why look ye on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?' is their account of themselves, or in the language of another of the apostles, 'we are men of like passions with yourselves.'

I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded.—The older interpreters understand these nuts of the larger species like the walnuts, which are most common in warmer countries; and they distribute the several parts into the outer husk which is bitter, the enclosing shell which is hard and

sometimes rough, and the kernel within which is sweet (Orig., Theod.) They applied the emblem variously; we take it of the word of God. Undoubtedly that blessed word to the children of this world, and to every man at first, is bitter to the taste. The outer rind is so bitter and distasteful to many, that they conclude there can be no sweetness within, and cast the whole away; or more commonly they leave it untouched and untasted, sometimes pleased with certain palatable preparations from it, but never really tasting the word itself. The reproof that meets them on the very surface of the word is so harsh and nauseous to them, that they look on the whole as a bitter medicine, which may be necessary and therefore good for the sick and dying, but which is not fit for any who are in life and health, and able to relish pleasant food. They will not therefore throw it away in contempt, nor will they revile the Good Physician; but they leave both the medicine and the healer to an hour of extremity—a dying hour, and they descend into the grave unsaved. But when a man's conscience is once awake to his lost condition, he no longer neglects the word of life on account of its bitter husk; he can receive reproof and even love it, because 'the reproofs of instruction are the way of life.' Nothing now seems bitter compared with sin, nothing painful except the anger of a holy God.

But beneath the bitter surface he finds a hard shell, and seems further than ever from the nutritious kernel within. It is not distaste that hinders him now, but helplessness. He finds himself like a hungry child in a garden of nuts which hang over him in tempting profusion, but his teeth are too feeble to break them. Such is the letter of the blessed word, a hard shell containing a coveted treasure, but without the least power to impart life to the soul until it is opened by a stronger hand. But when once the hard shell is broken, the kernel is found, and is sweeter than honey from the comb; the hungry soul 'eats that which is good; eats and lives for ever.' Then there is the whole garden of nuts; hundreds hanging around in every pathway of the word, in every line of the book of life. The soul delights in every hard case that

is broken, and every fresh kernel that is opened for it out of those countless treasures. It says of each in succession, this now is mine, and that is my own for ever. It delights also in the 'treasures that are still hid.' It looks over all the word of God, all the promises, all the truths, and says—These are all mine in free gift: I can now see only their outer surface, but they are kept for me by my heavenly Father, and will be opened for me as I am able to receive them.

Children of this world! you also are often entering a garden of nuts, you are seeking earnestly to find the fruit, you are often forcing your way through much that is distasteful, with great effort you break the hard shell at length, and all you find 'is vanity and vexation of spirit.' The fruit tasted is often rotten, and more bitter within than without, and at best it is a mere empty shell that can yield no real sweetness, no satisfaction to the soul, no food to the man. But in the whole garden of God there is not a single fruit that is bitter, not a single fruit that is empty and void. All is full, all is ripe, all is sweet; it is all the fruit of 'righteousness,' the fruit of 'peace,' the fruit of 'eternal life.' 'O taste and see that God is good!'—enter the garden—'eat and live!' If you will not hearken to us, listen to one who knew all that was to be found without the word of God, and who, haply from too distant a position, thus describes what is to be found within.

Within that awful volume lies
 The mystery of mysteries.
 Happiest they of human race,
 To whom their God has granted grace
 To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
 To lift the latch and force the way.
 And better had they ne'er been born,
 Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.—*Scott.*

THE CHARIOTS OF AMMI-NADIB.

Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.—What those were is of little importance to the meaning of the verse, as the substance of the image lies in the

swiftness of the chariots. Taken as a proper name, Ammi-nadib is supposed by many to have been some captain of the host, famous like Jehu for the speed of his chariot horses; but it seems improbable that any single officer should be so marked out in this Song, and especially one of whom we find no record. Translated, it has been rendered the chariots of 'a people willing, generous, or princely'; or else 'of the people of the Prince,' meaning his warlike attendants (Ges.) This last explanation appears to us the best, even if we should understand it of the chariots of an earthly king and his attending nobles. But we greatly prefer to interpret it of the chariots of Messiah, the Lord's Anointed; and then the reference will be the same as in the Psalms, 'the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.' Solomon was familiar with this use of the term chariot employed by his father David, and there is nothing more probable than that he should designate these angel-chariots as the chariots of Ammi-nadib, or of the angelic attendants on the great King. But, in every way, the sense is one; the hastening soul of the Bride is likened before by the King to the swiftness of the chariots of Pharaoh, and is now compared by herself to the speed of the chariots of Ammi-nadib.

The Bride is engaged in some duty, discharging it, however, in the Lord's name, and not without a sense of his presence; and in a moment her soul is carried away directly, irresistibly, rapidly, toward her Bridegroom and her King. She has no desire and no power to oppose the divine impulse; she is on the earth, though not of the earth; but in a moment is 'seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.' A willing chariot has borne a willing soul swiftly into the presence of her Lord. I knew not till 'my soul made me as the chariots of Ammi-nadib—he overturneth the mountains and they know not—the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell (thou knowest not) whence it cometh;' the power comes suddenly in all these cases, and uncontrollably in them all. The mountains overturned by unknown and irresistible might; the wind blowing at the command of an unseen power, unknown and

uncontrolled by us; the soul carried upward by a force not our own, nor under our direction—‘so is every one that is born of the Spirit.’ We know not the wind’s secret chambers, or its goings out and comings in, yet its irresistible power is instantly felt by us; and so here, it is the free breathing of the Spirit, irrespective of any immediate asking at the moment; not unlike the first breath of that Spirit upon the dead soul.

It may be in holy joy, that the soul is borne away to ‘the land that is very far off, to see the King in his beauty,’ or it may be in holy sorrow, ‘looking on him whom we have pierced’; ‘rising hastily, and going to the grave’ of him whom our soul loveth, ‘to weep there.’

See, see the chariot and those rushing wheels
That whirled the prophet up at Chebar flood;
My spirit some transporting cherub feels,
To bear me where the towers of Salem stood,
Once glorious towers, now sunk in guiltless blood.

There doth my soul in holy vision sit,
In pensive trance, and anguish, and ecstatic fit,
Mine eye hath found that sad sepulchral rock,
That was the casket of heaven’s richest store.

Milton.

Often however, most commonly and most gloriously, it is in the very midst of asking, while engaged in the exercise, that the Spirit suddenly and mightily bears away the soul; gives it more than angelic wings; and seats it in heavenly places with Christ. There are few better signs of spiritual health than this instantaneous ascension of the heart to Christ (Owen). Yet it is widely different from the rapturous flight of the unstable mind, easily carried about with every wind; and very far from being found by those who hope to maintain heavenly communion, merely by momentary thoughts and petitions. It is often given by the Lord to the young convert of his own sovereign grace, in fatherly kindness to the new-born soul, the helpless babe in Zion; it is often lost afterwards in the midst of cares and pleasures of earth, or in the multitude of outward

works; and in the case before us the gift, or the recovery of the gift, has been the fruit of spiritual exercise both long and severe. There may be neither length of time nor severity of labour in the immediate act, but it is the result of both. The closed doors between the soul and heaven have been re-opened, the spiritual youth is renewed, the eagle's wings that had lost their plumes have begun to grow again, in a moment suddenly the breath of heaven wafts the spirit upward, and it 'mounts with strong wings of eagles' to the sanctuary on high. Happy art thou, brother! sister! if, 'or ever thou art aware, thy soul is making thee like the chariots of Ammi-nadib'; and, if so, 'quench not the Spirit' that kindles this divine love within thee, else that same chariot-like soul will soon be cleaving to the dust, and drag heavily along till, with broken wheels, it is immovable in the mire.

He takes my soul e'er I'm aware
 And shows me where his glories are;
 No chariot of Ammi-nadib
 The heavenly rapture can describe.

O may my spirit daily rise
 On wings of faith above the skies,
 Till death shall make my last remove,
 To dwell for ever with my Love.

Watts.

THE TWO ARMIES.

Return, return, O Shulamite! return, return, that we may look upon thee.—The Shulamite is the daughter of peace, the peace-accepting, peace-proclaiming, peace-making Bride of Solomon the Prince of Peace. Those who ask her to return are certainly the daughters of Jerusalem, who are represented as present throughout the whole Song, even in its most sacred scenes, and have latterly manifested a growing interest in the spouse, and in her Beloved. The chariot-like flight to her Lord is represented as bearing her away from them; which may signify no more than the mind within itself being borne away to Jesus. but may also imply a retiring from friends to meet with

Christ—as Mary at his call rose quickly, and went through the weeping company to find him, without telling them why she so left in haste. Therefore they call, ‘Return, return, O Shulamite! that we may look on thee.’ When thou wast sorrowing after thy Beloved, we saw a heavenly beauty through thy tears and wounds, and called thee even then ‘the fairest among women.’ But thou hast found Him now, or rather hast been found of him; he has called thee, and made thee ‘beautiful as Tirzah’; the great ones of the earth themselves, the queens and princesses, admire, and praise, and fear thee; and we, who were not without interest in thy sorrow, desire to see thee now in thy gladness, and in thy beauty—‘Return, O Shulamite! that we may look upon thee.’ They call her now by a new name. ‘Fairest among women’ they called her before, but ‘the Shulamite’ now; ‘being justified by faith she has peace with God through Jesus Christ her Lord’; ‘He is her peace,’ and she herself is peace, for ‘the peace of God that passeth understanding keeps her heart and mind in Christ Jesus,’ and in his name she is ‘proclaiming peace’ to the perishing.

What will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies.—She accepts the name of Shulamite, and gladly recognises it as her own, being the willing consort of the Prince of Peace. But what will ye see in her, that ye should so look upon her? Is it all peace that ye will see in her whom you call by the name of peace—the Shulamite? Jesus, the greater Solomon, said,—‘Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth,’—warning his followers of war as well as peace; and his bride the Shulamite in her own place informs all who desire to see, admire, and follow her, that all is not peace either within or without. She has found peace, desires to diffuse peace, and cherishes the name of Shulamite in heaven and in earth. But she says, There is not peace with me without war; there is the promise of peace, there is the present fruit of peace, and there is the earnest of everlasting peace. But there are two armies in the Shulamite, these armies are in constant war, and be not stumbled if you see me tempest-tossed, ‘enduring

a great fight of afflictions, and for peace having great bitterness.' Were not my first words to you, 'I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem'? and think not that I am altered now. You looked on me then as black, and I warned you that I was comely also as well as black, and charged you not to look upon my blackness; you look on me now as comely, but I charge you not to look upon my comeliness, for I am black as well as comely. There were two armies in me then, though you suspected there was but one, and that of darkness; there are two armies in me still, though you think there is but one, and that of light. There are in me hosts of hell; there are in me hosts of heaven.

As angel armies exquisite,
So shall you see this Shulamite,
(Troth-plight Spouse)

sang one of our old singers in Israel. Yes, but two armies in me, saith the Shulamite; 'the angel armies exquisite,' and the powers of darkness, with their name of Legion. Did you not hear, O daughters of Jerusalem! of that battle between the flesh and the spirit, the issue of which left me in so sad a state, when you met me on that night of sorrow in the streets of Jerusalem? 'Then I slept but my heart waked;' then 'the flesh lusted against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh'; and in that hour of darkness the army of earth and hell prevailed over me. You heard my King console me afterwards, saying, 'my dove, my undefiled is one;' but that is because 'he sees no iniquity in Jacob nor transgression in Israel'; and he said it in his love, to 'bind up my broken heart' which told me that I was not one but two, double-minded and unstable. You heard also both my Lord himself and those threescore queens compare me to 'an army with banners'; but they were willing to forget that there encamp within me not one army but two, contending with each other. And now the Spirit has prevailed over the flesh, the new man over the old, the law in the mind over the law in the members; but think not that the old man with his deceitful lusts is dead within me, and

whatever you admire in me, admire not me but 'the grace of God that is in me.' Remember that the hostile army, unseen for the time, is lying in ambush within me, and be not startled if you should witness another conflict or another defeat for a season; for in the end I shall be 'more than conqueror through him that loved me.' In my contest I often cry, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' but at this moment I sing, 'Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord!' Look therefore at the Shulamite, look and love, look and imitate; for I would, O daughters of Jerusalem! that ye were 'both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.' Only, forget not that on earth there ever are 'in the Shulamite as it were the company of two armies.'

XX.

PORTRAIT OF THE PRINCE'S DAUGHTER.

THE BEAUTIFUL SHOES—THE WELL-SET JEWELS—THE GOBLET NOT WANTING WINE—THE WHEAT RAILED WITH LILIES—THE TWIN ROES—THE TOWER OF IVORY—THE FISH-POOLS OF HESHEON—THE TOWER OF LEBANON—CARMEL—THE PURPLE—THE GALLERIES.

How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs *are* like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman: Thy navel [or girdle-clasp] *is like* a round goblet, *which* wanteth not liquor [or mixed wine]: thy belly [or vesture] *is like* an heap of wheat set about with lilies. Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes *that are* twins: Thy neck *is* as a tower of ivory; thine eyes *like* the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose *is* as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus: Thine head upon thee *is* like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple: the king *is* held in the galleries.—CHAP. vii. 1-5.

THE BEAUTIFUL SHOES.

How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O Prince's daughter!—The King of kings has made a marriage feast for his Son. As in Jesus Christ he speaks to us as unto sons, so, in the relation of the Church toward him as his Son's Bride, he addresses her in the forty-fifth Psalm as his own daughter, saying 'Hearken, O daughter! and consider, forget also thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the King (the Son and Heir of the Father united with him in the kingdom) greatly desire thy beauty'; and immediately after this address, she is entitled 'the King's daughter all glorious within.' In like manner, the Father says, 'Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' So also the inquiring daughters of Jerusalem, having named her the Shulamite, the Peaceful, and peace-making, after her husband Solomon the Prince of peace,

now call her the 'Prince's daughter', recognising her as the child of the Great King. 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God'—He the God of peace—they the children of peace.

But here the Bride is the messenger of peace to the lost, and the feet that have borne the message receive the first kiss of gratitude and love. The inquiring daughters of Jerusalem are gathered around the Bride when the rushing wind of Pentecost 'makes her soul like the chariots of Ammi-nadib', and as they survey her she stands above them, and they first portray her beautiful feet. 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!' is the first joyful exclamation of souls gladdened with the Gospel sound—a welcome to the messenger, to the message, and to Him who sends them both. This messenger of peace is elsewhere addressed 'O Zion! that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain'; there the messenger being the daughter of Zion, and here the daughter of Zion's King. The well-shod feet have borne the willing herald to the mountain-top with the glad tidings of great joy; and the listening multitude in the valley beneath, looking upward, exclaim, 'How beautiful are thy feet with shoes!' beautiful because 'shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.'

How altered is now thy ease, O bride of Jesus! A little while ago thy snowy feet were fair to no other eyes save thine own. Thou wast 'the tender and delicate woman that couldst not adventure to set the sole of the foot to the ground for delicateness and tenderness.' All thy desire was, not to have thy rest disturbed, nor thy beauty marred—not even for the love of Christ, nor of the souls of men—'I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' Thou wouldst say nothing and do nothing that might either trouble thine ease, or expose thy fair character to contempt, or thy words or ways to the risk of mistake, suffer who might in consequence of thy selfishness. But soon thou wast fain to seek thy hidden Lord, all unshod, over the hard streets and through the miry lanes of Jerusalem, and that in the dark midnight, where thou couldst not see to pick thy dainty steps. And when the rough-shod watchmen

met thee, and smote thee on the unveiled cheek, thy tender feet did not escape without their bleeding wounds. How lovely then were those well-washed feet thou wast so loath to defile! But now these same feet—how beautiful they are with shoes, beautiful because of the silver sandals that adorn them! When the foot-sore prodigal had returned home, his father quickly commanded to put shoes upon his feet; the King's Son has already, in like manner, apparelled his weeping and returning Bride; and the daughters of Jerusalem witness and admire, for these well-shod feet have borne to them the good tidings of great joy.

Yet remember, Prince's daughter! that these 'beautiful shoes' are not merely for your neighbour's profit, but for your own; for it is an essential part of the Christian armour to have the 'feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.' Nor can we interpret this to mean simply 'the peace of God keeping your own heart and mind in Christ Jesus,' but the aggressive outgoing with the Gospel of peace to all. 'Behold,' said Jesus, 'I send you forth, and as ye go, preach the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' It is really your armour, for if you carry the Gospel of peace into the heart of Satan's kingdom, 'the strong man armed' will need more than all his skill and power to keep his own goods in peace, and will have the less leisure and courage for assaulting you within your bulwarks of salvation. It is your own armour, for if on that night when the Lord stood at your door with his head filled with dew, your feet had been 'beautiful with shoes'—if you had been like the passover pilgrim with 'your loins girt and your shoes on your feet,' you would never have disowned Him and degraded yourself by replying—'I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' Are then your feet beautiful with shoes? O Prince's daughter! are they in this very hour shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and 'as you go are you preaching' the tidings of peace?

'How pleasant are thy treadynges with thy shoes, O Princes daughter!' is the rendering of the Great Bible, and what we translate the feet is literally 'the goings' of the Prince's daughter. It includes the whole way and walk of the Bride of Jesus;

and there is nothing by which the daughters of Jerusalem around so judge of us, and also of our Lord. When our goings are 'pleasant,' when we 'walk before the Lord unto all well-pleasing'; when our walk and conversation are well-ordered, and steadfast; when, being well-shod, we fear not the roughest stones when they form our path, and neither turn aside from them nor stumble over them; when, being circumspect, we avoid the ditch by the way-side, and our feet are not bemired with the world and sin, like all around us—however they may mock for a time because we keep ourselves unspotted from the world, the spectators in the end will exclaim—'How pleasant are thy treadings, how beautiful thy feet with shoes, O Prince's daughter'!

Further, are you walking in the liberty of the Gospel? for some render the words 'O freely-born daughter,' and interpret them 'born, not according to the flesh, but according to faith and promise' (Fenner). And again, are you prince-like, O prince's daughter! for others translate 'O noble daughter,' O generous, princely daughter. And there is no difference, for if you are the Prince's daughter you are free-born, and you are prince-like yourself; if God is your Father, and his Son your Elder Brother, you are like Jesus and bear his image. But how prince-like and generous is He!—'freely ye have received, freely give,' saith your Lord. So was it with the Bride of Jesus, when her feet were first 'beautiful with shoes'; freely she received the bread of life, and freely she broke it to perishing thousands—go and follow her; freely also she received all things, for 'all things were hers,' and, prince-like, she scattered them abroad—'no man saying that any of the things he possessed were his own.' Go and do likewise in your place and in your measure; walk in the same spirit; and of you also men will say—'Behold the daughter of the King!'

O bondsman of sin! Satan, leading you captive at his will, has done with you as conquerors of old with their captives. In token of your subjection to him, he has taken the shoes from your feet, and made you walk like a slave 'naked and barefoot' in the miry clay, through the briars and thorns, over the sharp rocks, across the deep rivers. Hear what a re-

turning God and Father proclaims, 'Withhold thy feet from being unshod—return to him and he will return to you.' Shoes for your feet are ready waiting you in a Father's house; and when he sees you in the distance approaching, he will not suffer you to enter in rags, but will run to meet you, and will give the hasty command, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes upon his feet!'

THE WELL-SET JEWELS.

The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.—These words present a beautiful image of the glorious unity of the Church in the sight of every earnest beholder. The joining of the limbs to the body, is likened to the perfect setting of the gem in the gold by the hands of a skilful artist. Along with the free heart of the Church to all the world, there could not fail to be noticed, her perfect union within herself. 'Behold how these Christians love one another!' exclaimed the ancient heathen; for 'hereby,' said our Lord, 'shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' The union of all the members of Christ in subjection, in harmony, in love, is constantly represented by the parts of the body perfectly joined together in one. 'The head is Christ, from whom the whole body is fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.' In the description of the entire person, there is no part so suitable as this admirable joining of the limbs with the trunk of the body, to set forth 'the joining together' and 'the compacting' of the whole body of the Church—from Christ, in Christ, unto Christ. 'The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman'; the whole Church and all its members perfectly joined together, the gem-like setting and workmanship of the Holy Spirit.

There is another view taken by many of the text, which, though outwardly different, presents a meaning substantially the same; for the words may be understood, not of the joints appearing beneath the robes, but of the girdle by which the robes are bound.

Thy shoes with diamonds are bedight;
 Thy zone with pearls and rubies bright,
 Set by a skilful hand.

Grad. of Oxf.

Or in the words of Fenner, 'thy thighe-bande are like brooches made by hand of artificer, that is, the girdle called the bande or compassing of the thighe, which is pure truth framed by the most cunning workman of the Spirit of God.' In Jesus 'righteousness is the girdle of his reins;' in the believer 'his loins are girt about with truth'; and the emblem of this jewelled zone might be interpreted of pure truth, the workmanship of the Spirit. But the girdle itself so naturally signifies the binding together of the whole garments, that we prefer in this place to interpret it of the uniting power of love, or of 'the truth in love'; which makes the two interpretations substantially the same—the knitting together of all the joints, or the binding together of all the garments in one.

And is this indeed the body of the Church thus compacted together, thus firm, united, vigorous, with no dislocated limb, no broken joint, no diseased member? How has it been effected? These were all separate bones 'scattered at the grave's mouth'—these members were all 'hateful and hating one another'—and eternal fire itself could never have moulded them into one. But 'Jesus loved the Church and gave himself for it'; and Jesus possessed in himself a glorious compacted unity, such as the universe knew not—the Father one with the Word, and the Word one with the flesh with which it dwelt. This Jesus, this united One, offered his own body, the workmanship of the Holy Ghost, to be bruised, till he cried, 'All my bones are out of joint'; and he gave it to the Church, saying—'This is my body broken for you.' Through his broken body the members of his Bride are knit into one, and 'the joints of her thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.'

And, living soul! you well remember how the word of God piercing through you, 'divided asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow,' and scattered them like the bones which God has broken; but Jesus said 'Take, eat, my body is broken

for you;’ and your ‘joints became like jewels set by a cunning workman,’ united, firm, beautiful. Yet, sometimes since, like your father Jacob, your thigh has been out of joint while wrestling with the Angel of the covenant; and though you have prevailed, you have halted wearily on your disjointed limb. There is also still before you that cave of earth, in which the worms will consume your flesh, and by whose open mouth your bones may lie scattered. Then blessed shall be the hour when Jesus himself shall approach your grave, when your dry bones shall come together bone to his bone, and when, rising from the dead incorruptible, in the likeness of his glorified body, you will hear the admiring angels that have been guarding your tomb exclaim—‘The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman!’

THE GOBLET THAT WANTETH NOT WINE.

Thy navel [or thy girdle-clasp] is like a round goblet which wanteth not liquor [or mixed wine].—The first key to this whole description is found in the circumstance, that its words proceed from the daughters of Jerusalem; the second and more essential key in the fact, that the *dress* of the Bride is described throughout, except where clothing is not worn, as on the neck and the face. The proof of this is ample and irresistible in the very first line of the picture—the feet ‘beautiful with shoes.’ The person might have been clothed, while the feet were unshod; for the slumbering Bride did not say that she had put off her shoes, but that she had washed her feet and could not defile them; but it was impossible that the feet should be beautified with the finest sandals, without the whole person being arrayed as a bride adorned for her husband. Both the terms, therefore, in this verse are of necessity parts of dress covering the corresponding parts of the person; according with the tendency in all languages to transfer the names that designate the living body to the dress that both conceals and adorns it; and in their costliness and beauty exactly agreeing with the apostolic declaration, that ‘on our uncomely parts we bestow more abundant comeliness.’ There is a great agreement

of critics, as well as obvious suitableness, in interpreting the goblet of wine as an image of the clasp that secures the girdle, composed probably of rubies, to which wine is often compared.

Thy clasp is like a goblet round,
Of wine with mantling rubies crowned.

Frances.

The golden knot, which all thy vests
Firmly secures beneath thy breasts,
Like wine-crowned goblet shows.

Grad. of Oxf.

What is this well-filled goblet of wine? 'It is the goblet to which wisdom invites, saying, "Come drink of the wine which I have mingled" for you, and it signifies spiritual drink' (Origen). It is the new wine of the kingdom, drunk first by the Church herself, and then handed freely to the perishing multitudes. It is translated 'liquor,' because is it literally 'mixture,' that is, wine ready for drinking, poured out and mingled, when 'wisdom has mingled her wine and furnished her table.' The mixture is understood by many to be of water, which seems probable, as it was common with the ancients; but in the eighth chapter the wine is mingled with spices, and wine mingled with water is used in Scripture for injurious dilution. But whatever the mingling may be, the idea is, that the cup is full, and is ready for the lips of the invited guests. 'Drink, O friends! yea drink abundantly, O beloved!' said the King; 'this cup is the new testament in my blood, shed for many for the remission of sins; drink ye all of it!' said the same Anointed Messiah. It is wine and blood, wine resembling blood, wine betokening blood; blood instead of wine, the King's blood in room of richest and most refreshing wine; wine instead of blood, the choicest wine of heaven in room of our own red blood—this cup, the blood shed for us, and instead of ours. After Jesus had given this wine-cup to his disciples, and after the intervention of the dark night of sorrow, they 'were filled with the Spirit' as with the new wine of the kingdom. Then was fulfilled the prophecy, 'The Lord of Hosts shall defend them, and they shall drink and make a

noise as through wine, and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar—for they shall be as the stones of a crown: for how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.’ Like the corners of the altar, the disciples were sprinkled with the blood of the cleansing sacrifice; like bowls they were filled with wine; and both the blood and the wine were like the ‘stones of a crown,’ the ruby stones that studded a royal diadem. The Bride’s girdle-clasp is like that rubied crown, and like the blood-filled corner of the altar; and the wine-filled bowl is this ‘goblet that wanteth not wine.’ The ‘corn that maketh the young men cheerful’ is none other than ‘the heap of wheat set about with lilies;’ and the round goblet is filled with ‘the new wine that maketh cheerful the maids.’ The resemblance was so great, that as soon as the bride came forth as the Prince’s daughter with her ‘feet shod with the gospel of peace,’ the mockers immediately said, ‘these men are full of new wine’; and filled with new wine they were, but it was ‘the new wine of the kingdom,’ that inebriated not, but gladdened with overflowing joys. The Spirit of God himself takes up the image again, and commands, ‘Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.’

But this ‘goblet that wanted not wine’ being first put to her own lips, was freely handed to others; and this made the noble daughter of the Prince so lovely in the eyes of the inquiring daughters of Jerusalem. ‘Freely she had received, and freely she gave.’ ‘Repent,’ she said ‘and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost’—ye also shall drink out of this full wine-cup—ye also shall rejoice in the new wine of the kingdom. Reader! have you tasted this wine; have your lips touched this wine-cup; have you known the free remission of sins through the red blood of Jesus Christ; have you known the reviving power of the Holy Ghost in the bright wine of ‘the kingdom of God which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost’? If not, you have never tasted sweetness—you are still a stranger to gladness.

THE WHEAT RAILED ROUND WITH LILIES.

Thy belly [or vesture] is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies.—To the dress undoubtedly the description belongs, and some have referred it to the embroidered figures on the rich attire:—

Embroidered on thy vesture fine,
Tall sheaves of ripened corn entwine
With lilies of the vale.

Grad. of Oxf.

For this, however, there is scarcely warrant, and certainly no necessity. The description tallies exactly with that of the forty-fifth Psalm, of which this Song is universally allowed to be an inspired enlargement. In that Psalm, the two component parts of the Bride's attire are gold and needlework; wrought gold forming the main texture of the raiment, for it is twice repeated—'upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir,' and 'her clothing is of wrought gold;' white needlework forming the overhanging drapery of the dress, or rather its girdle of fine linen, for it is added 'she shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework.' The girdle of Eastern ladies, when not composed of precious stones, 'is of exquisite embroidery on satin, and fastened before with a clasp of diamonds' (Harmer). These delineations of the Psalm are in substance the very same as the description before us; for the one distinguishing epithet of ripe wheat is that it is 'golden,' and the white needlework agrees exactly with the white lilies. We have, then, in the Psalm a golden dress girded with fine linen curiously wrought; and we have in the Song this golden texture likened to a heap of ripe wheat, and this fine linen to 'a railing of lilies,' as in some of our old translations, or a 'setting about with lilies' as in ours. The Psalm describes the dress as it was supposed to appear—gold and white; the Song, according to its character, transfers these into images of wheat and lilies; wheat, it may be, in sheaves in the field with lilies growing round it—or rather wheat threshed out, piled into a heap, and decorated with lilies in token of harvest joy.

Now, this wheat is immediately associated with the wine-cup, for 'corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.' Jesus Christ alone is 'the finest of the wheat,' for he is 'the Bread of life, of which if a man eat he shall never die,' and by eating which we have not merely life, but life more abundantly. It seems but 'a handful of corn in the earth,' it is 'cast into the ground and dieth,' but, springing up, it bringeth forth much fruit, shaking like the trees on Lebanon with a most abundant harvest. Christ's 'broken body' is a vast heap of golden wheat sufficient to satisfy the hunger of perishing millions; a heap out of which 'a company that no man can number' have been fed and satisfied, and are living for ever; unto which crowds are at this hour coming 'out of all nations and kindreds and tongues'; yet there is enough for all, and no diminution of the heap. Nay, rather it is greatly enlarged; not in itself, for that could not be, but to the wants of men; like the five barley loaves, which, after feeding the five thousand, filled twelve baskets instead of one. 'The wheat,' said one of the Greek fathers, 'signifies spiritual food, and the heap denotes the harmonious gathering into one, of a multitude of virtues' (Origen). It is a heap of ripe wheat without the least mixture of chaff, without one imperfect grain in it all; every deed, every word, every thought of Jesus Christ a rich ripe grain of finest wheat, and all gathered together by the hand of the Great Husbandman into one vast heap of pure and precious food for dying men.

A heap of wheat 'set about with lilies'—not locked within a granary, and accessible only to the jealous possessor—not surrounded with lofty walls, to be scaled only by men of strength—not hedged about with thorns, to be penetrated only by men of courage—not set forth in a petty sample, to be sold to the highest purchaser—but the vast golden heap openly exposed in the sight of all, and most attractively 'railed round' with lilies—excluding none, but inviting young and old, rich and poor, without exception. Beside it stands the Great Husbandman himself, inviting, yea beseeching all—'Come ye, and he that hath no money, come! wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which

satisfieth not? eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness!

This is Christ; but how is this the Prince's daughter? Because it is she that sets forth Christ and him crucified to the daughters of Jerusalem, Christ crucified as the bread of life. Because she 'bears about in herself' continually 'the dying of the Lord Jesus,' bound around her as a girdle, and the wine-cup of his blood, like a glorious girdle-clasp that unites and adorns all her raiment. And in like manner, 'putting on the Lord Jesus Christ,' she bears ever about with her as her golden vesture the 'broken body' of the Lord Jesus, which is 'living bread'—a heap of golden wheat, the source of her own life, and the life which she sets forth freely for the dying; carrying it not secretly but openly; as if displayed by all her apparel, visible in all her conversation.

And what are these lilies that surround the wheat? 'As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters'—they are the redeemed souls whose 'robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb,' the virgins that follow and encompass him. They are all gathered round about that one heap of heaven's finest wheat; every one of them has been plucked by Christ's own hand from among the thorns in the wilderness, and planted in a brilliant circle round this harvest heap. Like as the first Christian converts gathered all they had together into one central heap, out of which all freely shared, so they were gathered round the broken body of Christ, 'continuing in the breaking of bread.' Around that store of living bread there circled a row of lilies—'harmless as doves, gentle as lambs'; yet an awful glorious hedge it formed, 'for of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them.' Whosoever willed, if first coming to Jesus, might be numbered with those lilies, being also like them; but through 'the thin white line' of lilies that encompassed the wheat, none dared to penetrate in order to trample it down. Friend! are you one of the lilies that encircle that wheat? are you pure and harmless, like those lilies? and is your station always close to the Bread of heaven that giveth life to the world?

THE TWIN ROES

Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.—These twin roes we have considered already in the Spotless Bride, taking them to be faith and love; and have only further to remark, that the two descriptions of the King's Bride and of the Prince's daughter now meet; the accounts of the Church derived from heaven and from earth, the portraits drawn from the feet upward and the head downward, here unite together. The first of these twins that attracts observation in heaven is *faith* looking upward, and piercing the unseen with more than the penetration of the roe's far-seeing eye; but it is never seen without its twin-born sister *love*, looking on earth with more than the gentleness of the eye of the roe. The first of the twins that is observed on earth is love, love to the brethren, love to all men; but it is never discovered without its fellow-twin beside it, faith God-ward through Jesus Christ. Seen by Jesus Christ, the two breasts of the Church are twins, faith and love; seen by the daughters of Jerusalem, they are the same twins, love and faith; and, admiring the love, they learn to respect the faith from which it flows.

THE TOWER OF IVORY.

Thy neck is as a tower of ivory.—The neck erect, but not haughty, is the scriptural emblem for holy freedom, as we have already noted; and in Christ's description of the neck, strength and victory are combined with liberty; for the stately tower is 'David's', beautiful in its strength, and hung over with commemorative trophies. The holy freedom of the Church is equally before the daughters of Jerusalem; for 'the captive daughter of Zion has shaken herself from the dust, and loosed herself from the bands of her neck.' But the next idea in their minds is not strength and conquest, but beauty, snowy whiteness—'thy neck is as a tower of ivory.' And why? because when the once free and glorious Bride had been captive to sin and Satan, a slave in strange vineyards, her sun-scorched skin had become black as the Ethiopian's, and she had owned it

before them—'I am black, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, for the sun hath looked on me.' Stooping in the vineyards, her neck, erewhile both free and spotless, would most of all be exposed to the burning rays, and be stained with deepest black, like the dark goat-skins of the tents of Kedar. The daughters of Jerusalem, beholding her now, can see no deformity, no discolouring, no tents of Kedar, nought but the snowy curtains of Solomon. Selecting, therefore, the once darkest feature of all, the chained and sun-branded neck, they exclaim—'thy neck is like a tower of ivory'! lofty, noble, and erect as a tower—white as the polished ivory. Lord! 'purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean—wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow'!

THE FISH-POOLS OF HESHBON.

Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim.—Heshbon was a celebrated city beyond the Jordan, and the royal residence of Sihon king of the Amorites, previous to its conquest by Israel. These fish-pools are unknown; and so is this gate of Bath-rabbim, but it means, the daughter of a multitude. This may signify, that the beautiful fish-ponds of Heshbon were close by a crowded gateway of that city; but it is better to understand Bath-rabbim of Jerusalem with its teeming multitudes, and then it is as if the clear lake of Heshbon were in the midst of the thronged streets of Jerusalem. The meaning is well given by Fenner—'fish-poolles in broad-gate fayre thine eyes.' And mark again the nice distinction in the portrait; for it is no longer the doves' eyes which the King describes as waiting and looking on Him, but the placid eyes that are looked upon, as a quiet lake, by the admiring daughters of Jerusalem.

The image indicates that the eyes, like the pools, are clear, deep, quiet, full. They were *clear*, reflecting the brightness of the blue heavens above—the image of God—the glory of Jesus Christ. The believer, 'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is transformed into the same image, from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' Bearing this im-

age, he presents it to all men to look upon, and learn what is in God himself. To heaven men will not look, for their eyes are ever set earthward, and except what meets them on the earth they see not. How good it is that before them on the earth they should see spread out this bright blue lake, and behold therein the beauty of that heaven to which they will not turn their regards! Even if at any time they gaze upward, from the place where they stand they see only clouds and darkness above them, and soon turn their eye downward again on objects less gloomy and awful. But above the spot where the child of God stands, the clouds have divided and the heavens have opened; the sun is shedding down his bright soft beams upon the lake of Heshbon, and there, as in a mirror, the world may see the hidden glory that fills the upper sanctuary.

Those pools were also *deep*; and how suddenly and completely changed are the shallow thoughts of the man of earth, in the hour when he becomes an heir of heaven! what a depth is now in his views, in his eyes, like deep water-pools. How shallow are the deepest thoughts of all 'who mind earthly things'—how short the longest line of all their wisdom—how soon it reaches the muddy bottom, and either stirs up the mire or is entangled in the oozy weeds! But the 'thoughts of God are a great deep,' and the shallowest mind of man that comes into union with that clear unfathomable depth becomes itself a clear bright water-pool—the beauty of which every man may behold, while its depth no man can fathom, for 'he that is spiritual is discerned of no man.' He is not discerned even by himself, in all the full caverns of the deep well of life that is now within him; for 'God, who searcheth the heart,' alone 'knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit' within the child of God. 'As the deep fish-pools of Heshbon are thine eyes, O Prince's daughter!' nor are those vacant depths, but full. As the pool is neither enumbered nor disturbed, but replenished, with its living yet hidden shoals of fish; so are those deep eyes filled with a multitude of thoughts, living and precious, which delight and enrich the soul.

But further, those deep pools are *quiet* and calm; for it is not the deep ocean with its waves, nor the deep river with its

stream, but the deep fish-pool with its calm unruffled surface. Neither are they as the eyes of hermits in the wilderness, or in the secluded convent, but they are in the gate of Bath-rabbim, 'in broad-gate fayre,' in the thoroughfare of incessant concourse, in 'the high places of the city.' Thus was it when the Prince's daughter first appeared in all her beauty; Jerusalem, filled always with her own myriads, was then overflowing with a multitude of Jews out of every nation under heaven; yet how calm and untroubled was the Bride of the Lamb! In the midst of the innumerable throng, in the tumult of almost countless tongues, what an unruffled aspect did she present in the gate of Bath-rabbim—'continuing steadfastly in prayer, eating bread with gladness and singleness of heart praising God, with great fear on every soul, with great grace upon all, and the multitude of them that believed of one heart and one soul!' Even in the outward eye of the heir of heaven, the placid, peaceful, pensive eye of the child of hope, in contrast to the keen eye of the covetous or the fool's eye in the ends of the earth, there is rest and refreshing, to him who looks upon this quiet well of water by the city gate. Yet often alas! we miss it, where we hope to find it. 'How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O Prince's daughter!' we have once and again exclaimed in the gate of Bath-rabbim; in the ceaseless throng of our vast metropolis we have greatly admired the Bride of Jesus shod with the gospel of peace, and ready to every good work. But we have sometimes been tempted to say, 'One thing thou lackest'; would that in this gate of Bath-rabbim 'thine eyes were,' also, 'like the fish-pools of Heshbon!' Yet even there it is found; and the most 'beautiful feet with shoes,' that through its darkest lanes are shining with the pearls of the word of life, will be owned as carrying also those eyes 'that are like the fish-pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath-rabbim.'

Serene as Heshbon's tranquil lake,
 Thy meditative eyes forsake
 The world's distracting joys.
 Beside its well-stored waters clear,
 The city's crowded gates appear,
 But nought its calm destroys.—*Grad. of Oxf.*

THE TOWER OF LEBANON.

Thy nose [or face] is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus.—This is obviously no palace of Solomon's in the forest of Lebanon, but the watch-tower of a border fortress, looking toward the hostile and restless kingdom of Damascus. Such a watch-tower is a fit image of the bold undaunted face of the Prince's daughter, for the word equally signifies either nose or face, and is here rendered face by one of the best translators (Diodati). 'I have set my face like a flint,' said the great Bridegroom in the days of his flesh; and to his Bride he promised, 'Behold I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads; be not dismayed at their faces, for I have made thee a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land.' Nothing can be more remarkable than the contrast between the face of the Bride as seen from heaven and seen from earth—by Jesus, and by the daughters of Jerusalem. Toward Him, her face was filled with holy shame and confusion—'like a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks;' but in their eyes, and toward all the world, her face stood firm like a flint, like a mountain watch-tower ready for every foe, erect and immovable like a turret on a rock. Exactly such a spectacle did the daughters of Jerusalem behold in the Bride, when the great council of the rulers 'marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John,' at their flint-like faces, as the tower of Lebanon looking on Damascus. Yet these two features combine in one beauteous countenance, and each loses much or the whole of its loveliness in the absence of the other. Without the blushing pomegranate within the locks, the noble tower of Lebanon is no better than a brow of brass; and without the turret defying Damascus, the crimson temples may be but the brand of the fearful and unbelieving, who are ashamed to confess Christ before men on earth, and whom he will be ashamed to confess before his Father in heaven. Blessed art thou, O Prince's daughter, who hast both the deepest shame before thy God, and the boldest front to all his foes!

But while the term may thus be understood of the face,

there is no difficulty in applying it also to the nose; because each enters into the other, and the view we have taken of determined courage pertains equally to both. Quick discernment, however, is characteristic only of the one, and to this much prominence is given by the earliest expositors. 'He who hath a holy breath, and by perception of the divine word can run to the odour of His ointments, hath a nose discerning spiritual fragrance' (Origen). Perception of holy fragrance and heavenly incense on the one hand, and of the smoke from the bottomless abyss on the other, pertains to the perfection of such a sense—'exercised to discern both good and evil.' Many a time by such quickness of spiritual discernment, without any outward token to reveal it and when duller spirits least suspected it, has the Prince's daughter discovered the welcome approach of Him 'whose Name is Ointment poured forth,' has run after him, has brought him home with joy to her mother's house, or has by him been brought into his banqueting-house where waves the banner of his love. Many a time again, like the watcher on the tower of Lebanon, has she discovered unexpected danger from a little spark smouldering as a hidden fire, yet connected with the flames beneath, and set on fire of hell. Even as in the endangered ship on the ocean, the quick sense of a single observer has discovered the latent fire which all others disbelieved, and has saved both the vessel and the precious lives within it; so the man of God with senses exercised to discern, has discovered the first faint traces of a great flame which Satan with fiery darts was endeavouring to kindle—in his own heart first and oftenest, then in the family, or in the Church, and through grace has been enabled to quench the smoke before it had risen into flame. This discernment both of good and evil is invaluable; it is true god-like knowledge of both, by immediate teaching and divinely-given intelligence. If thou hast been gifted from above with such a sense, despise it not, disown it not, disuse it not, but exercise it for thine own profit and the profit of many; and be not driven from thine own post on Lebanon's watch-tower, nor disheartened from using thy divine discernment, because other spirits can perceive no approaching yet haply passing friend, or can discover no insidiously assaulting foe.

Thy features in proportion fair
 With lofty watch-tower may compare,
 That marks approaching foes :
 Ev'n so discretion's practised eye,
 To choose the good, the bad to fly,
 With nice discernment shows.—*Grad. of Oxf.*

CARMEL.

Thine head upon thee is like Carmel.—It is not the head itself of the Bride, but the 'head that is upon her'; not the head that belongs to the body, but the head that rests upon that head, the head-dress, the bridal chaplet, the marriage coronet. This completes the glorious attire, from the costly shoes upon the feet to the crowning diadem of beauty, and adds another proof that the whole description is of the raiment that covers the members from head to foot. The King is compared to the dazzling majesty of the lofty Lebanon, and the Prince's daughter now to the beautiful Carmel; her head like the lovely hill itself, her crown like the forests, the vines, the olives, the corn, and the luxuriant herbage with which it was covered—'the excellency of Carmel.'

'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,' said the noble Paul—not the meanest representative of the Prince's daughter—'and not for me only, but for all them also that love his appearing.' But had he no crown of righteousness already?—yes, for 'the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all them that believe'; it was upon him, adorning him even now, and rendering him 'a king and a priest unto God.' But that which most of all he possessed was what most of all he sought to obtain—he ran that 'he might be partaker of the gospel'—he strove 'that he might win Christ and be found in him, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God by faith.' This crown, therefore, the Church already wears, while she must also strive to 'let no man take it,' but that she may receive it as her own for ever. It is a crown like Carmel—for to Jehovah's King it is promised that 'upon him shall his crown flourish,' not a crown of plucked and withering leaves, but liv-

ing and flourishing for ever; not a crown of dead gold, branched and budded by the craftsman, but a growing and flourishing crown, lasting as gold, but fresh as living laurels on his brow. So it is, likewise, with his Bride the Church, for her crown is 'a crown of life'; the crown is life and the crown is living, because it is 'a crown that fadeth not away,' that withereth not like the wreaths of laurels, or olives, or other green leaves, with which both victors and brides were crowned. Such a crown she is here represented as wearing; and whether we look to the spiritual, now present, or to the eternal future, 'her head is like Carmel.' From its oaks, its pines, its olives, its vines, and its myrtles, a garland is woven for the Prince's daughter; but it is a growing garland, with root and with life that shall flourish like Carmel for ever.

There is another coronet ascribed to the Church, in the crown of ransomed souls; for the apostle Paul addresses those who had received the truth through his ministry—'ye are my crown in the day of the Lord;' and a similar idea is expressed by Solomon when he says that 'children's children are the crown of old men.' In the day of Pentecost, such a crown richly adorned the brow of the Bride; 'the corn of wheat cast into the ground had died and was bringing forth much fruit; the fields were white already, the handful of corn on the top of the mountains was waving with a plenteous harvest, and the labourers who had so lately gone forth weeping were returning bearing their sheaves with them.' But the corn of Carmel was proverbial for its abundance; and, like Carmel crowned with its waving harvest, so was the Church encompassed and beautified with a harvest of saved souls, to be her 'crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.'

THE PURPLE.

And the hair of thine head like purple.—On account, perhaps, of the difficulty in the comparison to purple, some of our old translators have rendered it 'head-fillet' instead of hair; but the 'purple' does not necessarily ascribe that colour to the hair, because the term was anciently applied to whatever was

extremely rich and splendid, and to hair remarkable for beauty. But besides the richness and glossy brightness of the locks, the *purple* has probably reference to the royal rank of the Bride—followed especially as it is immediately by mention of the King; and the whole describes such hair as became ‘the Queen’ who was ‘clothed in gold of Ophir.’ It is also still to be remarked that—while the locks are the same as the King has twice compared to ‘the flock of goats on Gilead,’ even when in the last description he had called her ‘terrible as an army with banners’—such images as the long locks of subjection are never employed except by the King himself. The same hair which he compares to the ‘flock of goats,’ the daughters of Jerusalem liken to the royal ‘purple.’

But as the royal purple covering the King’s chariot—the purple robe worn by Jesus—is dyed in his own blood, so in measure he gave to his Bride to drink of the cup of which he drank himself; and the import of the expression is clearly brought out only by reference to the Pentecostal Church. When ‘her head was like Carmel,’ crowned with a waving harvest of ransomed souls, then also her hair was like purple; for, when the number of ‘disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly,’ the adversaries of the Lord could endure it no longer, but dragged the holy Stephen to the council and to death. Then his head also was filled with the drops of the night, and his hair was bathed in his own blood when stone descended after stone and drew forth the purple streams that dyed his locks, to be followed soon after by the blood flowing from the head of the martyr James, and by a great persecution of all the Church. ‘The crown of martyrdom’ such a death has commonly been called, and very beautiful were those purple locks in the eyes of admiring witnesses, sorrowing yet rejoicing.

In this connexion ‘the holding of the King in the galleries,’ which immediately follows, is most interesting; for it is generally acknowledged to have more special reference to ‘the purple hair,’ as if those locks had bound him. While we would stand at the furthest extreme from limiting the presence of the King to his personal manifestation, yet to that manifestation a special glory attaches, and throughout the Song it is strongly

marked. Now the last time that admiring witnesses could ever declare in this sense that 'the King was held in the galleries,' was, when for the first time the hair of the Bride became purple with her own blood. Once after this he appears to Saul of Tarsus, but then it is not in silent and delighted detention by the beauty of the Bride, but in direct address to a bitter adversary whom he draws to himself. But when the hair of the Prince's daughter is about to be made bright with the royal purple of her own blood, the daughters of Jerusalem hear Stephen exclaim, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!'—the King held fast in the upper galleries of his house by the beauty of the Bride in the courts below. They see not the King themselves, and they say not that they see him, for they address him not; but they know that he is appearing to the Prince's daughter, and is standing as if bound in the galleries of heaven, and looking intently on earth. They know also that he is still detained there, for the last words of the Bride with her now purple locks are, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!'

THE GALLERIES.

The King is held in the galleries.—'The King,' said the Bride, 'hath brought me into his chambers;' into his inmost sanctuary, the secret of his pavilion, the closest communion of holy fellowship. But here the Church, though not absent from the King, is in the more open Courts of this palace; brought forth, it may be, by the daughters of Jerusalem from those inner recesses of meditation into which her chariot-like soul had carried her when they called on her to return, and standing with them while they survey her in the galleries of his house. More especially it would seem as with the hair of her head she held the King—as if with the uncut locks of her consecration she had more than the strength of Samson to overcome (Lee's Heb. Lex.). The galleries where the daughters of Jerusalem are assembled, and the Prince's daughter with them, would be really vacant without the King; but this is her power and glory, that while the daughters of Jerusalem detain her, she detains

the King. Her beauty is only a reflection of his, her power to benefit only as she may prevail with him, and she is not worthy of any admiration except as the King himself admires her. But when they have praised and commended, they conclude with saying that her 'praise is not of men but of God—the King is held in the galleries.' They had seen the separation and the sadness, and they see now both what detains the King in the galleries, and, spiritually, they see the King who is there detained. 'Whither is thy Beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?' was their earnest inquiry, and now they behold him vouchsafing his presence to her. This is the first time that these inquiring daughters speak of the King as present, and, in so far, seen by themselves. They had oft been charged not to interrupt the bride's communion with him—they had been invited to come forth and behold him with his crown of espousals—they had been entreated, if they found him, to speak to him for his sorrowing Bride—they had asked of her where he might be found, and had promised to seek him—and now for the first time they, of their own accord, acknowledge his presence. The promise has now been fulfilled—'Fear not, O Zion! thy King cometh unto thee!' and the spectators 'falling down, acknowledge that God is in her of a truth.'

The feet with shoes—the joints compactly knit together in one—the shed blood and broken body of Jesus always borne about—the faith and love—the holy liberty without spot—the calm meditative eyes—the heroic boldness in face of the foe—the crown of righteousness and of saved souls—the consecration of all to him, even unto blood—these 'hold the King in the galleries.' Blessed are they who detain this King 'bound in the galleries' (marg.), as with cords which he cannot break, because with 'bands of a man' which he will not break. The King not held by the joy in the bosom of the Father, whence he would come forth for us to lay down his life—not held by all the mountains of Bether, nor all the floods of wrath, from coming to save us—not held by the cords of hell and death; yet held by the 'little strength' of 'the worm Jacob'—held by faith, by love, by prayer, by hope, by new obedience. 'Held in the galleries'—in the galleries of a preached Gospel, whither

the feet of the Bride now carry it—in the galleries of a united Church, where brethren dwell together in unity—in galleries where the new wine of the kingdom sparkles in the cup of salvation—in galleries where the bread of life and the finest wheat are freely broken—in galleries of faith and love—in galleries of holy liberty—in galleries of divine meditation—in galleries of holy watchfulness—in galleries of holy boldness when called to testify for the faith—in galleries crowded with new-born souls that have pressed into the kingdom—in galleries where hang crowns of free righteousness—in galleries of solemn dedication to Christ even unto death—in such galleries ‘the King is held,’ willingly held, always held. Blessed King to hold!—blessed soul that holds him!—blessed gallery where he is held!

The glorious and majestic One,
Whom death nor hell could e'er detain,
Is by thy powerful graces won,
And tied as with a mighty chain.

Strange loveliness it is that sways
The sovereign regent of the skies,
Constraining him to stay and gaze—
The charms do so attract his eyes.

Faith's efforts bold o'ercome the King;
How happy they the conquest share,
Who to his sacred courts him win,
And then have power to hold him there!

Erskine.

XXI.

THE BETROTHING OF JERUSALEM'S DAUGHTERS.

THE PALM-TREE—THE WINE THAT AWAKES THE SLEEPING—THE
SEAL OF ESPOUSALS.

How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes. I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples; and the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak. I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.—CHAP. vii. 6-10.

THE PALM-TREE.

How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!—The daughters of Jerusalem are still addressing the Bride of the Lamb, but we take this concluding portion by itself, because after the break that has just occurred regarding the King, the address begins to assume that practical turn which ends in their union to the Bride and her Beloved. Deeply impressed with the beauty she presented both to the eyes of the King and to their own, they exclaim—'How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love!' which accords exactly with what is written of the Pentecostal Church, that 'the people magnified them.' They call her by a name which the King never uses throughout the Song, for though the translation is the same the original is different; and they call her 'love,' both as beloved by the King and as now beloved by themselves—for they are advancing always nearer into the bosom of the Church—'O Love, O loving one, O loved one, O lovely one!' It is a good sign of an inquirer when he not only admires, but loves, those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and is often one of

the first evidences of the love of God within; 'for whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him; and we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.' She is 'pleasant for delights' to themselves, for 'all they that love her rejoice and are glad with her'; and she is 'pleasant for delights' to the King, for he 'is held in the galleries, is calling her name Hephzi-bah, and the Lord is delighting in her.'

This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes—or rather, as in one of the older Bibles, 'This thy stature is like a palme tree, and thy breasts like clusters;' that is, clusters of dates, for there is no evidence to prove, and no need to suppose, that the vine was trained on the palm-trees. The oldest of all our printed bibles has it, 'thy stature is like a date-tre, and thy breastes like the grapes;' by which is meant the date-clusters, for in the following verse the clusters of the vine are called 'vyne grapes'; so that formerly in our language, as still in other languages, 'grapes' included all fruit that grows in clusters.

The land of Israel, in certain parts of it at least, like Jericho, was famous for its palms; the nobles of Israel loved to call their daughters Tamar, or palm-tree; and the enemies of Israel, when they would commemorate the conquest of Jerusalem, struck the figure of the captive daughter of Zion sitting under the shadow of the palm-tree. The wife of Lapidoth, the lofty prophetess of Ephraim, 'dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah,' and there the assembled people waited on her judgment. The palm is a noble emblem of the Israel of God, of 'the righteous who shall flourish like the palm-tree.' Besides the properties, such as beauty, longevity, and perennial verdure, that are common to it and the cedar, which has already been considered as an image of Christ, the palm has special excellencies of its own. It is *erect* and lofty—not always more lofty than other trees, though some kinds of palm rise to an amazing height, far exceeding the tallest trees that surround them, but always more erect in its loftiness; and the palm must be a noble object indeed amongst the low brushwood of the wilderness. 'Upright as the palm-tree'—really upright, no slave of the

world, no servant of men, no stranger to God, can claim to be. He may be upright toward his fellow-men, but he is not upright in the presence of his Maker, saying with Elijah, 'the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand,' standing erect and justified in his sight. It drew the admiration of the bowed down daughters of Jerusalem, when they saw the bride of Jesus like the palm in the midst of worthless bushes, shooting nobly upward toward heaven—'this thy stature is like the palm!' But if it be true of thee, thou needst not boast of it; in due time the world will own it, or if never on earth yet it will be owned in that day 'when all the proud shall be as stubble, and when the day that cometh shall burn them up and leave them neither root nor branch.'

The palm-tree, further, is a sure *sign of water*. Wherever it rears its graceful head in the wilderness, water is certain to be found, and therefore there is no more welcome sight to the thirsty traveller—'they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm-trees, and they encamped there by the waters.' This palm-tree in the desert the daughters of Jerusalem saw, in the Church's first baptism by the Spirit—they knew that there was water there—'the Spirit and the Bride said, Come!'—and thousands drank and lived. Wanderer through the world's wilderness! despise it not, if thou see this palm-tree flourishing; when thou art not thirsting, thou wilt not turn aside to inquire; but when thy strength is failing thee and no water is near, thou wilt say in thine heart—There must have been living water where that palm-tree flourished, and I knew it not! It is not yet too late; for where those palm-trees grow, everlasting fountains are springing—free for thee to drink and live—flowing to render thee also a tree planted by the rivers, with its leaf always green and its fruit never failing.—But the *fruit* of the palm-tree is to be specially noted:—

I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof—is for the purpose of gathering the fruit, or rather, it is the grasping of the fruit itself; for the laden boughs of the palm are little else than vast fruit-stalks. No tree presents a more beautiful picture of abundance—the single, branch-

less, untapered stem—the magnificent crown of branching leaves—at the summit of the stem and beneath the leaves the boughs or fruit-stalks, each of them clustered round with innumerable dates, and sometimes hanging downward not far from the outstretched hand. The fruit of the palm is so abundant, that in some of the oases of the great African desert it is said to form the principal food of those sons of Ethiopia ‘who will soon stretch out their hands to God,’ and pluck living fruit from a nobler palm. In these last days, we sometimes look back with desire on the patriarchal infancy of the Church, ere the palm-tree had attained its present height, and when our fathers in the faith gathered the ripe fruit from the lowly summit of its still slender stem.

Sweet were the days when thou didst lodge with Lot,
 Struggle with Jacob, sit with Gideon,
 Advise with Abraham, when thy power could not
 Encounter Moses' strong complaint and moan ;
 Thy words were then, Let me alone.
 One might have sought and found thee presently,
 At some fair oak, or bush, or cave, or well.—*Herbert.*

But if the tree has grown taller, its fruit is more abundant in words of life multiplied tenfold to us and to our children, its thickened stem is more easily grasped, and is notched round year by year with helpful footsteps by the very gathering of the laden boughs. Each successive produce of the tree both prepares for a greater, and leaves, like the palm, a permanent step in the ladder by which we may reach the ample fruit—all the past a handmaid to the future.

The *clusters* are the ‘exceeding great and precious promises’ of the Word of life, because the milk which the new-born babe of grace desires is the ‘sincere word;’ and in a passage remarkably parallel to this, the same idea is set forth, with this single difference, that the breasts, which are here likened to vast clusters of ripe fruit, are there compared to exhaustless fountains of delicious milk. These two images are near akin in the book of God, for in the next clause we have ‘clusters of the vine;’ and ‘wine and milk’ ever flow together in the

streams of life, as priceless as they are precious. 'Who hath heard such a thing? shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children; rejoice ye with Jerusalem and be glad with her all ye that love her, rejoice for joy all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees, as one whom his mother comforteth.' This is the very scene before us—the new-born 'nation' consists of the thousands of saved souls—'Zion' is the Christian Church in the joy of the out-poured Spirit on the day of Pentecost—the 'breasts of her consolations' are the good tidings of great joy with which her bosom is filled to overflowing. So in this Song—the 'daughters of Jerusalem' are those who 'mourn' for the desolate Church, inquiring—'Whither is thy Beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?' those who 'love her' entreating—'Return, O Shulamite!' and exclaiming—'How pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!' and now they 'suck the breasts of her consolations,' they say, one by one, 'I will go up to the palm-tree!' they 'take hold of the boughs,' they grasp 'the clusters,'—'they are borne upon the sides, they are dandled on the knees, they are delighted with the abundance of her glory.' Reader! for thyself go up to this palm-tree, lofty yet accessible; thy God will 'confirm thy feeble knees' to climb the well-notched stem, and 'strengthen thy weak hands' to grasp its clustering promises; and then thou canst not pluck them for thyself, without also scattering some precious fruit for the perishing beneath thee. Yea, when thou hast eaten and thy soul hath lived, put forth thy puny effort—yet mighty through God—to shake the laden boughs for the dying multitude around, for 'the branch of the Lord is beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.'

Nor ought we to omit the higher boughs, which reward the climber of the palm-tree after he is satisfied with its fruit—the noble *leaves* or leaf-branches that formed amongst the Jews the great symbol of joy and of triumph. The Prince's daughter was not 'beautiful with shoes' till 'the day of Pentecost had

fully come.' Many days earlier, the daughters of Jerusalem, even 'much people, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!' Most seasonable in itself, and for the King, were their songs and their palms; but premature for them, for they knew not what manner of spirit they were of. But now when they have looked, and mourned, and rejoiced; now when the feast of Pentecost is fully come, they remember the branches of the earthly palm they had prematurely plucked. They see others rejoicing in the fruits of the earth, and they say, Not with those fruits will I rejoice—but this bride of Jesus, this Prince's daughter, is a noble palm-tree in mine eyes, its clusters I have eaten, and its waving branches I will pluck, and will rejoice before the Lord my God. 'The branch of the Lord was excellent and glorious' to them indeed; for 'they gladly received the word; were filled with the Holy Ghost; and they kept the feast with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.'

'After this,' in the closing scene of all, 'I beheld and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands.' And whence those triumphal palms? Chiefly because 'they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,' yet also because 'they have come out of great tribulation.' They have heard the promise, 'to him that overcometh will I give'—through all difficulty and discouragements they have 'persevered unto the end'—they have gone up into the palm-tree and laid hold on the boughs thereof, they have climbed its lofty stem, have plucked its topmost waving plumes, and now they stand with palms in their hands before the throne and before the Lamb. Fellow-traveller through life! wilt thou also climb? We have seen not the date-bearing palm, but another species of the same tree rising so high with umbrella-like shaft and tuft above the surrounding timber of the forest, that we almost shrank from eating the pleasant produce that had been fetched from the giddy

height ; yet to the bold and practised climber it was a daily feat without danger or difficulty. What seems arduous or impossible at first, will be accomplished by God's right hand upholding thee, and will become daily easier by daily exercise unto godliness. Yet see that thou sleep not on that lofty mast, or if thou sleep and fall, 'remember whence thou hast fallen and hold fast and repent ;' see that thou turn not back toward earth again, for thine must be a life-long ascent heavenward, and 'if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him ;' and see that thou faint not through fear and unbelief, for 'the fearful and unbelieving' fall into the abyss beneath, and are for ever among the dogs without. When at length, through faith and patience, thou hast 'gone up into the palm-tree and taken hold of its boughs ;' when, if left for a moment even at the last, thou wouldst sink helpless into the pit below ; then will thy Lord 'hold thee by thy right hand,' saying, 'Fear not !' and will himself break for thee, and bestow upon thee, the long-sought symbol of victory. How joyfully then wilt thou 'remember all the way ;' and how adoringly, with the white robes arraying thee and the unfading 'palm in thine hand,' wilt thou stand before the throne and before the Lamb ! Yea, if the King, the Bridegroom, the Beloved, should make a festal progress through the 'streets of gold like transparent glass,' as he did through the earthly Jerusalem when he rode on paths paved with fairest garments, and adorned with choicest boughs—would not the bright company above who 'cast their crowns' at his feet, right joyfully 'spread' the way for Him even with their 'white robes,' and 'straw' it with their triumphal 'palms' while they sung, 'Hosanna to the King of Israel, Hosanna in the highest ?'

Who would gain thy fruit
 Must climb, undaunted that such trivial help
 Thy naked stem can offer in itself,
 With eyes up-raised, with steady feet put forth,
 On the prepared indenting of his way,
 Patiently rising till a high reward,
 And wreath for victors, be within his grasp.
 O difficulties ! why should we retreat,
 When ye are steps that lead to such success ?—*Meditations.*

THE WINE THAT AWAKES THE SLEEPING.

Now also thy breasts shall be as the clusters of the vine.—The clusters of the palm are now followed by ‘the clusters of the vine,’ not by a confusion but by a succession of images—the date serving to feed and nourish, the grape to cheer and to quench the thirst. The vine in the garden of nuts had flourished, its fruit was already ripe, and clusters of Esheol had been gathered from the land of promise—the first-fruits and the richest of all the vintage. Of all the images in the word of God taken from vegetable life, the highest place is still accorded to the vine. Each has its own peculiar excellence—the fig, the olive, the apple, the cedar, the palm—but all yield precedence to the vine; the feeblest of all, but with the richest fruit; the chosen emblem of all creation’s entire dependence on God; the image of creation’s noblest produce to its Maker. ‘I am the true vine,’ said the Lord Jesus Christ; these grapes are the fruit of this Vine; and the clusters of grapes, like the palm-tree’s clusters, are the promises,—the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are spirit and life to all who receive them. The Church’s breasts are therefore vine-clusters, full of joy for the sad in heart, full of refreshing for the weary, that they ‘may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations.’ How widely different the consolations which all the world bestows—how sadly unsatisfying!

And the smell of thy nose [or breath] like apples [or citrons].—There can be no doubt that the fragrance of the *breath* is here meant by what our bible renders too literally; for a translation may be less just if too exact, because the expressions that are natural in one language are inappropriate in another. This reviving breath of the Church is the fragrance of the Spirit of Christ, ‘breathed’ on her by ‘his mouth which is most sweet;’ and rendering her own breath, which was once corrupt, odorous like citrons, and reviving for those who are ready to faint. The Spirit of God dwells in believers; and as into the nostrils of our lifeless father God ‘breathed the breath of life,’ so into our lifeless souls has he breathed the life-giving Spirit. ‘The first Adam was a living soul; the Second Adam is a

quickenings Spirit. Jesus 'the breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord'—in whom is our life, and on whom is the Lord's anointing without measure—has of his own free-will breathed out his soul for us, and given up the ghost. The breath of the life which he gave up for us we receive from him, and with it the fragrant anointing of the Spirit; so that the breath of our 'nostrils' (old translation) becomes fragrance in the midst of corruption. To give the wonder-working Spirit to another none who received it had power, except the apostles; to give the quickening Spirit no apostle had power, but only He that was sent of God; but the Spirit inhaled by the believer is also by him breathed forth around. The mere presence of a soul on which rests 'the unction from the Holy One' is fragrant and reviving; the mere presence of a soul 'dead in trespasses and sins' diffuses corruption around, for 'their throat is an open sepulchre.' When ungodly men speak not, the sepulchral breath of the spirit within them spreads around them its noxious exhalation; and when many of the dead are gathered together for their own worldly pleasures or pastimes, the atmosphere becomes pestilential. But the soul quickened in Jesus Christ has received not only life, but 'unction'; not mere breath, but the breath of heaven wafted from 'the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense,' and bearing with it the sweet savour of Christ, the infinite fragrance of the Anointed One, the odours of the myrrh and the aloes and the cassia which perfume the garments of Him 'whose name is Ointment poured forth.' That which the soul has now inhaled, that which is its very breath of life, it cannot but exhale; and thus it becomes a source of living fragrance amidst the exhalations of the tomb. One who has received the anointing, one Christian or anointed man, even in silence is as spikenard in a banquet-hall; much more when he speaks and his speech is seasoned with grace, for then the inward breath of the Spirit is diffused by the words of his mouth. This is still more observable when two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, or in the house of God, when a heavenly fragrance often fills the place irrespectively of the words uttered at the moment, or even in an interval of silence. In times of copious anointing

by the Spirit, the deaf that could not hear the preacher's words have sometimes been arrested and attracted as if by the fragrant breath of assembled saints, and have themselves become partakers of the quickening Spirit. How much more in Pentecostal days, when the Holy Ghost rested on the Church and 'great grace was on all,' must the daughters of Jerusalem have been attracted to the Daughter of the Prince! In the midst of the death that reigned around, and when those who were fairest to the eye were only whited sepulchres augmenting the corruption, how must these fainting daughters have exclaimed—'The smell of thy breath is like citrons!'

And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.—'The roof of the mouth' means the voice, or, more exactly, the palate or throat pouring out the voice, like the outpouring of the choicest wine. 'The mouth of fools poureth forth foolishness, but the well-spring of wisdom is a flowing brook;' and this brook is here represented as overflowing with wine. This 'best wine' is poured out for two distinct parties; first for 'my Beloved,' because the inquiring daughters of Jerusalem, in some of their number at least, now reach their final destination; they become one with the Bride, and they call Christ their own 'Beloved.' They are first warned not to misjudge the Bride—then not to disturb the Beloved—then to behold him with his marriage-crown—then if any of them find Christ, to intercede for his forsaken spouse. Still they ask her 'what is thy beloved?'—they next desire to 'seek him with her'; but as *her* beloved rather than their own—and then they call her 'love' in closest attachment, as well as highest admiration. But now, they have eaten for themselves 'the clusters of the palm-tree and of the vine,' have become 'partakers of the exceeding great and precious promises' in their own souls, and they alter their language, and call him not *her* beloved but *their own*—'the best wine for my Beloved.' It was now in Jerusalem as it had been in Sychar, when 'many of the Samaritans believed for the saying of the woman which testified, He told me all things that ever I did; and many more believed because of his own word, and said unto the wo-

man,—Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’

But why is this wine for the Beloved? Because to the Beloved the love of the Church ‘is better than wine,’ and especially that love uttered in praise or in prayer or in preaching of the word—‘they shall drink and make a noise as through wine, they shall be filled like bowls.’ We are not informed what was the nature of the first utterance of the disciples after the outpouring of the Spirit, except that it ‘was, speaking the wonderful works of God as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ Before much time had elapsed, Peter stood up with the eleven and preached repentance and remission of sins to the people in the name of Jesus; but the previous utterance which attracted the multitude does not appear to have been direct preaching like Peter’s discourse, but rather a pouring out of the new wine of the kingdom before the Lord, in presence of the multitude. It was ‘the best wine for the Beloved,’ which he was now ‘drinking new with them in the kingdom of the Father; supping with them and they with him.’ But the right utterance of truth and love from the lips of the believer, in whatever form, is always as the best wine to the Beloved, who assures him ‘My son, if thy lips speak right things, my reins shall rejoice;’ and all our speech ought to be, first, ‘not as pleasing men but pleasing God—a sweet savour of Christ’ to the Father.

But next, it is wine for ‘those that are asleep, going down sweetly and causing them to speak.’

Like strong and mellow wine,
Which makes the ancient speak;
Awakening those that sleep,
In heaviness and grief.

Troth-plight Spouse.

These lines combine our present translation with the older ones and with our marginal reading; the root of the two ideas is the same, the weakness and inactivity which are produced both by age and by sleep; but the ‘sleep’ of the authorized

version appears the better rendering. It is 'strong drink to them that are ready to perish, and wine to such as are of a heavy heart.' Christ's first miracle was to turn water into wine—'the good wine kept until now'—intimating that to men slumbering, yet dying under the law, the Gospel would come with all the power of restoration to the faint; and the word spoken by the Apostles was such wine indeed as the world, faint and sick, had never tasted before. The same effect is ascribed to the Gospel under the image of water—'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out.' These men were blind, deaf, and dumb—water opens their eyes, unstops their ears, and loosens their tongues—because for lack of water they had fainted, and could not see nor hear nor speak. This fainting swoon is here represented by 'sleep,' which in like manner paralyses the soul; for it is not the sleep of health but of want, exhaustion, sickness, sorrow. 'The new wine of the kingdom' is first poured upon the sleeping lips, exactly as the water elsewhere is poured—'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.' It is not water poured out *for* the thirsty, but *on* him; because he is too weak to rise and too faint to drink, till the refreshing water poured by a Father's hand has moistened his lips, and restored the first weak beginnings of strength, that he may rise and drink for himself and live; for the sinner is passive under the first drops of grace from above, which restore the elements of spiritual life in the soul. The image here is the same, but with wine substituted for water—the soul in its swooning sleep is too faint to stretch the hand for the wine-cup, or to drink it if presented. The man has drunk the cup of death—first the poisoned cup of sin, and then the mingled wine-cup of wrath; he has tasted the bitterness of death, has fainted, and become as one that is 'asleep.'

How exactly this describes the case of many a soul under the curse of the law! they have lost their old life, and the new life they have not yet found. The law has killed them, they are lying dead, and to themselves it seems as if they were not awake to anything—not even 'to the worth of their own

soul. They are as men in a stupor, in a sleep; and as such the word addresses them, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!' Nothing awakens the soul out of that sleep but the Gospel; the law has already slain, and it seems as if the soul could no longer feel the wounds of that sword. But how the new wine of the Gospel awakes this sleeper! When it touches his lips he is afraid to drink, afraid to open his mouth wide that it may be filled, for he thinks that every draught must be bitterness and death for him. But its first drop from an unseen Father's hand begins to restore—oozing through his closed lips 'it goeth down sweetly'—half 'asleep' still, half dead, he now begins to speak, and his first words are, Lord! evermore give me this new wine! Strengthened by the living draught, he rises, takes in his hand the cup of salvation, 'drinks and forgets his poverty, and remembers his misery no more.' He 'opens now his lips and praises God'; and 'the tongue of the dumb sings a new song to the Lord, for he hath done wondrous things.' Believer! say if this history was not thine own; sleeper! awake, and believe the word of salvation, and it shall also be thine.

As Cana's wine *they* know full well
 Who draw it from the vessels, that his will
 Alone hath made it what they find it now.
 It goes down straightway to the heart's deep core,
 Breaking its slumbers; and the long-closed lips
 Of them that were asleep begin to speak
 Of things eternal.—*Meditations.*

THE SEAL OF ESPOUSAL.

I am my Beloved's and his desire is toward me.—This is an expression of far greater fullness than 'I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine;' not of more entire dependence and trust in Christ, but of greater nearness on the part of Christ to the soul, and clearer perception by the soul of that nearness. It implies out-going of desire from the heart to Christ, but it expressly declares what is much more precious—the known strength of Christ's desire toward the believer. 'I

know, saith the Lord, the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of good and not of evil;' the Lord who thinks them knows them, but he toward whom they are thought is often ignorant, or doubtful, or unbelieving regarding them; and most blessed are the souls that can respond, 'We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.' We have more knowledge now in the letter of this love than the fathers had of old, and we ought to have more faith in the love; yet too seldom do we say with David, 'how many thy thoughts which are to us-ward, they are more than can be numbered!'—or with the Bride, 'my Beloved is mine, and his desire is toward me!' Yet, by grace, even we adopt these words; through the Holy Ghost we also have the mind of Christ; receiving the Spirit of God, we humbly believe and assuredly know what is in the heart of God and of his Christ, and are enabled to set our seal to the words of the Bride, and say along with her—'His desire is toward me—I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me!' He so thinketh on us, as to enable us to know that we are the object of his thoughts; he so desireth us, as to give us secret intimation and assurance that we are the object of his desire. Wondrous grace!

But whose words are these, 'My Beloved is mine, and his desire is toward me'?—are they the words of the Spouse as before, or of the daughter of Jerusalem, who in her own and her sisters' name said she would go up into the palm-tree, and spoke of the best wine for her Beloved? Of both, as we conceive, now united into one—of the newly-betrothed daughter of Jerusalem saying, 'My Beloved is mine and his desire is toward me!' in the kindness of her youth and in the love of her espousals; and of the recently-restored spouse 'called now as a woman forsaken and a wife of youth when she had been refused,' and saying, 'My Beloved is mine, and his desire is toward me!' They are the words of the restored Peter who had forsaken and denied his Lord, and wept when he thought thereon; and the words of the new-born converts to whom he had preached repentance and the remission of sins. They are the words of the penitent and believing multitude of teachers and taught, who are 'of one heart and of one soul,' and now as

one Bride of the Lamb sing, 'My Beloved is mine and his desire is toward me!' A similar adoption and union will be found again of another branch of the Church, toward the close of the Book; nor does it militate against this view, that the daughters of Jerusalem are once more afterwards addressed by the Bride; because with every addition to the Church,—when 'there were daily added to it such as should be saved,'—there still sprang up around her, new daughters of Jerusalem—new inquirers, to be added also in the day of their visitation. Or, if we prefer to conclude that these daughters of Jerusalem in the eighth chapter are the same individuals as in this, it is natural and fit that these new converts, more ignorant of Satan's devices and less alive to whatever may grieve the Spirit, should be charged by the tempted and tried and restored Bride of the Lamb 'not to stir up nor awake her love till he pleased.' No more after this do we hear them ask of the Bride, what her beloved is more than another beloved, or propose to seek for Jesus as the Bride's Beloved distinct from their own: but, through grace, they have for themselves called him 'my Beloved'; and along with the Bride are enabled to say, 'My Beloved is mine and his desire is towards me!' So is it in all conversion—the soul that gives itself first to the Lord 'gives itself also to us by the will of God'; teachers and taught are alike members of one living body, are alike and together followers of one Lamb of God, and go forth alike and together to seek the salvation of the lost.

XXII.

THE GARDEN IN THE FIELDS—THE VERY BROTHER.

Come, my beloved! let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, *whether* the tender grape appear, *and* the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates *are* all manner of pleasant *fruits*, new and old, *which* I have laid up for thee, O my beloved! 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, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, *and* bring thee into my mother's house, *who* would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand *should be* under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem! that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, until he please.—CHAP. vii. 11-13; viii. 1-4.

THE GARDEN IN THE FIELDS.

Come, my beloved! let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved!—In this prayer of the Bride, and of such of the daughters of Jerusalem as had now become one with her, there are some things which we have already considered—the flourishing of the vine, the appearing of the tender grape, and the budding of the pomegranate; but there are two points deserving of special notice. The first is, that in the midst of the work of visiting the vineyard, she expressly contemplates communion with himself, nay, makes it her principal object in view—

‘there will I give thee my loves.’ The Bride will not merely have Christ walking with her in her labour of love for his name, but in the midst of it will have express seasons of direct communion with himself, and will go forth to that work, not only to obey him and to benefit men, but in order to obtain this communion. If, believer! thy Shepherd is leaving the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness to go after the one that is lost till he find it, when thou also seekest for that lost one thou shalt not only find the sheep, but the shepherd who is gone forth in quest of it; while, if thou abidest only in the sheep-fold, thou shalt miss the shepherd himself.

The next point is, that the Bride prepares for her Beloved all manner of fruits, both new and old. There are tender grapes on the vine, there are fruits just ripe and newly plucked, and there are fruits of former years carefully preserved. Such the soul possesses, that is growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thou hast fruits of repentance, of faith, of love, of good works that have been gathered long ago, for Christ who sent thee to bring forth fruit, ordained that thy fruit ‘should remain’—laid up for eternity in the Lord’s storehouses; thou hast fruits of the Spirit newly ripened and fresh for the husbandman to eat, and thou hast the blossom and the tender grapes, not fit for gathering, but beautiful in their promise; new thoughts springing through the soul—of love, of labour, of repentance, of faith, of liberality. ‘Blessed is the man that is in such a case—yea blessed is the man whose God is the Lord!’ But if thy Lord cometh seeking fruit on the fig-tree and findeth none, thinkest thou to turn away his displeasure by offering him the old figs of former seasons now corrupted?—once good figs, but now by length of time become exceeding bad, so that they cannot be eaten.

To these two notes of the varied character of the fruit, and of the Lord’s presence in visiting the vineyard, may be added two other notes of time and of place. Regarding the *time*, the Church says ‘Let us get up early to the vineyards,’ as to a work requiring immediate attention, and not bearing any delay. The work demands all earnestness, implied in the early rising to engage in it; and is work most inviting and attractive,

inducing activity on the first dawn of morning. Not so inviting to our first parents was the dressing of their earthly Paradise, as is the keeping of the garden of grace, when the dew from the Lord descends on it.

To-morrow ere fresh morning streak the east,
 With first approach of light we must be risen,
 And at our pleasant labour to re-form
 Yon flowery arbours, yonder alleys green,
 Our walk at noon with branches overgrown.
 Those blossoms also and those dropping gums,
 That lie bestrewn, unsightly and unsmooth,
 Ask riddance.

Paradise Lost.

But while there is much joy in getting up early to the vineyards with their tender grapes and budding pomegranates, there is the stern work of severe earnestness besides, requiring the whole soul's self-denial in girding itself early for the task and the conflict. There is also an immediate necessity for redeeming every moment for the salvation of lost souls, for while some are budding with new spiritual life, most are still dry branches, or leafy at best, with the axe laid to their root; and if we are not early awake seeking to snatch them as brands from the burning, they may have been cut down before the third hour or the sixth, and our effort be hopelessly late. Oh that any man knew the value of one immortal soul!

There is, further, the *place* where these special vineyards lie—'let us go forth into the field, let us lodge in the villages.' They are not like the vineyards hitherto mentioned, in the immediate neighbourhood either of the bride's residence or of the King's palace, but are far from both. 'Let us go forth into the field'—intimates distance, highways and hedges to be passed along, and solitary places to be crossed, ere the vineyards can be reached. 'Her mother's house' has been a favourite resort of the Bride, that she may bring the Gospel to her mother's children; but these are the outfield population, not assembling in the house of prayer, and not partakers in the privileges of 'Jerusalem which is free, which is the mother of us all.' To them the believer would now go forth, amongst

them he would now serve Christ, amongst them walk with Christ, and amongst them seek to find Christ. He would obtain for Jesus, and would present to him out of a new vineyard, precious first-fruits of the redeemed.

But in the place there is more than mere distance noted, for there is residence contemplated, as well as journeying; not permanent indeed, yet such as implies a removal from home, and the uncertainties and hardships incident to going forth into 'the fields, and lodging in the villages.' Blessed are they who count all things loss for Jesus Christ; who keep not within the narrow home-line of other men's labours; who forsake 'houses and lands' for Christ's sake and the Gospel—either permanently, if so called, or for a season, according to the Master's work; 'seeking first the kingdom and righteousness of God,' and holding all things else subordinate, and easily set aside or sacrificed for his sake. How much in this way is still to be done in all lands!—how much in our own land! Too much, it will be replied; but how hard—how impossible to effect it, or attain almost any progress toward it! Hard it is, but not impossible, if first we entreat Him to go with us 'with whom all things are possible,' and then go forth, 'enduring all things for the elect's sake' that they may obtain salvation, and 'becoming all things to all men that we may win some.'

Let us glance now at the progress of the Christian Church in Jerusalem, as brought out in these verses. Many of the 'daughters of Jerusalem' had been added to the Church, multitudes both of men and women—'and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.' Soon, however, 'they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles; and, therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.' The 'Beloved,' who walked with the two disciples as they went to the village of Emmaus, did not leave them when they thus 'went forth into the fields and lodged in the villages,' but 'wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following.' These outfields were within the vast enclosure of the Lord's vineyard, which embraces the whole world, every part of which will yet be cultivated as the garden of the Lord.

There were two reasons for the disciples going forth from Jerusalem—the first was, that they could no longer openly profess Christ, and hold communion with him there, on account of the persecution. The Bride therefore asks him to ‘go with her to the villages,’ where there was greater liberty, that the Church might there hold unfettered fellowship with the King; or in allegoric language ‘there will I give thee my loves,’ in praise, and prayer, and the breaking of bread. The next object was, that they might see ‘whether the tender grape appeared and the pomegranate budded;’ might inquire into the progress of the Gospel throughout the country, and might hasten that progress by preaching the word of the kingdom. Both ends were fully attained. Of Samaria it is said that ‘there was great joy in that city,’ and therefore much communion with the Lord Jesus Christ; and concerning the rest of the country it is written that ‘they preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans,’—the ‘vine flourishing, the tender grape appearing.’ But in those villages there were ‘fruits new and old for the Beloved;’ for Christ while on earth, taking the Bride along with him in the work, had already sown good seed in those fields which had ‘whitened even then unto harvest.’ Thus in her visit to this outfield vineyard, the Bride gathered ‘the old fruits laid up in the gates’ of Sychar; new first-fruits of the Gospel by the Spirit now given; and ‘all manner of pleasant fruits for the Beloved’; out of those villages of the Samaritans.

THE VERY BROTHER.

O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea I should not be despised.—

O would thou as my Brother wert,
 My mother’s sucking child!
 I’d kiss and press thee to my breast,
 And should not be reviled.
 Yea in the openest, patent place,
 Without a blush through shame,
 I would with joyful arms embrace
 The Babe of Bethlehem.—*Erskine.*

These words, considered as proceeding from the Hebrew Patriarchs, present an earnest prayer for the incarnation of the Eternal Word, when he should become 'Immanuel, God with us.' From us, however, and from the early Christians, they are a natural expression of desire both for greater intimacy of fellowship with Jesus, already come, and having called the Church 'his sister' and 'spouse'; and for his appearing again, when we shall see him not merely in spirit, but as the Word made flesh, and the First-born among many brethren. What follows concerning the 'leading him into her mother's house,' and the holy repose and communion implied by 'the left hand under the head and the right hand embracing,' along with the charge to the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb his rest, all finds a natural and ample parallel in the sequel to the history of the evangelizing of the Samaritans. The conclusion of this outfield visit supposes a return of the Bride along with the King to her mother's house, which accords with the record—'and they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem.' When the Bride has returned with the King to her mother's home, then follows the last holy rest recorded in the Song, which the daughters of Jerusalem were charged not to disturb; and in like manner, after the apostles have returned to Jerusalem, we have the last scriptural record of divine repose enjoyed by the Church, in the remarkable words—'then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied' (Acts ix).

'O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother!' does not necessarily in this verse, and cannot in the next, mean an infant brother, and therefore we think it preferable to understand the expression simply as referring to a brother of the bride born of the same mother—implying the nearest possible kindred. To such a brother, though not a child, affection might be openly shown; as of old regarding a more distant relation it is recorded, that when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, meeting

her 'without' in the presence of the shepherds, 'he kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept.' Such a Brother the Lord Jesus Christ has become to us in being 'born of the seed of Abraham, and becoming flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.'

In the beginning of this particular Song, the King calls the Bride his sister for the last time. After the greatest favour and nearness, she had experienced distance and displeasure; he who had as a brother come into his garden along with her, had afterwards been repulsed in his condescension, and had showed himself as the great King that will not be mocked. It was a great lesson, a lesson never to be forgot by all who have learned it; and Jesus who had been slighted in his gracious presence, was never so magnified as in his lamented absence. But now the Bride having obtained full reconciliation, desires also the renewal of this teaching regarding the glorious human nature, and human compassions, of Jesus Christ—'the High-Priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.' 'O that thou wert as my brother!' had been taught us when we least looked for it, but lost again when we made light of it and least expected to lose it; and is restored—we know not when, but surely at that time when the soul is renewed again unto 'first love'—a season that comes too late with most, and never, it may be, with many while they remain on earth. But let us pray for it, plead for it, press for it,—and who can tell the glorious issue?

When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee, yea I should not be despised.—It is not recorded that any man ever kissed Jesus on earth, save Judas the traitor; he found him, for he knew the place—he found him, for he knew the man—he found him, for he had been to him 'as a brother' and as the son of his mother—he found him 'without,' and openly, in the presence of the multitude, kissed him.

Judas, dost thou betray me with a kiss?
 Canst thou find hell about my lips, and miss
 Of life, just at the gates of life and bliss?

Herbert.

Therefore the true follower of Jesus is oft afraid and ashamed to make open profession of love to him. Yet be not ashamed of Him, lest he be ashamed of thee, but seek such fellowship with him, and such owning on his part of thy kindred to him, that all men will know and acknowledge that he is toward thee as a brother. Then they will neither wonder nor despise, if thou dost always and openly testify thy love; but be constrained to conclude that from one so nearly related to him and so fully owned by him, this constant expression of love is only due and becoming. And, still more, within thine own heart wilt thou have holy boldness and liberty, when Jesus draws near to thee as a Brother, permitting and inviting freedom of access to himself by the Spirit. Yet, meanwhile, it is with us but 'looking through a glass darkly'; it is with Jesus but 'showing himself through the lattice'; and never fully shall we find him without and kiss him, till we see Him face to face 'whom having not seen we love.' And, as proceeding from the lips of the early Christian disciples, such a meaning of the words is peculiarly appropriate; for their last familiar intercourse with Jesus, the last time he spoke to them in the full intimacy of friendship, was in the words, 'could ye not watch with me one hour?—open to me my sister, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.' From that night even till this day Jesus hath never been kissed save by Judas the traitor—a closer spiritual communion was soon granted, but along with greater outward distance and majesty. 'Touch me not,' was the authoritative command in all future intercourse; but Jesus in the same breath referred to a time when such restraint would be removed, 'touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father;' alluding, doubtless, to the same season which he promised in his last supper, when he would drink 'the fruit of the vine new with them in the kingdom of the Father.' Longing for that day, the Church might then, and may now, truly pray—'O that thou wert as my Brother! when I should find thee without I would kiss thee; I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.'

I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house.—As the believer returns from all works and duties to Jesus Christ himself, saying ‘O that thou wert as my Brother!’ so, having found Christ again for his own soul, he has a returning and increasing desire to bring him into the house of his mother, to abide there continually. The ‘house of our mother’ we have considered as the Church, and as the human family; and let us now add, the family of the domestic circle. We inquire not now after the Bride’s mother; but taking the simple idea that her mother’s house is her home, where she has dwelt from infancy, where she still dwells, and where she desires the Beloved of her soul to dwell along with her, we have the view of Christ brought into the family. And there is not a more blessed leading of the Lord Jesus, than when we are emboldened to conduct him into our home, our hearth, our fireside, our family circle, our family table, our family altar. But whether as the head or as the member of a house, we must present the prayer—‘O that thou wert as my Brother!’ to accomplish this great end; for if we are going to introduce one who is a stranger to that circle, nothing will embolden us but the knowledge that He is no stranger to us, that he will own his brotherhood toward us, and not put us to shame. Happy table where the Lord Jesus is! ‘where the King sitteth at his table,’ making it his own, where the fragrance of the Spirit fills the room, and the bread is eaten with gladness, and singleness of heart, and the praise of God; happy family circle of which Jesus is the centre! saying ‘I am in the midst of you’; happy family altar where Jesus is the High-Priest! offering up with much incense the morning and evening prayers and praises. Into this home it is good to lead Jesus forth out of our own closet when we have found him there; and into this home it is good to conduct him within, out of the church when we have found him there; for nothing tries, and nothing confirms, both the religion of the closet and the religion of the sanctuary, so much as the religion of the family. It stands between the two, and partakes of both; it is not their superior, yet it is the first and chief of all the tests that prove them, and the strongest of the

bands that fasten and make permanent whatever in them is real and divine. The religion that will not carry outward from the closet into the family is either hypocritical, or dangerously sickly and weak; and so is the religion that will not carry inward from the house of God into a man's own house. The grace of the closet and the grace of the sanctuary are confirmed and sealed, when they have become also grace in the family and in the house of our mother. Many a spark that has begun to kindle in the closet, and many a spark that has begun to kindle in the church, has been quenched by hiding the feeble fire from the family, and smothering it in the household. Being hid there, it is soon extinguished, both in secret and in the sanctuary. But into no spot on all the earth does Jesus more delight to be led, than into the heart of a home circle; nowhere does the Son of Man more love to lay his head, than within the bosom of a God-fearing family, and nowhere is the sound more welcome in his ears 'I charge you not to awake nor stir up my love till he please;—Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.'

Who would instruct me.—These words may refer to the mother of the Bride, as our translation implies; but the translation is equally correct and the reference much clearer, if, with all our older Bibles, we take them of the King. 'There thou shalt teach me,' is the rendering of one; 'that thou mightest teach me,' of another; and we have therefore no hesitation in referring the expression entirely to the King—'thou wouldst instruct me.'

There are two noble lessons in these words, the first of which is, that we possess all instruction in Christ. It is not that we bring a doctrine home, which is good—or a precept home, which is likewise good—but that we bring Christ home, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' both all doctrine and all precept—that we 'hold him fast and let him not go, till he hath come into our mother's house.' The next lesson is, that having brought him home, we come daily, hourly, instantly to Him for instruction. For this we must believe that all instruction is in Him, and that he is will-

ing to communicate it to us by the Spirit and the word—as a patient, loving, and most skilful teacher. We must ourselves ‘become fools that we may be wise,’ and babes learning ever from his lips, sitting in our homes like Mary at his feet, and hearing his word. What a treasure thou hast, whosoever thou art, that hast found Jesus, and led him to thy home, and dost possess him for thy teacher! In him thou hast all knowledge: but see that thou prize it, and wait for it from his lips; and remember that ‘counsel in the heart of a man,’ and most of all in the Son of Man, ‘is like a well of water, and that’ only ‘the man of understanding will draw it out.’

I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.—It is our part to give Christ the best entertainment in our power, to spare nothing on him, to gather all for him and present all to him, that is choicest and best. But the full reference of these words is to the final ‘marriage of the Lamb when his wife shall have made herself ready,’ and when Christ ‘shall drink the fruit of the vine new with her in his Father’s kingdom.’ The King gave to the Bride the solemn cup of betrothing before he departed to the hill of frankincense; and the Bride calling on him to return, promises that she will have prepared for him the cup of her covenant vows. The cup already filled was the King’s, and he gave it to her in covenant-pledge that he would return for the marriage. But it was rather his pledge to her than hers to him, for the Bride was not yet ready. Till he come again she shows forth His pledge, and in so doing pledges herself; still it is *his* cup of covenant rather than hers—his love—his death—his blood—his seal till he come. But when he comes to dwell in her mother’s house for ever, when he comes seen face to face in the flesh as her Brother, as well as her God; then she is also ready with her full and everlasting response; then she presents to him her full covenant-pledge, and gives to him her wine-cup filled with the juice of the pomegranate; her solemn pledge of everlasting marriage to the Lamb. It is ‘spiced’ wine, because, though spices are never once introduced in the Song in the King’s absence, the supposition here is, that he will have

returned from the mountain of spices, and her spiced wine will then be presented to him in person.

His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem! that ye stir not up nor awake my love, until he please.—The charge not to disturb the rest occurs thrice, but the ‘left hand and the right hand’ occur only once actually, and this second time conditionally. This affords another out of constantly recurring examples, of the singular structure of every clause, and the nice selection of every word in the Book. It is only when the aged Simeon embraces Christ in the temple, that the left hand is under the head with the right hand embracing; and all that the Bride now speaks of is, not a present embracing of Christ, but merely such a prospective embracing, in the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed. When he is again seen as a Brother, his left hand will again sustain and his right hand again embrace; but the Bridegroom of the Church will no longer then be the little child held in her arms as the Babe of Bethlehem, but the glorious and Holy One, sustaining and comforting her with his own ‘everlasting arms beneath her.’

But what is hope in the one verse is realization in the next, as is constantly the case throughout the Psalms; the soul following hard after God, and quickly passing into actual joy in his salvation. It is a holy quiet resting, neither in Jesus manifest in the flesh nor in Jesus manifest in glory, but in the Spirit revealing Jesus as the one object of desire and the one ground of hope, and giving ‘joy unspeakable and full of glory’ in an unseen Christ—Christ not seen yet believed on, not seen yet beloved. There are two Canticles which have not this conclusion—the third and the last. The nature of the repose is a transient but most blessed rest and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ breaking in upon absence and distance. It is ‘the lodging of the wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night’—every hour of the repose is precious—every hour uncertain; he was absent before—he will depart again—prolong the visit to the utmost, for, if lost, it may not soon be

recalled. In the third Song Christ is present, and is not brought home by persuasion into the home of the Bride's mother—he has prepared his own chariot—he has come into his own garden—he has eaten his own fruits; he is neither a wayfarer passing through, nor an invited guest in the house of the Bride, but himself the host—though making all things common between himself and his spouse. It is *his* wine, *his* honey, *his* garden, *his* chariot and chair of state, as well as *his* mother, and *his* crown. There is both less need and less opportunity for the Bride to charge Jerusalem's daughters, for the Bridegroom is himself taking charge of all the bridal feast. In the final Song again, it is not fit that the conclusion should be repose, because the King's Son has gone into a far country to receive his kingdom, and has not returned. In the progress of the Song it is meet that the hasty and broken visits, which he pays to the Church and to the soul at intervals, should be improved to the uttermost; but in the end of all the Song there is a greater object still, in the final and eternal return—the final and everlasting union—the final and unbroken rest. Had all the history terminated with an earnestly cherished repose, we might have mistaken as if this were 'our rest, and this our continuing city'; but the broken, longing, and unsatisfied close of all, teaches us that 'we are saved by hope'; and that we are to look for a city to come, and a Saviour to come, saying 'Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly!'

But at the close of this Canticle we have one of those refreshing visits of the Spirit, which we should cherish and improve to the utmost. Such a season of 'rest' is a time for 'edification'; for the building and establishing of the soul in the faith of God's elect. It is a time for 'walking in the fear of the Lord,' with earnest walking onward in the course, with careful daily walking out and in, with deep holy fear in the midst of rest and joy, and with a constant sense of the great and immediate presence of the Lord. It is a time for 'walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost,' in the consolations of the Spirit, in the joy of spiritual liberty, in the life of spiritual-mindedness, in spiritual communion with the Father and the

Son, and in spiritual fellowship with the saints. It is, lastly, a season for the 'multiplying' of the churches; for increasing the number of the called, and justified, and sanctified; for employing 'the joy of God's salvation to teach transgressors his ways, with the assurance that sinners shall be converted unto him.' How earnestly should we seek such a season! if granted, how carefully should we cherish it, and how solemnly should we charge ourselves and others not to abridge its period, or interrupt its holy quiet—'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem! that ye stir not up nor awake my love, till he please.'

XXIII.

DIVINE LOVE.

ITS RELYING WEAKNESS—ITS SIGNET-LIKE ADHESION—ITS DEATH-LIKE STRENGTH AND GRAVE-LIKE CRUELTY—ITS VEHEMENT FLAME AND QUENCHLESS FIRE—ITS PRICELESS WORTH.

Who *is* this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth *that* bare thee. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; jealousy *is* cruel as the grave: the coals thereof *are* coals of fire, *which hath* a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.—CHAP. viii. 5-7.

RECEIVING the whole of this concluding Canticle as having special reference to the Little Sister and the calling of the Gentiles, we find throughout an exact correspondence with the progress of the early Church, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The hinge of the entire book is, communion between Christ and the Church, and therefore all other things are referred to chiefly in relation to that communion. The persecution that scattered the disciples from their mother's house in Jerusalem, is alluded to only in so far as it is interrupted fellowship with the Beloved; and is introduced in the way of invitation for Him to go forth to the fields and villages, where this holy communion might be enjoyed in peace. The persecution, when past, is now fully brought out; but as in other cases, only in relation to love, and touching its effect on divine communion. 'Death and the grave, floods and many waters,' as well as trials regarding 'the substance of a man's house,' are sung of as subjects with which the Bride had become familiar, and with whose terrors she has been grappling. But it is only to bring out the glorious facts, that they had 'taken joy-

fully the spoiling of their goods' and had counted them nothing for love; that in the face of death love had not died; and that 'the floods and deep waters had passed over their souls,' without quenching the divine love that burned within them.

Along with this reference to the past persecutions which had issued in the evangelizing of Samaria, there is now specially to be introduced the calling of the Gentiles, in the betrothing of the little Sister. But the Apostle of the Gentiles by pre-eminence is Paul, who is personally also pre-eminent as a 'pattern for all believers after him, because toward him especially God had showed forth all long-suffering'; like the thief on the cross in his 'birth out of due time,' but better fitted for a pattern, because he was not only to die, but to live, to the honour of Christ and the glory of the Father. Previous to the discussion of what is to be done for the younger Sister, the daughters of Jerusalem inquire 'who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?' and in words singularly correspondent Paul narrates his own history, 'neither went I up to Jerusalem, but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus—afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea.' These churches, not knowing him by face, inquire—'who is this that cometh up' to Jerusalem? but they add—'leaning on her Beloved,' or, in the historical terms, 'they glorified God in me.'

Then follows the answer to the inquiry, 'Who is this?' and it is given in the words of the King himself; just as Paul, several times over, rehearses the history of his own conversion, and repeats the words of Jesus toward him. 'I raised thee up under the apple-tree' are the first words that have been uttered by the King since the Bride went down into the garden of nuts; and Christ's appearance to Paul contains the only words that he has addressed personally to the Church since his ascension from Mount Olivet. The King never speaks again in the Song as one present and visible; for the only other words he utters are his invitation to the Bride as dwelling in the gardens, neither to come to him nor look on him, but simply to 'let him hear her voice;' and her call in reply to that invitation is, to 'turn, and be like a roe on the mountains of spices,'

obviously addressing him both as distant and unseen. Here, however, although there is great majesty, the whole utterance is of one present and visible, but it is for the last time. Christ, in like manner, has never spoken directly to men, since he spoke to Saul on the way to Damascus; all his subsequent interviews with Paul, with Peter, with John, have been by angelic messengers, or spiritual vision, or communications of the Holy Ghost—‘last of all he was seen of me also.’ The similarity of the King’s last appearance in the Song, and Christ’s last appearance to the Church, is too obvious to demand detail—‘I raised thee up under the apple-tree—I fell to the ground and he said, Rise and stand upon thy feet.’ ‘There thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought thee forth that bare thee—God separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace;’ last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.’

THE RELYING WEAKNESS OF LOVE.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved?—The last stage of the true believer’s life is characterized by pilgrimage, by weakness, by dependence, and love. The Bride comes up early from the wilderness, but had for a time been overcome, and had made the world her home, sleeping in security; but she has been chastened and restored, and now commences her journey anew, as for its last period. She is a willing pilgrim and stranger on earth, is looking straight to the eternal inheritance, and is leaving the world as a wilderness behind her. It becomes to her more and more a barren desert, and she is severed from it more completely every day. It is one thing to own, and even to feel, the world to be a desert, and often quite another to quit that desert. Many of the inhabitants of this world’s wilderness are complaining of it as dry and desolate and disappointing, yet roam wearily through it without any thought of forsaking it. But the Bride of Jesus comes up from the wilderness, moves from it daily forward to Zion, rises from it daily upward to God, and ‘sets her affections on heaven, where Christ sitteth at God’s right

hand.' How good it is to have all the affections transferred, to have their manifold roots transplanted, from earth into heaven, that in the final transition there may be little to be done except liberating the spirit to let it go home—to the home prepared by the blood of Christ—to the home prepared by the Spirit lodging the affections there!

O loose this frame, this knot of man untie,
 That my free soul may use her wing,
 Which is now pinion'd with mortality,
 As an entangled, hamper'd thing.
 What have I left that I should stay and groan?
 The most of me to heaven is fled;
 My thoughts and joys are all pack'd up and gone,
 And for their old acquaintance plead.—*Herbert.*

But the Bride is coming up in weakness, for she is faint and weary, and needs the stay of the Beloved's arm on which she leans. 'When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest'; even in spiritual youth there is often much self-girding and self-guidance; and this strength has been 'weakened in the way' that by becoming weak we may be really strong. In the youth of pilgrimage there may be also bodily vigour and animal spirit, which both help and hinder the growth of the inner man—help, by natural energy transferred into spiritual faith and vigour—hinder, by natural energy and hope degenerated into carnal strength and confidence. These features of nature are gone; the tried pilgrim feels his own weakness, and is more than ever weaned from making his own arm his strength. It is an exceeding great progress thus to be enabled and delighted to say—'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

Yet further, the Bride is coming up in dependence and in love, 'leaning on her Beloved.' The believer now clings to Christ more than ever in love, and more than ever leans upon him in childlike trust. His arm is weak, and needs support; but his heart is confiding, and grasps the support that it needs. Bride of the Lamb! you leaned erewhile but lightly on that mighty arm; as you walked with him through the desert your

hand or your arm rested on His, as one that desired company and counsel rather than sustaining strength; as one also partially distrustful of his arm, and afraid to offend or to burden by leaning too much on its support. But now you are weak, and you lean not your hand only, but the whole weight of all your concerns in soul and body, on that everlasting strength; now also you believe and know that his arm loves to be leaned upon, and trustingly you rest on it; yea, with all your burdens on your arm, you grasp that strong One's arm, that you and your burdens may lean together upon it. Thus you walk through the wilderness; yet not as one hindering or wearying your Lord, but as a Bride resting her arm on her Husband, you go forward to the marriage feast above, 'leaning on your Beloved.' In youth you 'mounted up with wings as eagles,' when his banner over you was love—in manhood you 'ran and wearied not,' even when you sought him sorrowing through the streets of Jerusalem—and in age the lowly blessing is yours, that 'you shall walk and not faint.'

I raised thee up under the apple-tree; there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee.—We have had the apple or fruitful tree already, and we know that it is the emblem of the 'Beloved among the sons.' But this fruit-bearing tree is Christ upon the cross; it is not Christ simply in himself, for he said 'except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit'; but it is 'Christ crucified.' That tree which Jesus bore to Calvary, and which there bore him, was full of rich fruit unto God and of life-giving fruit for us, when all others were barren trees of the wood. That apple-tree, that cross with Christ upon it, afforded thick shade from the burning rays of Jehovah's wrath, when all other trees were withered and leafless; and in that very hour Jesus called it 'the green tree,' when the rest were dry. 'Under that apple-tree Christ raised us up' out of our mortal sleep, from weakness into strength, from sickness into health, from death into life. Nor need we wonder if, in the following clauses, the veil of the allegory appears thinner and more transparent than it has

hitherto been; for this is a marked characteristic of this last Song throughout. 'Solomon had a vineyard which he let out to keepers' is indeed parabolic language, but the image is so frequent throughout all the Scriptures, that we almost forget its figurative character. So the commencement of this special Song, 'who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved?' begins to draw the veil aside; for the previous inquiry, 'who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke?' was within the limits, not of actual but, of possible occurrence. It might have been that the earthly Solomon and his royal bride had emerged together from the desert in a princely palanquin; but the 'coming up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved' never could have occurred to any Bride of Solomon. The dependent weakness of the Bride having thus been brought out, it is only a step further to trace this weakness back to helpless infancy. As the apostles in their epistles are employed by the Spirit to take up and expand the seeds of truth that are in the words of Jesus, so Ezekiel does in this instance with the words of Solomon; but the prophet commences with the outcast infant, and concludes with the full-grown bride arrayed in 'excellent ornaments'; while the King begins by her perfect comeliness with rows of jewels and chains of gold, and now retraces her history to its helpless origin. 'I am black as the tents of Kedar' is the confession Solomon puts into the mouth of the Bride; 'thy father was an Amorite and thy mother a Hittite' is the corresponding account by Ezekiel. 'Under the apple-tree thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought thee forth that bare thee—thou wast cast out in the open field in the day that thou wast born. I raised thee up under the apple-tree—none eye pitied thee, I passed by thee, I said unto thee, Live!' Under the shadow of the cross the outcast, helpless, soul is taken up and owned by Jesus, and there the word 'Live!' first sounds in the ears of the dying. The apple-tree, believer, beneath which thou hast often sat with great delight while its fruit was sweet to thy taste, is the same under which thou wast also born—there was thy second birth by the Spirit—there, when

thou was old, thou wast born again and didst become a little child. It was beneath the shadow of the Son of Man, lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that the Spirit breathed on thee as he willed, and thou wast a new creature. The tree of the forbidden fruit, with its awful curse, convinced thee in part that thou wast condemned; but it was the tree of the cross, rich with the fruit of life, that enabled thee fully to own the conviction and say to the judge, Thou art just in condemning. It was, therefore, at the foot of that tree, that thou didst fall down among the dead; but the tree of life was there, there wast thou brought forth, for thy new birth was there. There Christ gave thee breath of life—there he owned thee and raised thee up—there he took thee in his arms and blessed thee, as a little child entered into the kingdom of God.

THE SIGNET-LIKE ADHESION OF DIVINE LOVE.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart.—This is in its own character one of the most intense entreaties in the Song, yet having a character peculiarly its own. It indicates presence; yet with the certainty of future, and even early, absence. It is not—Tell me where thou feedest, seeking for an absent Christ; neither is it—I charge you that ye stir not up my love till he please, as if he were remaining; nor is it—I sat down under the apple-tree, for that refreshment has been enjoyed, and she must be up and journeying onward. But it is, ‘Set me as a seal upon thine heart whithersoever thou goest, and wherever thou art; the Bride, leaning on the Beloved’s arm, entreats—Loose not thine arm from mine, till thou hast set me as a seal upon that arm. The double image also, of heart and arm, confirms the view of the ancient interpreters, who understood the ‘leaning’ to mean, on the bosom of the Beloved; the Bride weak, with the arm resting on his arm—weary, with the head leaning on his bosom. And now there must be some separation—He must leave to feed his flock among the lilies—she must go down to the vineyard to see if the pomegranate bud. But ere they separate, and in order that there may be no sepa-

ration even for an instant, she entreats that, as her head now rests on his bosom, she may herself be fixed there as a seal—‘Set me as a seal upon thine heart’; not simply as a signet suspended from the neck and carried in the bosom, but as a signet set and fixed round the heart, as a bracelet is round the arm; or else, as a seal impressed upon the heart—the image of the believing soul forming the seal, and the heart of the Redeemer as the soft wax that receives and retains the impression. Ransomed one! in the hour of thine access lift not thy head from that bosom, till thou hast both pleaded and procured the engraving of thy name upon that heart. Thy weak arm must now be withdrawn for a season from the intertwining arm of his strength, yet loose not the grasp till thou hast entreated and obtained that thy name shall encircle his arm like an engraving on a bracelet; that he may bear it written there, whence no man, not even thyself, can pluck it; and where it will never be absent from his sight, but borne ever about with him, and beauteous always before him. The fruit of many interviews with Jesus is partially lost for want of this wisdom and zeal; lost, by not covenanting with him before the meeting is dissolved, that there shall be this perpetual remembrance; lost, by not detaining him till he grant this parting blessing—till he consent to make the soul as the signet-ring of his arm, the signet-ring of his heart.

THE DEATH-LIKE STRENGTH AND GRAVE-LIKE CRUELTY OF LOVE.

For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.—Death in its own sphere is strong, and seems omnipotent, but it cannot conquer love. Death, with all its terrors, was before the Lord Jesus Christ as the price of his love to lost men, but it deterred him not—‘he loved us and gave himself for us, enduring the cross and despising the shame.’ Death has been ten thousand times before the Bride of the slain Lamb, and she ‘loved not her life unto the death’; for ‘neither death nor life is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ These two mightiest combatants

in the universe have met together and measured their strength, Death and Love; and love has prevailed over death in the conflict, has yielded to death that it might triumph over it, has given itself into the power of death, that it might obtain the keys of death and hell, to liberate death's captives. This love in the Beloved has awakened a returning love in his Redeemed, 'strong also as death,' and seeking to be 'set as a seal on his heart and on his arm,' to be borne through the midst of death. And Jesus did so bear his Father's elect; death did not pluck them from his heart; for in his death-cry—Save me from the lion's mouth! it was still 'and my darling from the power of the dog'; and death did not pluck them from his arm, for he bore them through it, promising—'to-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.'

Jealousy is cruel as the grave—the all-devouring grave, that knows not pity. Even so is holy jealousy relentlessly cruel to every creature that would interfere between the soul and the Lord Jesus Christ—to the thousand idols that once seemed fair, casting them away as 'dross, to win Christ and in him be found,' within his heart—to father and mother and brother and sister, whom it forsaketh and even hateth for his sake, if they come into rivalry with him—and cruel as the grave to the Bride's 'own life also,' which she hateth and layeth down, that she may follow him, closely bound as a signet to his arm. Yea, jealousy is cruel as the grave, not only against all that would interfere between it and the Lord whom it loves, but against all that would do despite or dishonour to that glorious Lord. It was jealousy cruel as the grave that, in the midst of Israel's dance around the golden calf, gathered the sons of Levi to Moses; that armed every one with his sword to 'slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour,' and obtain for them the covenant of peace and truth from the Lord. It was jealousy cruel as the grave, that in the day of Balaam's wiles filled the hand of the noble Phinehas with the javelin that slew the prince of the house of Simcon; and 'it was counted to him for righteousness unto all generations, because he was zealous for his God.'

It was jealousy cruel as the grave that moved Elijah, who was 'very jealous for the Lord God of hosts,' to slay the prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon and let not one escape; and, with a chariot of fire and horses of fire, the Lord took him up by a whirlwind into heaven. It was jealousy cruel as the grave that moved Peter to address the covetous wife of a covetous husband, who had both of them lied not unto men but unto God—'behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door and shall carry thee out;' that kindled Stephen, in the face of death, to charge his judges—'ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost'; and that stirred Paul to utter the righteous and holy, yet tremendous curse—'if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.' This jealousy, with its grave-like cruelty, our protesting and suffering forefathers knew better than we; and it produced a remarkable but noble mingling of ardent love to Jesus with tenderness of conscience and manly boldness, which made little account either of their own lives or those of others, when placed in competition with the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. The taunt of their foes was, that 'the only library of a Presbyterian divine consisted of an explanation of the Apocalypse, and a Commentary on the Song of Songs' (Macaulay); and the allegation strikingly illustrates these verses. 'Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm' is a brief summation of the substance of this bridal Song; and in the Song the ardent and tender affection to the Lord Jesus Christ, which formed half the character of those stalwart men, would find fit outlet and expression. 'Love strong as death, with jealousy cruel as the grave' formed the other half of that character; and it sought and found its free and holy exercise in the opened seals, the sounding trumpets, and outpoured vials of the 'true and righteous judgments of the Lord God Almighty.' Reader! if thy name is set as a seal on the heart and on the arm of Jesus Christ, then thou art not quite a stranger to 'the love that is strong as death, and the jealousy that is cruel as the grave.'

THE VEHEMENT FLAME AND QUENCHLESS FIRE OF DIVINE LOVE.

The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame—or ‘the fire-flame of God’ as an old translator renders it. It is the love that burned and flamed within the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ when he said, ‘the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up’; for in him, more than all his servants, was it true that ‘zeal consumed him,’ and that the ‘word of the Lord was in his heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones.’ His herald was ‘a burning as well as a shining light,’ but Jesus came to ‘baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire,’ and the baptism by measure on others was poured immeasurably on Him. ‘I am come,’ said he, ‘to send fire on earth, and what will I if it be already kindled’—a fire indeed that would create heart-burnings throughout the world; yet not the fire of vengeance which his disciples would have called down from heaven, but the fire of holy love. How vehemently it burned within him when he exclaimed, ‘I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished—with desire have I desired to eat this passover with you!’

Ascending to the right hand of the Father, he kindled within the hearts of his disciples the same divine fire that burned within himself; sending down the Holy Ghost to rest upon them as flames or tongues of fire: and the fire of love burned more mightily within them, than the visible flames that encircled their heads. He made ‘his ministers in that hour a flame of fire,’ and all his disciples in their measure; and most vehement the flame was, of love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and of love to men for his sake. ‘We love him,’ they could affirm, ‘because he first loved us’; with a love infinitely weaker than his, yet kindled by its fire. To men they could declare, ‘I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love the less I be loved; yea if I be offered (as if consumed on the altar-fire of love) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.’ With this enkindled flame of love, the Lord made ‘the governors

of Judah as an hearth of fire among wood, and as a torch of fire in a sheaf'—set the whole world on fire with the vehemence of the flame—and the lighted sheaf has never been quenched, and the enkindled wood is burning still.

This divine fire of love hath 'a most vehement flame.' The men of earth soon resolved to try its strength with other flames, and, tying the martyrs to the stake, they measured its power with the fiery fagots heaped around them. But the fire of love prevailed, and burned bright amongst and above the outward flames. 'Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do!—Lord! lay not this sin to their charge!'—was still the breathing and the flame of love, more vehement than all the coals of juniper that burned their bodies to ashes. How little now of this vehemence of love, how little kindling of heart to Jesus, how few flames of fire in his service! Yet one torch of fire kindled from heaven, with the 'love that beareth all things,' effects more for the honour of Christ and the salvation of souls, than a thousand half-extinguished sparks. These sparks light no flames around them, but themselves require continual watching, else they will expire altogether; but this one vehement flame kindles a sheaf, and sets a whole city on fire; this one hearth of fire in the forest spreads the flaming light and heat through the whole. A burning forest how glorious, how terrible it is—how branch kindles branch, and tree kindles tree—how it flames, how it crackles, how it roars like the waves of the sea, or the thunder of the heavens—awful in its consuming might, irresistible in its onward march, blazing through the midnight gloom with more than the light of a thousand torches! Even such is the flame of Jehovah which love enkindles; so great, so majestic, so irrepressible, so luminous, is the fire which one man may serve to light if cast like a blazing torch among the forest of human souls, till soul enkindles soul, mind enlightens mind, and tongue sets fire to tongue, in the vast multitude both of the living and of the dead.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.—If waters could have quenched the love of Jesus, or floods have drowned it, his love had perished in the 'many billows

that passed over him.' Through waters of cold indifference and hatred on the part of those he came to save; through 'floods of ungodly men compassing him about'; through 'floods cast forth from the mouth of the great serpent seeking to destroy the man-child when born,' and 'swelling to the brim in the hour and power of darkness'; through the dark flood of his Father's wrath when he cried 'let not the water-flood overflow me, the pit shut her mouth upon me!'—through all these waters the great Redeemer passed. The loving One for a season seemed drowned beneath the floods, but never the love. When 'all God's waves and billows were passing over him,' his love to the Father was unquenched, and he cried 'My God, my God!' as he sank beneath the waters. In all these waves, his love to his Bride was equally unquenched. 'Deliver my Only One!' he cried, while he bore her in his arms through the deadly billows (Ps. xxii.); and he fainted not, nor failed till he had placed her securely on the rock of ages, and had shouted with a loud voice to heaven, earth, and hell,—'It is finished!' and then beneath the dark waters the strong One bowed his head and sunk in death. But the 'many waters had not quenched the love, nor had the floods drowned it.' Jesus is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever'; our many provocations have not quenched his love, nor has it been drowned by the floods of our iniquities; but all the love that burned on earth in the heart of Jesus is burning for ever in its strength.

So is it with the love that the same spirit enkindles in the redeemed soul; the waters quench it not, the floods drown it not. The floods poured upon divine love within the heart of man are like waters on quick-lime, serving only to bring out the heat that was latent before, and making it burst forth and boil till it break and melt all the mass.

Lime begged of old, they say,
A neighbour spring to cool his inward heat,
Which by the spring's access grew much more great.

Herbert.

It is a glorious conflict between fire and water. God has kindled on earth the fire of heaven in the heart, but the enemy comes up like a flood to quench it—sins, temptations, persecutions, the world, men and devils, flesh and blood, and powers not of flesh and blood. It is the fire of heaven, it is the flood of hell—which shall prevail in the awful meeting? shall the black flood quench the bright fire, the light of a dark earth, and the warmth of a wintry world? ‘The sea roars and the waves thereof’—the fire must perish like a spark in the ocean! But deep and quenchless is that holy fire—onward the billows rush, right over the bright flames the deep waters have rolled, and the noisy waves toss themselves and roar in the madness of triumph. One moment more, and there bursts a burning mountain from the ocean’s depths, the waters have destroyed themselves, they have touched an unsuspected fire that was latent in its mighty elements, and have kindled those elements into flame. From the ocean’s bed the volcano rises burning brightly, dries up the bitter flood, and sheds light through the gloom, and warmth through the snowy cold around. So ten hundred times has the world risen to quench the light of the Church of the living God, and so has the enemy ‘coming in like a flood’ ever been foiled. Around the burning altar of love, God’s children have gathered again with a hymn of triumph, and their song has ever been, and to the end when greater floods shall lift their waves their song will ever be, ‘Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it!’

Whole seas of trouble cannot quench
Love’s everlasting fire;
Though hell oppose whom I have chose,
I cannot but admire.

Mason.

But drown not thou the love, ‘quench not thou the Spirit, grieve not thou the Holy Ghost,’ but ‘stir up the gift that is in thee.’ How often when the waves of adversity have only kindled the fire of heavenly love, has the tide of prosperity

and peace, stealthily approaching, drop by drop cooling the live embers, welcomed as a friend and not feared as a foe, gradually weakened the fire of love till it has quite flowed over it and seemed to leave it extinct beneath the placid flood! Believer! tremble, yet despair not, distrust not, for the many waters cannot quench the fire of divine love within thee. 'I know how to abound and how to suffer want,' said one in whom that fire was burning; and where true grace exists, neither the dark and bitter waves of adversity, nor the sweet and smooth waters of earth's flowing tide, will quench the love that God has enkindled. 'Neither things present, nor the world, nor life, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

LOVE'S PRICELESS WORTH.

If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.—This is a truth, like the preceding, applicable to the Bridegroom and the Bride; true of divine love toward us, true of divine love in us; for love in these verses is employed exactly as it is by the Apostle Paul in the end of the eighth of Romans, where 'the love of Christ' means, both his love to us and our love to him. As the words are uttered by the Bride, let us take it, first, of the substance offered to her, and by her refused for love; if Christ would give all the substance of his house instead of his love, it would be utterly contemned by the believing and loving soul. So Paul asserted, that 'to win Christ he reckoned all things loss and counted them but dung'—that is, almost in Solomon's very words, he held them in utter contempt. Those all things were the outward substance of the Bridegroom's house, the treasures of riches, or knowledge, or honour, or pleasure with which the world is stored; for 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,' the solid earth itself and all its furnishings. All these things are given into the hands of Christ, and are his to bestow or to withhold; and the Bride, through the mouth of Paul, declares that she holds them in utter contempt, casts them away, vilifies them,

when advanced against the excellency of Christ. Or again, these things are represented as in some respects pertaining to the Prince of this world, and with them he essays to buy this love of the heart which pertains to God alone. He succeeds with those who serve him and bear his image, because they love his ways as well as his substance; but he utterly fails with the heart in which the love of God dwells. He made the attempt with Jesus himself, offering 'all the kingdoms of the world and their glory' for his heart, his love and homage; but the proffered gift of all the substance of his house for love was utterly contemned—'Get thee behind me, Satan!' With the chaste virgin espoused to Christ he is ever attempting it again; the Prince of the world offers sometimes less, sometimes more, sometimes all his substance and kingdom, that he may win her heart for the world; but, through grace, she answers him—'Get thee behind me, for the friend of the world is the enemy of God!'

The Bridegroom of the Church, again, the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved the Church and gave himself for it, asketh love and nothing less in return; asketh love and will accept of nothing else. 'Give me thine heart!' is his demand, and the heart he will possess. He has purchased the soul, and with it has purchased the soul's love; he has redeemed the whole person of the Bride, and has purchased her whole heart. But not with the substance of his house did he buy her love, or once offer for it such a price, for it would have been utterly contemned; 'not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood' the Lamb redeemed his Bride. This is a price for love which can never be despised, because it is not the bounty of the hand but the blood of the heart; all the man and all his love are in it, for 'greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.' But having thus proved his own love, and having at so great a price purchased ours, he 'utterly contemns' everything else but love in return. Some are giving him the labour of their hands instead of love, little reflecting how thoroughly it is despised; for if by faith, and equally if by labour, 'I can remove mountains and have not

love, I am nothing.' Others give their gold and silver to the cause of Christ and to the poor, but these being given instead of love are utterly contemned ; for 'if I give all my substance to feed the poor and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.' Nay if, not in token and gift of love but in its absence and in its stead, we should give our body to the flames, it would be mere outward substance wanting the heart, and would meet with utter contempt ; for 'if I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.' How sad it will be to lose our knowledge, our labour, our gold and silver, our very life ; giving all these to Jesus, and refusing him our heart and our love ; sacrificing much for him, yet finding him not ! 'Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting'—reveal to me thy love in Christ Jesus, and take to thee my heart and my love, in Jesus, and for his name's sake!

XXIV.

THE CLOSING SONG.

THE LITTLE SISTER—THE VINEYARD TRANSFERRED—THE LAST
OF THE FOUR MOUNTAINS.

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? If she *be* a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver; and if she *be* a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. I *am* a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour. 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. My vineyard, which *is* mine, *is* before me: thou, O Solomon, *must have* a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice; cause me to hear *it*. Make haste, my beloved! and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.—CHAP. viii. 8-14.

THE LITTLE SISTER.

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?—The Little Sister, is by general consent, understood of the Church of the Gentiles. Ezekiel, with probable allusion to this very passage, says to the Hebrew Church—‘Thy younger sister is Sodom,’—is a gentile and the worst of the Gentiles; and of this younger sister he further declares, that ‘she was not mentioned by her mouth in the day of her pride’; the heathen being despised as dogs by the Jews. But this untoward sister begins now to be owned by the King, and therefore by the Bride. The persons consulting together are, no doubt, the same who said at the commencement of the Song ‘we will run after thee,’ or members of the Hebrew Church. These alone hitherto constituted the recognised Bride of Christ; for, although the

Gentiles were not shut out from salvation, the door of communion with the Church, and of acknowledged communion with its Head, was open to them only by becoming proselytes. The Hebrew Church now tardily begins to acknowledge sisterhood in the converted Gentiles, irrespectively of their subjection to the ceremonial law; or rather, in the first instance, previously to such subjection. 'God hath granted to them,' said Peter, 'the like gift as he did to us'; and asked 'Can any man forbid water that these should be baptized?' It was not only in oneness of blood that the sisterhood consisted, but in oneness of spiritual gift from heaven.

'What was to be done for this little sister?' was among the chief of all the questions that agitated the early Church, and 'the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.' The day had now come when this sister was 'spoken for;' the great Bridegroom of the Church was calling her into covenant union with himself in the time of her espousals. Hitherto she had no breasts, either as the recognised Bride of the Lamb, or as the glad mother of a spiritual offspring. She had been without any form or comeliness; and the twin roes were not hers either in faith or in love. 'Faith cometh by hearing,' and being 'without a preacher' she had not heard; love returns to him who first loved us, and the riches of his grace she had not yet known. But now, the Lord sends his word to her, and she hears and believes; the Lord looks down on her with the eye of love, and she 'turns from the love of idols to love the living and true God.' God had now 'granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.'

The question in the Church does not properly regard the calling of the Gentiles into the relation of Sister, for that belonged to God alone; but it regards the reception which this younger sister, when accepted by Christ, is to receive from the elder. It is the younger son in the parable, whom the Father has already received; it is the sun-smitten dresser of the vineyard whom the Bridegroom has espoused; what shall be the acknowledgement by the first-born brother? what the welcome by the elder sister?

If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver.—

If God has founded her on the rock Christ, if God has built her like a wall in Zion, what shall we do now? Shall we cast the wall down?—No, for we cannot and will not fight against God. ‘Forasmuch then,’ said the first of the builders, ‘as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, what was I that I could withstand God?’ But if she be a wall built by God, and not to be thrown down by man, what shall we build thereon? ‘Wood, hay, stubble,’ many desired and purposed to build; circumcision, ceremonies, divers rites and ordinances, ‘yokes which neither Hebrew fathers nor children had been able to bear.’ They could not allow the Gentile converts to be a wall of God, now to be only adorned and beautified; but looked on them as shut out, even from salvation, without their alterations and emendations. But, said one of the friends of the Bridegroom, ‘It is written, I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, and will build again the ruins thereof, that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles on whom my name is called; known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world: wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God’ (Acts xv). ‘Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,’ and known likewise all his words; and the Apostle of the Gentiles, as if referring to this silver palace or turret to be built upon the wall, said—‘I have laid the foundation—other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ—if any man build on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones.’ While some desired to build only ‘wood, hay, and stubble,’ the true Church resolved to add nothing but gems and gold, or to erect upon the wall ‘a palace of silver;’ they agreed to own the wall to be of God, to add every privilege which the Church could bestow, and to afford every aid for the growth of the Gentiles in faith and love.

If she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.—They liken the little sister to two of the principal parts of a building or temple—first, the wall, without which there is no stability, no house; and second, the door, without which there

is no entrance to the house, and no use of it. Paul and Barnabas rehearsed to the churches 'how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles—and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.' Christ is 'the door' of the Father, 'the **door** for the sheep'; faith is the door of the heart which God opens; and Jesus given, is the door of God opened to faith. The wall is the image of stability, on which, with its solid strength, is to be built a silver palace for habitation and for beauty. The door is the image of accessibleness; but a doorway without the wooden framework requires cedar boards to distinguish it from a mere open thoroughfare. The foundation wall is stable and may be depended on, but it remains comparatively without use, and without beauty, till the palace is reared on it. The doorway in the wall gives ample access; but it must have other elements besides, it must be rendered capable of enclosing as well as admitting, must be provided with a framework of wood, and for ornament as well as use that wood is to be carved 'cedar'—fragrant, beautiful, enduring. In a word, this Gentile Church is to be owned, beautified, and ordered, in all respects, for a glorious 'habitation of God through the Spirit.'

I am a wall, and my breasts like towers.—The little sister, the Gentile Church, thus expresses her joy both in Jesus Christ himself, and in her privileges as a Gospel Church. When Paul and Barnabas, along with Judas and Silas, returned from Jerusalem to Antioch with the letter of 'the apostles and elders and brethren, they gathered the multitude together and delivered the epistle, which when they had read they rejoiced for the consolation' (Acts xv). The Gentile Church was now recognised as a wall in God's temple, and greatly rejoiced in the privilege. Paul addressing these Gentiles writes, 'Ye are no more strangers, but of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.' The Hebrew Church appears to be represented as one wall, the Gentile Church as another, and Jesus Christ as the corner-stone uniting the two, as well as the

foundation of both. Received thus as one of the main walls of the Lord's temple, and equally important to the building as her Hebrew Sister, she might well rejoice, and gratefully exclaim, to the praise of grace, 'I am a wall!' Nor was it the mere roofless wall of an unfinished house; but 'the silver palace' had been built upon the wall, and had been entered and occupied by the Lord himself, for she is 'an habitation of God through the Spirit.'

And my breasts like towers.—In allusion to the silver turrets which the bridal virgins proposed to build upon the wall, the little sister now compares her breasts to towers. 'The twin roes that feed among the lilies' were hers now; 'the breast-plate of faith and love' was her armour and her ornament; 'her faith grew exceedingly and her charity abounded.' Not merely, however, in personal beauty did she now appear before the Lord, like the Spotless Bride; but like that Bride also when, afterwards, 'her stature was like the palm-tree and her breasts like its clusters;' so does she now nourish many sons and daughters with the sincere milk of the word. To the children of Jerusalem it had been promised—'thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and suck the breasts of kings;' and the Gentile Church has now breasts of consolation and life, both for the perishing heathen and for the children of Israel. That Church grew with amazing rapidity, so that the 'little sister' now became both more beautiful and more honoured than the elder. Already Israel's 'elder sister Samaria' had been received, but not by her covenant of the law, but by the new covenant of grace; and now her 'younger sister Sodom which was not mentioned by her mouth in the day of her pride,' has her captivity restored, and is given to Jerusalem at once for a daughter and a sister—an offspring in the faith, yet now an equal in divine favour. Samaria being converted and Sodom being called, the whole promise is fulfilled, 'Thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger, and I will give them unto thee for daughters.'

Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour—or peace (marg.); for it was Jesus preaching peace, first to them that were near, and now also to them that were afar off. Favour

and acceptance are found with God, for he ‘grants to the Gentiles repentance unto life in an acceptable time and in a day of salvation.’ The Church of elect Gentiles is first ‘reconciled by Christ’s death, and now much more saved by his life’; when yet an enemy, reconciled and obtaining peace; reconciled now, and finding favour in his eyes—favour, because faith and love were growing—favour, because she was ‘the joyful mother’ of souls born in Zion, whom her breasts were nourishing. But further, in finding peace, in finding Salem, she has found also the Prince of Peace. The peace-proclaiming Pentecostal Hebrew Church had become the Shulamite, the Solomonite, the Bride and Spouse of the true Solomon. But now likewise, the Church of the Gentiles, obtaining peace, is united in bridal covenant to Solomon, and becomes the Shulamite (*Sanctius*); not separately nor exclusively, but equally with the Hebrew Church, as partaker of all her privileges, a ‘fellow-citizen with the saints’; not another bride to the Lamb, but belonging to the one bride, one with Christ, and one with the Church of Christ. It is peace to the near, and peace to the far off, the far off and the near being now both one in Christ, both made nigh to God in the blood of his cross. The parting middle wall between God and man is broken down in Christ our peace—the parting middle wall between man and man, Jew and Gentile, is broken down in Christ; God ‘the very God of peace—Christ our peace’—the Hebrew Church finding peace through Jesus—the Gentile Church finding peace through Jesus—Jew and Gentile finding peace with each other in him; the Father the God of peace, the Son the Prince of peace, the Church the Daughter of peace, the Lamb’s wife.

From the parable of this Little Sister let us learn these things: 1. To cherish compassionating love for the lost. The lost *heathen* are flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone; they are not men simply, as we also are men; but they are members of the same human family, children of the same Father, and toward them as to younger children of one household we are by divine appointment our ‘brother’s keeper.’ Let us think on a single family; husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, old men and little children, living beneath one roof; all dead in sin,

all without Christ, without God, without hope in the world. Let us fix the mind upon this household till we feel toward them as brethren, and till our compassions are moved for them. Let us place ourselves in *their* dark and hopeless condition, and them in *our* light and liberty; and striving to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, let us ask how we would have them to think, to pray, to give, to labour for *us*; and so let us give our thoughts, our prayers, our offerings, our efforts for *them*. Not that any one perishing family can claim all our regards, but that the heathen world is composed of such families in myriads and in millions—all kindred to ourselves, all perishing for lack of knowledge, all capable of obtaining invaluable help at our hands.

Let us remember next, or rather first, lost *Israel*—bound to us by the tie common to them and all mankind, because children of one father Adam; but having another tie peculiarly their own, because their father Abraham according to the flesh is our father Abraham according to faith. If they thought on us while yet their ‘little sister without breasts’ and without beauty; let us think in return on them when the bridal ring has been put on our hand, and our elder and comelier sister now sits a desolate widow. In her desolation she is not forgotten by her God, ‘since he spake against her he earnestly remembers her still,’ and she will yet ‘be spoken for,’ and be called as a wife of youth when she had been refused. ‘Blessed,’ meanwhile, ‘are all they that love her, and all that mourn for her, that they may sing with her in the day of her gladness.’

Poor nation! whose sweet sap and juice
 Our scions have purloined, and left you dry:—
 Who by not keeping once, became a debtor;
 And now by keeping lose the letter.
 O that my prayers—mine alas!
 O that some angel might a trumpet sound,
 At which the Church falling upon her face,
 Should cry so loud until the trump were drown’d,
 And by that cry, of her dear Lord obtain
 That your sweet sap might come again!—*Herbert.*

Our own lost let us not forget; our neighbours lost, our chil-

dren lost, our kindred lost; subjects of the same kingdom, citizens of the same city, members of the same family and household. None can tell how soon they may 'be spoken for'; how near the effectual call to eternal life may have approached the door of their hearts; how speedily the King may be entering in to sup with them in bridal covenant. Let us not hinder, but hasten the holy union; nay, let us be of those who 'speak for them,' who plead for them with the King, and entreat him to betroth them to himself.

2. Let us learn from this parable that 'the last shall be first and the first shall be last'; and let us hold ourselves in readiness to receive all whom the Lord has owned. In every age of the Church, the little sister received by Christ has been a stumblingblock to the first-born daughter. 'He that is not against us is with us,' is a lesson which every generation of the Lord's people have to learn anew for themselves; which they are often slow to learn; and the refusal of which is both injurious to the spread of the Gospel, and most hurtful to their own souls. 'We saw one casting out devils in thy name and we forbade him because he followed not with us—forbid him not, for no man that casteth out devils in my name can lightly speak evil of me.' There is a man baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire—pressed in spirit, he is testifying that Jesus is the Christ—men crowd to hear at his lips the words of everlasting life. We must disown him; for we taught him not—we sent him not—we ordained him not; before we receive him we must impose on him our training for the ministry, and our laying on of hands; the yoke that was profitable for us must be necessary for him, he cannot in one hour be made equal with us who have borne the burden and heat of the day! 'We have a little sister and she hath no breasts, what shall we do for her in the day that she shall be spoken for?'—the King has now received her, and she has become his Bride—shall we send her back beneath the trammels of infancy and childhood and long preparation for the marriage, such as we ourselves rightly underwent? Nay; rather, whom God hath owned let us not disallow—for who are we to withstand Him,' when he hath already bestowed the seal of his

own gifts? Let us rather grant every aid and furtherance—let us afford every encouragement—let us welcome to every privilege. ‘If she be a wall, let us build thereon a palace of silver; if she be a door, let us enclose it with boards of cedar.’

THE TRANSFERENCE OF THE VINEYARD.

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. My vineyard which is mine is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.—Solomon is the Messiah; and Baal-hamon—the owner, or the place, of a multitude (Gesen.)—is, no doubt, either Jerusalem or the land of Israel, whose people in the days of Solomon ‘were as the sand which is by the sea in multitude.’ It is the Little Sister, as now the Bride of Solomon, who narrates the history of her husband’s vineyard; or, it is the united Church of Jew and Gentile, forming one Bride; but in either case, no longer the Jewish hierarchy, but the true Bride of the Lamb. She gives an account of the vineyard, first as under the charge of its original keepers, and next as committed to her own care, in words which need little explanation, because they scarcely differ from the words of our Lord himself. The vineyard was let to keepers who were to render its fruits to the King—they were to render them, but the silence as to the fulfilment implies that the covenant was not kept. When the great Proprietor sent for the fruits in their season, the keepers of the vineyard sent his servants away empty; and, as Jesus adds, they beat his servants, and at last slew his Son.

The New Testament Church now declares that by the Lord’s grant the vineyard is hers, ‘my vineyard which is mine, O Solomon!’ and undertakes through grace that she will never lose sight of it, ‘my vineyard is before me.’ She further engages to assign to those who labour in it a suitable and moderate maintenance, because the Lord ordains that ‘they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel’; and allots ‘two hundred pieces of silver to those that keep the fruit of it.’ At

the same time she promises that the full revenue shall only be the Lord's, and that she will never attempt, like her predecessor, to claim the vineyard as her own—'Thou, O Solomon! must have a thousand.' The property of the vineyard is his, the honour his, the fruit and revenue his; yet she devotes herself to it with her whole heart and soul as if it were her own—'my vineyard, which is mine, is before me.' It is her Lord's, she 'is bought with a price' and belongs to him in her person, her property, her work; but it is her husband's, 'her Beloved is hers,' and all that he hath is hers—his person, his property, and his work are all hers. There are, therefore, no separate interests and no rival claims; but all that is his is hers, and all that is hers is his.

Kings of the earth their vineyards leave
 To hireling labourers' sordid hands,
 And but a partial share receive
 Of increase of the fertile lands.
 The vineyard of my Lord is mine,
 No separate interest we own;
 Its gain and hire alike combine,
 For Bride and Bridegroom both are one.—*Grad. of Oxf.*

There is a remarkable agreement between this passage, and the reference to the Lord's vineyard in the fifth chapter of Isaiah. The prophet sings 'a song of my Well-beloved (or Beloved, for the original word is the same) touching his vineyard;' he takes this title of Beloved from the Song of Solomon, and explains that the Beloved is 'the Lord of Hosts, his vineyard the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.' In the seventh chapter he adopts the same number of silver pieces as Solomon for the rent paid by tenants; 'every one for the fruit thereof was to pay a thousand pieces of silver—every place where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings.' The Song of Solomon was evidently much in the mind of Isaiah, and he refers to it more or less directly in almost every page of his prophecies. 'The King hath brought me into his chambers—come my people, enter into thy chambers.' 'I am the Rose of Sharon—the desert shall blossom as the rose, the excellency of Sharon.' 'Tell me where thou

feedest thy flock—where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? he shall feed his flock like a shepherd.’ ‘Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels—as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.’ ‘His fruit was sweet unto my taste—the Branch of the Lord shall be glorious, and the fruit of the earth excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.’ ‘His banner over me was love; I charge you that ye stir not up nor awake my Love—there shall be a root of Jesse for an ensign to the people, and his rest shall be glorious.’ ‘Behold he cometh leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills—behold the Lord God will come; every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.’ ‘Rise up my love, for the rain is over and gone—this is as the waters of Noah unto me; I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee.’ ‘Arise my fair one—arise, shine, for thy light is come.’ ‘O my dove, let me see thy countenance—who are these that fly as doves to their windows?’ ‘By night on my bed I sought him—with my soul have I desired thee in the night.’ ‘Until the day break and the shadows flee away—they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.’ ‘The watchmen that go about the city—I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem!’ ‘I held him, I would not let him go—there is none that stirreth himself up to take hold of thee.’ ‘I brought him to my mother’s house—where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement?’ ‘Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?—who is this that cometh from Edom?’ ‘the covering thereof purple—with dyed garments from Bozrah?’ ‘Like pillars of smoke—the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day.’ ‘In the day of his espousals and in the day of the gladness of his heart—as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.’ ‘Behold King Solomon! the King is held in the galleries, he is altogether lovely—thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.’ ‘Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet—woe is me, for I am of unclean lips; thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged.’ ‘Thy neck is like the tower of David—loose thyself from the bands of thy neck; like a

tower of ivory—shake thyself from the dust.’ ‘Come with me, my Spouse!—the Lord hath called thee as a wife of youth; thy Maker is thy husband.’ ‘Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with all trees of frankincense—I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, the myrtle, and the oil-tree, trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.’ ‘A fountain of gardens—a garden that hath no water; a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon—Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.’ ‘Awake, O north wind, and come thou south!—awake, awake, O arm of the Lord!’ ‘I have drunk my wine with my milk, I have eaten my honey-comb—and shall call his name Immanuel, butter and honey shall he eat.’ ‘Eat, O friends, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!—come! yea come buy wine and milk without money; eat ye that which is good!’ ‘His head is as the most fine gold—I will make a man more precious than fine gold.’ ‘His cheeks are as a bed of spices—I gave my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.’ ‘What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved?—who hath believed our report, and to whom is the Lord revealed?’ ‘His countenance as Lebanon—the glory of Lebanon.’ ‘His countenance is as Lebanon, (his form) excellent as the cedars—his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.’ ‘Thou art beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners—I will make thy windows of agates, and all thy borders of pleasant stones; we have a strong city, salvation for walls and bulwarks.’ ‘The queens saw and praised her—the kings shall shut their mouths at him.’ ‘Who is this that looketh forth as the morning?—then shall thy light break forth as the morning.’ ‘I went down into the garden of nuts, to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded—for as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.’ ‘O Shulamite! (peaceful), how beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O Prince’s daughter!—how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that publisheth peace!’ ‘Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon—I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon.’ ‘Thine head upon

thee is like Carmel—the excellency of Carmel.’ ‘Thy breasts shall be as the clusters of the vine—that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations.’ ‘O that thou wert as my brother!—O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down!’ ‘Set me as a seal upon thine arm—I have graven thee on the palms of my hands.’ ‘The coals thereof are coals of fire—as when the melting fire burneth.’ ‘We have a little sister and she hath no breasts—sing O barren that bearest not; in that day Israel shall be third with Egypt and Assyria.’ Then there is the vineyard which is referred to throughout the Song of Solomon, and throughout the prophecy of Isaiah. The reader, if so disposed, will probably be able to find many more similar allusions, as we have attempted no regular comparison of the two books. The Spirit of God, in raising up new men to utter his mind, ever causes them to give special heed to his words already uttered; and it would seem as if the literal outward affinity between the Song of Solomon and the prophecies of Isaiah, in being placed beside each other in our Bibles, were not closer than the mental and spiritual affinity subsisting between the inspired writers of both. Their utterances, indeed, are often in the way of contrast; and the whole of the fifty-third of Isaiah appears to be the inspired outburst of a full heart that had been engaged in deep meditation on the beauty of Immanuel, as described by Solomon as the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely,—‘Who hath believed the report? for he is without form or comeliness, or beauty that we should desire him.’

But let us not omit in these verses the contrast as regards the keeping of the vineyard, between the close and the commencement of the Song. ‘Mine own vineyard I have not kept’ is historically the confession of the Gentiles, to whom the Lord’s vineyard is now assigned in charge; but it is equally the confession of every soul that has departed from the living God. Now, ‘he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy’; but the mere acknowledgment ‘I have not kept mine own vineyard’ will only aggravate the condemnation, if it be accompanied by no desire and endeavour to keep it. The Bride, compelled at the beginning to confess ‘mine own vine-

yard have I not kept,' is enabled at the close to declare, through grace, 'my vineyard which is mine is before me'—I am keeping it daily and diligently, and through grace will endeavour to keep it to the end. Let us go and do likewise, and, 'being not forgetful hearers but doers of the word, we shall be blessed in our deed.'

Thou that dwellest in the gardens! the companions hearken to thy voice; cause me to hear it.—In assigning these words to the Bridegroom as an address to the Bride, there is scarcely any difference of opinion. The Bride who confessed at the beginning of the Song that she had wandered from her own vineyard and not kept it, now not only keeps the vineyard, but takes up her abode within the vineyard or garden in order to take charge of it. It is no lordship over the heritage, for 'the dwelling-place in a garden' is described by Isaiah as a 'cottage in a vineyard'—not the mansion of the owner, but the humble lodging of the vinedresser, or rather in this case of the tenant under whom the vinedressers labour, for the vinedressers are 'the companions who hearken to her voice.'

It is the Christian Church with the word of God committed to her; the care of souls intrusted, and the discipline of the Lord's house assigned, to her. Apostles and elders, companions and vinedressers, hearken to her voice, as Paul and the others obeyed the council at Jerusalem, though in part it consisted of themselves. It is the Church in her divinely-ordered assemblies guiding the ministers, elders, and members, by the word and Spirit, under Christ the Head. Great evil arises if the companions hearken not to the voice of the Bride, when that voice accords with her Lord's; but these words take for granted that the companions will so hearken. They are a solemn charge from Christ himself to the Church and her ministers, to let their voice of authority be ever uttered in his presence and by his Spirit; to let their voice of preaching be ever first poured out as in his ears; and especially to cause their voice of prayer to be ever ascending to his throne. The word of direction by the Church to her members, the word of preaching by ministers to the people, or by him that heareth when he saith 'Come!' to him that is yet far off, will never

be acceptable and never profitable, except also the voice of prayer is rising to Christ in heaven. 'We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word,' said the apostles—continually to the one as well as to the other; we shall be as diligent in causing Christ to hear the word of supplication, as in causing men to hear the word of salvation—when 'the companions are hearkening to our voice,' we shall 'cause Him to hear it.' Oh that these two were united!—that not men only, but Christ, heard the voice of the Church, the voice of ministers, the voice of members who seek to spread the word abroad!—'cause me to hear it.' Often last—and often least—is the direction of the voice to Christ; men are more sure of hearing it than Christ, men hear more of it than Christ, and men often hear a more earnest voice than that which arises to the Lord. 'O thou that dwellest in the gardens!' thou who rightly art taking up thine abode in the vineyard of the Lord, making that thy home, thy rest, thy work, thy business, thine object, thy life; if thy companions are hearing thy voice, or thou art seeking that they should hear it—companions once in sin, companions now in grace, or 'brethren and companions' by any bond; if these hear thy voice, be sure that Christ hears it also—more earnestly and more frequently uttered to him than to them. Resolve with the apostles to 'give thyself to prayer' first, and next to 'ministering the word'; and then shall thy words be with profit, for he 'will suffer none of them to fall to the ground.' 'O thou that dwellest in the gardens! the companions hearken to thy voice; cause me to hear it.'

THE LAST OF THE FOUR MOUNTAINS.

Make haste, my beloved! and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.—In a book in which there is introduced so great a variety of aromatic plants, is there also in this mountain-roe amongst the spices a reference to precious perfumes found on earth? The allusion may be that which is supposed by some of the older writers, of the roe being perfumed by the aromatic shrubs amongst which it feeds; but may not the literal roe on the spicy mountains be found in the

musk-deer? Musk is one of the most powerful of all perfumes, is highly valued in the East, and both the perfume and the deer from which it is taken were probably well known to one so conversant with natural history as Solomon. The musk-deer is similar in size, and in other respects not unlike to the roe; it is specially the roe of the mountains, for its habitation is in the Asiatic Alps; and, fragrant with its precious perfume while leaping on the summits of the lofty hills, may it not form the outward emblem in this roe or young hart on the mountains of spices?

As there are four gardens, so there are four mountains in the Song—the mountains of Bether, the mountains of the leopards, the mountain of myrrh, and the mountain of spices. Other mountains, such as Gilead and Carmel, are introduced as images, but there are only these four that form part of the narrative or structure of the Song; for the undefined mountains at the commencement of the second Canticle are the same as the mountains of Bether toward its close; while Lebanon, Shenir, and Amana, from which the Bride is invited to come, are the hills of the lions' dens and the mountains of the leopards. The mountain of spices in this last verse of the Song must be distinguished from the mountain of myrrh from which the Bridegroom has already returned, and must of necessity constitute a fourth mountain in some respect—although we are disposed to identify it with the hill of frankincense, taken in distinction from the mountain of myrrh.

There is no reference to spice mountains of any kind, till the Bridegroom announces on the approach of evening that he is about to rest in the mountain of myrrh till the morning. The previous mountains over which he is to leap like the roe are only mountains of Bether or hills of division—of division between us and God, division between us and Christ. They are mountains of holiness and righteousness in Jehovah—'his justice like the great mountains, his truth rising to the clouds,' and all dividing us from God and from peace. Jesus surmounts all those mountains in his meritorious life and death, and the mountains of Bether are converted into mountains of spices—most fragrant to the Father in heaven, and full of

sweetest perfume for men on earth. Next come the hills of the lions' dens and the mountains of the leopards—mountains of sin, of the world, strongholds of Satan. Jesus assaults these strongholds and takes them, binds the strong one that kept his prisoners in his dreadful den, breaks our chains, opens our dungeon doors, and invites us—'Come with me, my sister, my spouse, from the lions' dens and from the mountains of the leopards!' These mountains, also, are turned for Christ and his people into mountains of fragrant spices; for 'through death Christ hath destroyed him that has the power of death; out of the strong one hath come forth sweetness;' and bruised 'foes have been made a fragrant footstool for Christ' and his redeemed. The third mountain is the mountain of myrrh, which is certainly the sepulchre on Mount Calvary where Jesus lay embalmed as in a vast heap of myrrh and aloes, brought by Nicodemus and his friends. The Bride expressly calls that mountain 'a garden;' and speaks of it not at all as she now does of the mountain of spices, but as implying depth as well as height, when she says that he 'has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices.' But from the time when the Bridegroom says that he 'will get him to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense,' he has given no intimation whatever in the Song where he is to abide till he returns for the marriage; yet just as the Bride knew before that he had gone down to the 'garden of spices,' she knows now that he is tarrying on 'the mountains of spices,' and entreats him to descend from their lofty summits. We therefore conclude that the Bridegroom makes a double intimation in the 'mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense.' In his brief returning interview he had come from the 'mountain of myrrh;' but he has gone again, and whither?—'to the hill of frankincense;' and therefore she now entreats him to come down from this 'mountain of spices.' A double mountain he spoke of, and a rest on each; a double night of absence from the Bride on earth, first in his death and now in his ascension; a double rest, first in the grave and now in heaven; and a double morning, first of his own resurrection, and then of his appearing again in glory in the morning of the general resurrection of all that are in their graves.

Jesus is now on the hill of frankincense, standing on the fragrant mountain of his own finished work, 'an High Priest consecrated for evermore'; and from that mountain continually 'much incense is given to him, and it ascends out of his hands with the prayers of all saints.' Saints on earth rejoice because he is on the mountains of spices—because the fragrance of his merits and death is like the 'great mountains'—because there are sweet odours enough to burn perpetually night and day before Jehovah; much incense offered and a vast cloud of fragrance ascending without ceasing. These mountains of spices are more fragrant than our sins are offensive, as the high and holy Servant and Sufferer is greater than the merely human transgressor; these mountains of spices are greater than the mountains of our sins, 'as the heavens are above the earth,' and as the hill of God is higher than 'mountains of leopards and dens of lions.'

But although it is profitable for us that Jesus has departed; and although by the Spirit we now enjoy more of his true presence, than when he was seen by his disciples on earth with less enlightening power of the Holy Ghost; yet the Bride desires not that the Beloved should tarry for ever on these fragrant mountains, but that he would descend from them to her, like a roe or a young hart—'Make haste, my Beloved! and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices.' Jesus is beautiful like the mountain roe in her eyes, not feared, not shunned, but loved and desired; swift like the young hart are his feet, yet not too swift for her longings, but beautiful in their speed. The Bridegroom seems to tarry long, but when 'he that cometh shall come, he comes and does not tarry.' 'Behold, I come quickly, surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

Come, Lord, my head doth burn, my heart is sick,
 While thou dost ever, ever stay:
 Thy long deferrings wound me to the quick,
 My spirit gaspeth night and day.
 O show thyself to me,
 Or take me up to thee!

Yet if thou stayest still, why must I stay?
 My God, what is this world to me?
 This world of woe? hence all ye clouds, away!
 Away! I must get up and see.
 O show thyself to me,
 Or take me up to thee!

We talk of harvests; there are no such things,
 But when we leave our corn and hay.
 There is no fruitful year, but that which brings
 The last and loved, though dreadful, day.
 O show thyself to me,
 Or take me up to thee!
Herbert.



NOTES.

To present the opinions of others in a commentary instead of his own is the easiest method for the author, the most laborious for the reader, the worst for practical ends, but in some respects the best for imparting information. As we have not adopted this mode, our first design was to add pretty copious notes on the whole Book, but in our original plan we had not included what forms the first part of the exposition on the structure of the Song. This has increased the volume so far beyond its expected limits, that we can only select out of what we had designed as notes a few on the more difficult or important passages; but although in our exposition we have usually presented no more than our own judgment on each passage, we have never formed that judgment hastily, but have examined what has been written on every verse of the book with the same care as in the few verses adduced in these notes.

The question of the *Inspiration* of the Song we have not taken up, and shall not attempt it now, both for the reason just assigned, and on account of our full conviction that the single question in this respect is that of *interpretation*. As a question of evidence it is substantially the same as the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures, for any specific objections are extremely minute, and relate rather to the age and the author of the Song than its place in the inspired records. They are such as the occurrence of the word Paradise, and the ׳ (Yod) in דוד David, which are alleged by some to belong to a later age than Solomon's. The reader will find the latter point most elaborately discussed by Dr. Gill, and the objection removed. But even if the points of this character, both few and minute, were more than they are, it is a most deceptive kind of criticism regarding ages of which we have so few remaining records; and often rests merely on the opinion of some individual critic, which is in its turn set aside by the judgment of some abler scholar who succeeds him. Were such evidence to be resorted to at all, instead of the sure ground of testimony, we should attach much more weight to a literary judgment on the general style and character of the book; and we have no doubt whatever that if—setting aside such uncertain minutiae—the Song of Solomon were placed in the hands of a jury of literary men to assign its age, they would unanimously place it between the Psalms and the Prophets.

The only real question is that of *interpretation*, because if the allegorical interpretation is received, all will own the evidence of inspiration to be

most ample; but if it is interpreted literally there are many thoughtful men whom no amount of evidence, short of miraculous proof to the individual, would induce to receive it as the inspired word of God. 'It was chiefly the *subject* of the poem that influenced Dr. J. Pye Smith in rejecting the Canticles from the canon' (Kitto's Bib. Cyc.). We are not forgetting that Michaelis interprets literally, and allows the inspiration, holding that chaste conjugal love is a fit subject for a pen divinely inspired. But how few will concur with him when the whole of his view is taken into the account,—how few will believe that the holy word of God is occupied throughout a whole book with nothing higher than the complexities of polygamy, tolerated though it was for a season! But if the Song of Solomon is received as a pure allegory, as it unquestionably is, all who own the Bible will at once accept it as inspired.

CHAP. I. 1.—*The Song of Songs*—Heb. שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשֹׁלֹמֹה; Sept. ᾠσμα ᾠσμάτων ὃ ἐστὶ Σαλωμών; Vulg. Canticum Canticorum Salomonis. Origen states that it was sometimes entitled Cantica Canticorum, but he censures this as incorrect.

In the English Bibles, Wycliffe has—'Here begynnyth the Boke that is clepid Songis of Songis of the Bridulis of Crist and of the Chirche.' Coverdale's title is—'Salomon's Balettes called Cantica Canticorum.' The Great Bible, and all the rest we have seen down to the Geneva, entitle it 'The Ballet (or Ballate) of Ballettes of Salomon.' The Geneva, usually very accurate, but in this instance taking more liberty than any that preceded or followed it, gives not the translation but the meaning of the title—'An excellent Song which was Salomon's.' Fenner (1587) is the first who resumes the old title and calls it 'the Song of Songs.' In the titles of the foreign modern versions, there is nothing remarkable. The title of the Targum is rather an explanation, but a noble one, 'The songs and hymns which Solomon the prophet, King of Israel, delivered by the Spirit of prophecy, before Jehovah the Lord of the whole world.'

2. *Let him kiss me*.—Wycliffe, 'Kysse he me with the cosse of his mouth'; Fenner, 'O with the kisses of his mouth let him kiss mine!'

3. *Because of the savour*.—Heb. לְרִיחַ. Dr. Hodgson, followed by Good, Fry, and others—'Like the scent of thine own sweet perfumes is thy name, a perfume poured out.' Most of the older Bibles connect it with the preceding—'Better than wine, and that because of the good and pleasant savour of thy most precious baulmes.—Bishops' Bible. On the whole, we prefer the common translation to either.

Thy name is as ointment poured forth.—The Geneva is the first Bible that inserts *as*, which is better omitted. 'Thy name is a sweet-smellynge ointment when it is shed forth.'—Bishops' Bible.

Name.—Heb. שֵׁם; *ointment*.—Heb. מְשֶׁחָ. 'Elegans hic Paronomasia inter Hebraicas voces.'—Ker.

4. *Draw me, we will run*.—Me quoque cum reliquis sub tua jura trahe.—Jonston.

The King hath brought me into his chambers.—To reconcile this clause with the petition (ver. 7) 'Tell me where thou feedest,' has perplexed the most eminent critics, and Harmer says it is impossible to reconcile them except by translating 'the King is bringing me,'—which is just bending text to meet the difficulty. The whole connexion is simple by using the expression 'we will remember' as the key to the passage, and interpreting 'hath brought' as referring to time past. This appears so obvious, that our only difficulty has been in not meeting with it in any of the commentaries; but since the first part of the volume was printed, we have found it clearly brought out by Sanctius.

We will remember thy love—Sept. ἀγαθήσομεν; Vulg., memores uberum; Montanus, memorabimus; Dathe, celebramus; Rosenmüller, celebrabimus; Percy, Good, Williams, we will celebrate; Wycliffe, myndful; Great Bible and Coverdale, we thynke more of; Geneva, we will remember. Compare Gen. xli. 9, which fully justifies the common translation.

The upright love thee—Marg. *they love thee sincerely (or uprightly)*—Heb. יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל; Sept. εὐθιότης, Vulg., recti—so Pagninus; Origen, equitas; Diod., gli huomini diritti; Montanus, rectitudines; Dathe, probi; Wycliffe, rigtmen; Great Bible, they that be righteous; Coverdale and Taverner, well is them that love thee; Geneva, the righteous; Gesenius and Rosenmüller, sincerely; Percy, followed by Good, thou art every way lovely, but he owns that 'the Hebrew can hardly be brought to yield this sense;' Dr. Lee (of Cambridge), true, direct, persons.

7. *Where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.*—Origen and the Greek Fathers understand this to mean, under the full blaze of the noonday sun, and to imply the desire of knowing and resting with Christ, not as in twilight, but in the clearest brightness of his grace.

On this clause a curious instance occurs in the works of Augustine (we have not the passage now before us), of the manner in which ancient disputants sometimes endeavoured to defend themselves in their false positions, by misinterpreting and misdividing the word. The Southern heretics with whom he is contending had adduced in their own favour this passage, 'Tell me where thou makest thy flock to rest,' which in the Latin is 'ubi cubes in meridie'—signifying, in the South, as well as, at noon; and they had distributed the clause into two—'Tell me where thou retest? In the South'—which they took as the answer to the inquiry, and as good evidence that the truth remained with themselves in the South! and put this noble champion of the faith to some trouble in correcting their interpretation.

As one that turneth aside—Sept. ὡς περιβαλλομένη; Vulg., ne vagari incipiam; Wycliffe, lest to go vaugrant I begynne; Coverdale, lest I go wrong; Dathe, oberrem; Hodgson and Good, for why must I be as a wanderer? Margin, as one that is veiled—which might either be as a harlot or as a mourner, and the latter if we translate it veiled we should rather prefer; Montanus, velut operiens se; Diod., come una donna velata; Rosenmüller, tanquam velata.

8. *If thou know not*—Sept. *ἐὰν μὴ γινῶς σεαυτὴν*; Vulg., *si ignoras te* (if thou know not thyself)—from which many good but irrelevant comments have been made on self-knowledge by all the ancient commentators.

Beside the tents—Montanus, *super*; and so Fenner,

And doe thou feed thy young
And tender goates on hye,
Above the tabernacles where
The other shepherds lye.

9. *O my love*—*אִשְׁתִּי*; Sept. *ἡ πλησίον μου*; Vulg., *amica mea*; Ital., *amica mia*; French, *mon amie*. It is correctly enough translated *my love*, though literally it signifies *my friend*, and in the margin of ver. 15 is rendered *companion*. To translate it so would not be more accurate, but it would have the advantage of distinguishing it from other similar words. It occurs in every part of the Song—nine times in all: i. 9, 15; ii. 2, 10, 13; iv. 1, 7; v. 2; vi. 4. Most of the old Bibles translate it *my love*; but the Great Bible has *my soule*; one of the Wycliffe Bibles has *my leef* (or *love*), and the other *my frendesse*, which is the most exact translation. Fenner, Ainsworth, and others, render it well—*my fellow-friend*.

To a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots—*לְקַסְתֵּי פָרָחֵה פָּרָחֵה*; Sept. *τῆ ἵππων μου ἐν ἄρμασι Φαραῶν*. This the Vulgate rightly interprets collectively, and translates *equitatus meo*; Ital., *alle cavalle*; Portug., *a' minha cavalleria*; French (not well), *à la beauté de mes chevaux*; Great Bible, *unto the hoost of Pharaoh's charettes have I compared thee* (Marg., Ex. c. 14); Geneva, *to the troupes of horses in the charets of Pharaoh*. Coverdale renders it rather peculiarly, *There wil I tary for the (my love) with myne hoost, and with my charettes, which shall be no fewer than Pharaoh's*. This is not very different from the sense assigned by Origen and the Fathers. They followed the Septuagint, but interpreted it of Christ, referring to his Chariots by which at the Red Sea he overcame the chariots of Pharaoh. Bossuet translates, *equæ meæ*; and explains, *equæ pulcherimæ*. Dr. Hodgson translates, *to my horses in Pharaoh's chariots*; Good, *to one of the steeds*; Dathe, *equis ad quadrigas Pharaonis*.

Rosenmüller completely vindicates our authorized translation—'a company of horses.' His words are, 'Equabus in curribus Pharaonis assimilo te, O socia mea. Plures reddunt *equæ meæ*—minus huic tamen quadrat quod additur *in curribus Pharaonis*. Huic recte Hebraei *yoð* nomini illi additum habent pro paragogico, quale est in Thren. i. 1: Iesai i. 21, etc.' He then shows that the classical quotations have been misinterpreted, that the critics have failed in producing a single example in which a beautiful woman is praised by comparison to a mare, and that the famous instance of Helen amounts only to this, that 'as the cypress to a garden, or the Thessalian horse to a chariot, so Helen was an ornament to Lacedæmon.' Sanctius is very decided that it is the chariot host, and

asserts that the comparison to a mare with the ancients would not have been laudatory, but most offensive; and on a classical subject his authority is great. See also Poli Synopsis. The Targum interprets the comparison with reference to the Red Sea, but conceives that Israel so provoked God that they would have been drowned like Pharaoh's chariots except for the intercession of Moses. The other Hebrew interpreters, as Jarchi quoted by Ainsworth, interpret it also with express reference to Pharaoh's host.

13. *A bundle of myrrh—he shall lie all night.*—Portuguese Bible, *ella morara*. Harmer is decided that from the structure of the verse it must be the myrrh that is referred to as between the breasts, and that the idea is only that of abiding, without special reference to night. He is followed by many modern critics.

15. *Doves' eyes.*—Dr. Hodgson—thine eyes are like doves. We incline to agree with those who think that in chap. v. 12 the comparison is to the dove itself and not to the dove's eye, but that is not obvious either here or in chap. iv. 1. 'To conceive the force of this expression we must not refer it to our common pigeons, but to the large and beautiful eyes of the doves of Syria. They who have seen that fine eastern bird the carrier-pigeon will need no commentary on this place' (Bishop Percy).

16. We are indebted to Bossuet for the quotation from Augustine.

CHAP. II. 1. *The Rose of Sharon*—Heb. תְּבַצְצֵלֶת הַשָּׂרֵיִן; Sept. ἄνθος τοῦ πεδίου, κρίνον τῶν κοιλάδων; Parkhurst, a rosebud, an opening rose; in confirmation of which he cites Aquila who renders here κάλυξ, and in Isaiah καλυκωσις; Coverd., the floure of the felde, and lylie of the valleys; Genev., the rose of the field, etc. But the Great Bible and the Bishops' put each for the other throughout—the lylie of the felde, and the rose of the valleyes—as the rose among the thorns, and so everywhere. The difficulty regarding the word Rose is, because it occurs only here and in Isaiah xxxv. 1; but we are satisfied that the authorized translation is correct. Percy, Hodgson, and Good, render rose—so does Diodati. Kitto says, 'we believe there can be little doubt that the rose is really intended by the Hebrew word. Even if in the general sense it should mean but a *flower*, we should still infer that, when applied in a particular sense it means a rose; for this would be according to the usage of the East. The extent to which roses flourished in and near Palestine may be perceived from the testimonies of travellers. Burckhardt was struck with the number of rose-trees which he found growing wild among the ruins of Bozra beyond Jordan; and informs us that roses are cultivated with much success in the gardens of Mount Sinai. Mariti found the greatest quantity of roses in the hamlet of St. John, in the wilderness of the same name. "In this place the rose-trees form small forests in the gardens."'

What the lily is, and what its colour, are questions much disputed. Kitto says, and as we think justly, that 'the Hebrew word seems to indicate that the lily of the valley was one of those plants wherein the num-

ber *siv* predominates in the distribution of their parts, as the crocus, asphodel, daffodil, lily, etc.' Dr. Lee defines the word the white lily, and Gesenius derives it from a root signifying white. There is no reason, however, to doubt that it signifies a red lily in chap. v. 13, nor any difficulty in supposing the name to be applicable to plants the same or similar in form though varying in colour. We had made various extracts on the lilies or supposed lilies of Palestine, especially regarding their colour, but as each traveller has a different lily with a different colour, we have drawn our pen through the whole, believing that we possess little real information on the subject.

7. *My love till he please*—עַר שְׂתַחֲבֶה עֵר אֶת-הָאֵהָבָה; Sept. τὴν ἀγάπην ἕως ὅν θελήσῃ; Vulg., dilectam quoadusque ipsa velit; Great Bible, till she be content herself; and to the same effect Wycliffe, Geneva, and almost all our English Bibles—so also Hodgson. But Bishop Percy, Good, the Editor of Calmet, and many of the literal interpreters, as well as most of those who interpret spiritually, agree with our authorized version in putting the words into the mouth of the Bride—the justice of which, as we think, admits of no doubt. The difficulty arises from *love* being feminine. This exact expression occurs four times—thrice in this charge and once in chap. viii. 7, 'many waters cannot quench love'; and the whole difficulty is removed by translating 'that ye disturb not love (or this love) till love itself please.' Editor of Calmet, 'if ye disturb this complete affection, till affection herself desire it'; and many others to the same effect.

9. *Looketh forth*—Percy, Good, etc., 'looketh in'—so also the Great Bible; the Bishops', showing himself; marg., flourishing. Some take it as representing the Bridegroom under the image of a plant growing through the latticed window.

12. *The time of the singing of birds*—יָמֵי הַזִּבְרִיר; Sept. καιρὸς τῆς τομῆς; Vulg., tempus putationis; Pagninus, putationis; Montanus, cantus. Lee gives the preference to—pruning. Hodgson, Percy, Good, give, singing. Wycliffe, the tyme of cuttin. Geneva, singing; but Coverdale and other old Bibles have 'the twyisting time is come.' Twyst is an old word for twig, and the meaning no doubt is, the time of pruning the twigs.

13. *Putteth forth*.—Percy, Good, Taylor, etc., sweeteneth.

15. *Take us* is masculine, just as the companions in viii. 13 are, and the same persons are addressed in both.

17. *Until the day break*.—Mercerus, whose authority is good for the sense of the Hebrew, renders this 'while the day breaks,' which throws great light on a passage otherwise difficult.

CHAP. III. 6. *Who is this*.—Because *this* is feminine, if we translate *who* we must refer the words to the Bride or the Church; but almost all the modern critics, Percy, Good, Taylor, etc., understand it of the palanquin—what is this, and so it includes both the Bridegroom and the Bride. Gesenius allows it to mean *what* but with a special reference to persons, which is the exact idea—What and who.

7. *Bed*.—Good, Taylor, etc., palanquin,—we have used litter, because it is a biblical word.

9. *Chariot*.—Our translators may not have meant a wheeled carriage by chariot; and we have therefore retained the word chariot in our transcription of the Song. Bacon seems to use the word in this sense; ‘he was carried in a rich chariot litter-wise.’—Johnson’s Dict.

10. *Bottom*.—Sept. ἀνάκλιτον; Vulg., reclinatorium.

Paved.—Vulg., constravit; Sept. λιθόστρωτον. Gesenius says it signifies a stone pavement.

CHAP. IV. 1. *Jaw bone of the ass* (see p. 270).—In the Organ Mountains of Brazil, the proprietor of a large stock of mules showed me a young ass on which he set a high value, at least £70 in English money. It was a strong animal, and to an unpractised eye clumsy; and on inquiring why he reckoned it worth so much he said, ‘Do you see what a jaw-bone he has got?’ ‘Yes, and what of it?’ ‘That is the one point we look to in the ass; contrary to the rule in all other animals, if the jaw-bone is large the ass is valuable.’ And, certainly, the jaw-bone was in this case of a prodigious size, so as at once to make it evident, that if it was such another that Samson found, it must have done him good service in the day of battle. The Lord delights to work through weak instruments; but whether it is the sling in David’s hand, or the jaw-bone of the ass in the hand of Samson, it is still an instrument that serves its purpose well.

2. *None barren*—Hodgson and Good, none bereaved; Percy, still better—and none hath lost its fellow.

5. *Lilies*.—Not necessarily ‘lilies of the valleys’ growing wild, because the twin roes have the aspect of being not quite in the wilderness and remoteness of nature, but rather as feeding in the king’s park or garden; where white lilies (if they are not native in Palestine, which we are far from concluding) though introduced at first by the hand of man, might be growing luxuriantly in the pastures.

12. כְּלֶה אֶחָתִי שְׁפֹסָה לְיָמֵי נְעוּרָיִךְ; Sept. κήπος κεκλεισμένος ἀδελφῆ μου νέμψη; Vulg., hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa; Wycliffe, a closed garden, my sister, spouse, and he interprets the garden of the land of promise. Dathe, who states that he follows Doederlein in this, translates Hortus conclusus est, mea soror sponsa; and explains *hortus*, locus commorationis duorum amantium. There are three reasons, each of them strong, and together quite conclusive, against inserting *is*. 1. In the space of these eleven verses ‘spouse’ occurs six times, and ‘sister’ five times (and nowhere else throughout the Song), and each time it is and must be translated as addressing the Bride, O sister, spouse. But it is quite contrary to the rules of translation, in a doubtful case to depart from the rendering fixed by the cases which admit of no doubt. Diodati and Ainsworth, who refer it to the Bride, are obviously aware of this difficulty, and with their usual accuracy

preserve the form of an address. Diodati, O sposa, sorella mia, tu sei; Ainsworth translates, a garden locked, my sister, my spouse, but explains that it is to be understood, thou art. 2. The Bride is frequently distinguished from the garden, and nowhere identified with it (see p. 52). 3. The concluding scene of the feast, 'Eat, O friends'—as various authors have noticed—renders it absolutely impossible that the Bride herself can properly be the garden enclosed and the fountain sealed, because the Bridegroom's friends are expressly invited by him to eat the fruits of this garden, and to drink of its fountain.

CHAP. V. 5.—*My hands dropped with myrrh upon the handles of the lock.*—Some understand this of the ointment from the hands of the King while knocking at the door.

The fastened lock I searched, sweet-smelling myrrh
From every bolt its precious moisture shed,
The rich perfume my lover's hands had left.—Mrs. ROWE.

But although critics as well as poets have adopted this view, we can see no ground for it.

6. *My soul failed when he spake*—Sept. ψυχὴ μου ἐξήλθεν ἐν λόγῳ αὐτοῦ; Vulg., anima mea liquefacta est, ut locutus est. We cannot present all the minutely varying shades of meaning that have been attached to these words. Let these four suffice.

(1.) My soul failed in consequence of what he had said, is perhaps the most common interpretation—at the remembrance of his words.—Good.

(2.) To this idea Mrs. Rowe taking a poetic liberty adds another link:—

Tired with my cold delay, Farewell he eries,
These killing words my fainting soul surprise.

(3.) A better thought is suggested by Ker, of the mind failing or being in a state of stupor while the Bridegroom was speaking, which is a very good interpretation.

Tum fores, ruptis mora nulla claustris
Obditis, reddo patulas amico;
Sed viam carpens citus advolarat
Præpete penna.

Verba dum fecit, mihi mens stupebat:
Quæsi, nusquam mihi sed repertus
Ille, responsum mihi nec vocanti
Reddidit ullum.

(4.) But we have no doubt that the true meaning of the passage is that the heart failed *till* the king should speak. So Pagninus 'dum loqueretur ipse,' and Fry 'my soul failed for his words.'

8. *I am sick of love*.—Mr. Macaulay in his History quotes in a satirical manner Bishop Patrick's paraphrase on this verse. In prosaic paraphrase there is ever a temptation to weaken by excessive dilution, but his commentary on this book is most excellent.

9. *What is thy beloved*.—Who is thy love above other lovers? or what can thy love do more than other lovers?—Coverdale.

10. *My beloved*.—My well-beloved, Geneva Bible.

11. *His locks are bushy*.—Sept. βόστροχοι αὐτοῦ ἰλάται; Vulg. comæ ejus sicut elatæ palmarum. Wycliffe—his hair as bunchis of palmys. The idea is much the same as curled or bushy.

14. *His hands are as gold rings*.—Diodati is the only translator we know who has rendered exactly Rev. i. 20, seven stars *on* my right hand—*sopra la mia destra*. See also Poli Synopsis.

Belly.—Coverdale, *body*; Bossuet—pectus etiam significat; e summa aut exteriori veste, pectoris candor apparet inter lapillos ipsi veste in-tectos. We have no doubt this is the meaning of the passage, and not the veins through the ivory skin. *Overlaid*.—The Hebrew word certainly means elsewhere, wrapped over as with a garment.

15. The three lines by Watts are from Williams' Exposition.

16. *This is my Beloved, and Friend*.—The Geneva Bible brings out rather more strongly the idea which the words contain, of one both beloved and loving—This is my well-beloved, and this is my lover.

CHAP. VI. 8. שְׁשִׁים הִקְיָה קְלָכֹת. Ainsworth translates, Threescore are they queens; Fry, Threescore are they the queens; Editor of Calmet, Sixty are those queens, and eighty those concubines.

10. *Who is she*.—Dudley Fenner, Percy, Good, and many others, interpret these as the words of the queens saying, 'Who is she?'

11. The great body of interpreters understand these words of the Bride—Wycliffe, Percy, Good, etc.

CHAP. VII. 1. Percy, Good, the Editor of Calmet, etc., interpret these as the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, or attendant virgins. Fry takes the whole passage of these daughters; but most introduce the King at the seventh verse, which creates complete confusion in the ninth—'for my well-beloved'—which is the term invariably applied to the Bridegroom; and they bring forward all manner of fancies to get rid of the difficulty. Dr. Lee in Heb. Lex. justly remarks, that the whole can only be understood by allegory.

2. *Navel—belly*.—Sanctius adduces many examples from various languages, of the parts of the body being employed to represent the corresponding portions of the dress.

6. *Galleries*.—Some refer it to the ringlets, but not so well.

CHAP. VIII. 5. *I raised thee up*—עִירָתִיךָ.—Notwithstanding the Masoretic points, Percy, Good, Editor of Calmet, and many of the best critics,

interpret these words of the Bridegroom; and the whole texture of the Song requires this interpretation.

10. *Favour*— שְׁלוֹם Peace. Becoming the Shulamite, so Sanctius.

13. *Thou that dwellest in the gardens*—הַיְיִשְׁבֶּת בְּגַנִּים. The Sept. makes this masculine ὁ καθήμενος ἐν κήποις—but is nearly if not quite alone in this; Vulg., quæ habitas in hortis. With the exception of the Septuagint, the Bibles, English, French, Italian, and all critics and commentators, so far as we know, interpret the words as an address from the Bridegroom to the Bride. An excellent little work recently published takes it as an address to Christ, and quotes Durham as holding that the companions are the angels. But there must be some mistake in transcribing the name, because Durham takes it as an address to the Bride, and renders it, 'O inhabitress of the gardens,' and says that 'by companions here are understood members of the Church.' Diodati interprets the companions of angels, but agrees with all the rest in receiving it as an address to the Bride.

NOTICE OF AUTHORS ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

Ἐξ τῶν πατρῴων εἰρημένον ἐν ταῖς ἡμέτεραις εἴροισιν ἐρμηνείαις, ἐστὶ δὲ τὸ
τοιούτων οὐ κλοπή, ἀλλὰ κληρονομία πατρῶα.

Theodorct.

Tolle quod hic nostrum est, interpretis erue sentes;
Caetera sunt violæ, lilia, myrrha, rosæ.

Arthur Jonston.

We make no attempt to give a Catalogue of the writers on the Song of Solomon—Rosenmüller's consists of a hundred and thirty-three—but merely to present a brief notice of such as we have consulted in the preparation of this volume. When we have referred to authorities it has generally been to the earlier writers, because as the stream widens it is almost impossible to trace the sources of the separate rivulets whose waters mingle in the common current of interpretation. We have therefore made little reference to many authors to whom we have been much indebted. At the same time, when our interpretation has been different from that which is most current, and we have afterwards found it in some writer of weight, we have been too glad to add the authority; although the view we presented had been derived simply from the Word itself, and had sometimes been in type before we had discovered it elsewhere.

The Targum or Chaldee Paraphrase on the Song of Songs—thought to have been composed in the sixth century, and to contain the opinions of the Jews of earlier ages. It interprets the Song as a pure allegory, representing the dealings of God with Israel. Amongst much that wanders widely from the purpose, it contains also materials more valuable than the reader would at first suppose. Dr. Gill presented a translation of it in the first Edition of his Commentary on the Song, which Dr. Adam Clarke has transferred into his Commentary on the Bible; for which we should owe Dr. C. a tribute of thanks, had he not placed it beside his own irreverent and injurious remarks on this Holy Book.

Origines in Canticum Cantorum—two homilies translated by Jerome, and four books translated by Rufinus, but neither reaching to the end of the second chapter; to which are added Procopiana Excerpta in Greek, extending to the end of the Song—very brief and fragmentary, but much more condensed than the preceding Latin translations. The allegoric interpretation of Origen, which is so faulty when applied to the other Scriptures, is most just in the Song of Solomon; and in the midst of much that is extremely diffuse, and with various views of truth that are obscure or faulty, these expositions contain a fullness of scriptural illustration, a genuine warmth of love to Christ, a freshness and originality, that seem to us to render them more valuable than the commentaries on this book by any of the other Fathers to which we have had access. Many of the noblest thoughts in those that follow are to be found in Origen, although the wide range of disquisition in which he indulges sometimes serves to bury them.

[*Philo Carpathius* in Cant. Cant.—is not in the more common collections of the fathers, and we have not seen it. It occupies a prominent place in all the catalogues on the subject, but is seldom quoted. Sanctius however refers to it frequently.]

Gregorius Nyssenus in Cant.—in fifteen homilies, which are full of earnest practical religion, but too diffuse as expositions; almost all that is expository in these homilies is found in the following.

Tres Patres—Expositio Cant. Cant. collecta ex Sancti Gregorii Nyssae, Sancti Noli, et Sancti Maximi Commentariis. This exposition, commonly entitled Tres Patres, is very good, and being condensed, is more serviceable in the way of exposition than the fuller but more diffuse treatises.

Theodoretus Cyri Episcopus in Cant.—embraces the whole book, which is not the case with many of the other Fathers. It is a judicious and valuable exposition, and is made great use of by Bishop Patrick. It is said to have been written with the view of counteracting the exposition of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the only one of the ancient Christian writers whose name has survived by whom the Song of Solomon has been interpreted literally. He is stated to have denied the allegorical sense altogether, and to have expounded the book as referring to Solomon and an Ethiopian princess. Theodoret however does not name him or any other, but only refers to interpretations of that class.

Gregorius Magnus in Cant. With less vivacity of genius than some of the Greek Fathers, there is decidedly a clearer enunciation of the great doctrinal principles of Christianity. The two most distinctive features in his exposition are, a great expression of desire for the conversion of the Jews in expounding the passage ‘I have brought him into my mother’s house,’ which he interprets of ancient Israel; and the introduction of the Virgin Mary into the song, being the first of these expositions in which we have observed it; but it is only to the effect that ‘the crown

wherewith his mother crowned him' was the humanity which Christ derived from Mary—a view which contains no doctrinal error. Ambrose had previously applied this text in the same manner, and had also referred 'the voice of the turtle' to Mary; but our remarks are confined to works expressly written on the Song of Solomon.

Michael Psellus—Canticum Canticorum versibus civilibus explicatum—an explanation of the Song in Greek verse, written in a freer style of criticism than the earlier expositions; but we have not observed in it any founding of the Song on a literal basis. The Virgin Mary however is brought in most fully and zealously; and to the writer nothing can be more clear, than that she is 'the dove and the only one' in contrast to the surrounding multitude of queens and princesses. In the history of the Song it is much more easy to trace the entrance and progress of the Virgin Mary, than of Pharaoh's daughter, who has just as little right to occupy a place.

Bernardus Abbas Clarevalensis--has eighty-six sermons on the first two chapters, which contain many beautiful, rich, and profitable passages. In an article on the Song in Kitto's Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature, containing much valuable information on the subject, the writer states 'St. Barnard assigns to the book three senses—a historical, a moral, and a spiritual. He describes it as an agreeable and a figurative epithalamium, in which Solomon sings the mysteries of an eternal marriage; and among the moderns Bossuet observes that Solomon adduces as an example his chaste affection toward Pharaoh's daughter.' By which we conceive the writer of the article to mean, that Bossuet's idea is the same as Bernard's, and founded on it. But the passage which Bossuet quotes from that father, as presenting the whole foundation of the Song, implies in Bernard nothing more, as we understand it, than a spiritual marriage under a veil of outward figure; and unless we have quite misunderstood him, his historical meaning is exactly the same as Origen's, and signifies merely the external figure of the spiritual reality. Origen's words after his literal expositions are these: 'hæc continet historicum drama et propositæ fabulæ species, sed redeamus ad ordinem mysticam:' and he never introduces the remotest reference to the outward history of Solomon. Bernard's view appears to us to be exactly the same as Origen's.

There may have been oversight on our part, but we have not found in any of these ancient authors the remotest allusion to Pharaoh's daughter, and must confess ourselves quite baffled in a somewhat laborious attempt to trace her introduction into the Song of Solomon. Coming farther down, there is no trace of her in Wycliffe's Bible in the fourteenth century; the first time that we meet with her, and that merely in passing, is in some of the first printed Bibles in the sixteenth century; but from what source derived we have not had opportunity to ascertain.

MODERN AUTHORS.

ENGLISH BIBLES.—*Wycliffe, John, and his Followers*.—The Holy Bible. Oxford, 1850.—This contains two translations of the Bible in the fourteenth century. In the first the Song of Solomon is the same, so far as we have compared it, with one previously printed by Dr. Adam Clarke from an old manuscript; it is interlined throughout with the names of the speakers in the dialogue; it interprets the allegory of Christ and the Church; and the interpretation is in substance the same as that of all the early printed Bibles. The second and later of the translations published in this volume does not in itself differ widely from the first; but the notes are entirely different from those of all the other Bibles, and contain a most interesting illustration of the Song by the history of Israel down to the commencement of the seventh chapter, after which it is interpreted of the Christian Church.

Coverdale, Miles.—The Holy Scriptures, 1535.—This is a reprint of the oldest of the printed English Bibles containing the entire Scriptures; it is not accompanied by notes.

Thomas, Matthew.—The Byble in Englyshe (or Tyndale's according to Anderson), 1537—a noble volume in black letter, with the interpreting explanations in red through the whole of the Song, see p. 8. *Rycharde Taverner*.—The most Sacred Byble. London, 1537. The same as the preceding, so far as we have compared them. *Rycharde Grafton and Edward Whitechurch*, 1539.—The Byble in Englyshe. This is the 'Great Bible,' commonly called Cranmer's. *The Bishop's Bible*.—The Holie Bible; London, 1568.

These four Bibles are in the Library of the British Museum; the notes—or interlined headings, not of chapters but of verses and clauses—though the same in the general views presented, sometimes vary considerably in the particular passages; and both these, and the various turns given to the translation, are most useful and extremely interesting in the study of the Song of Solomon.

Barker, Robert (or Geneva Bible).—The Bible imprinted at London, 1603.—This is the date of the one before us, but it is one of the latest editions. It has excellent notes on the Song, as throughout the volume; the translation is nearer the authorized version than those preceding, yet still with considerable variety.

Wilcocks, Mr. Thomas.—Exposition upon the Booke of the Canticles. London, 1624.—Is one of those treatises which would be highly prized had it not been succeeded before any great lapse of time by others that are superior.

Sanctius, Gaspar, in Soc. Iesu Theol., 1616.—This is a quarto volume of nearly 400 pages of great learning and research, full of valuable and

interesting matter, throwing much light upon the book. The sentiments are modest and reverent, and for the most part just, his view of the Song being entirely spiritual. There is little introduction of the peculiarities of Popery. It is one of the most learned, complete, and in many respects most serviceable commentaries on the book.

Meercurus, Joannes, 1651.—Brief when compared with Sanctius, but valuable, and contains a full discussion of the original words, with constant reference to the Hebrew Doctors.

Diodati, Giovanni.—*La Sacra Biblia*, 1641.—His notes on the Song of Solomon are much more extended than on the rest of the Bible, and form a regular commentary. They are thoroughly admirable, clear in exposition, rich in doctrine, beautiful in expression.

Ainsworth, Henry, 1639.—Solomon's Song of Songs in English Metre, with Annotations.—We place this exposition beside Diodati's, because we always class them together as amongst the most valuable commentaries on the Song of Songs. They are both brief when compared with other expositions, they both express at once clearly what they mean, they seldom disappoint and never weary the reader. Yet are they very different—Ainsworth, who is thoroughly spiritual, excels in giving light on the critical meaning of the words—Diodati, who is a thorough critic, excels in bringing out clearly their spiritual power and beauty. We have not classed Ainsworth amongst the metrical expositors, because his metrical version of the Song, which is of little value, occupies little space or prominence, except in the Title of the Book. It is in these respect entirely different from the verses of Fleming, into which the whole thoughts of the writer on the passage are often thrown.

Robotham, John.—Exposition on the whole book of Solomon's Song—sold at the Golden Ball in Aldersgate Street, 1652. Not equal to Durham's as a practical commentary, but contains much valuable matter.

Guild, William, D. D.—Love's Entercours between the Lamb and his Bride, Christ and his Church; or a clear explication and application of the Song of Solomon. London, for Ralph Smith, at his shop at the Bible in Cornhill, 1658. Practical and experimental; we cannot say that we have found it throw any remarkable light on the book not to be obtained elsewhere.

Durham's *Clavis Cantica*—published after his death, with a recommendation by Dr. Owen dated 1669—is too well known and too highly prized to need any notice from us. It does not contain the superabundant materials of Gill, but is much more distinct in giving the expositor's own interpretation, and is extremely rich as a practical and experimental treatise.

De Veil, Caroli Mariæ.—*Explicatio Literalis Cant. Cant.* London, 1679.—A small volume with a good deal of interesting matter.

Collinges, John, D. D.—The intercourse of Divine Love betwixt Christ and his Church, or the particular believing soul metaphorically expressed

by Solomon in the first chapter of the Canticles. London, 1683.—Full of learning and of materials gathered from many sources, with less expression of his own opinion upon the congregated mass. But 909 quarto pages are too much on *one* chapter of any book.

Cantica, Canticorum, Chymice Explicata—is the title of a book in the Library of the British Museum, but the book itself in the lapse of years has gone astray; and we can form no conjecture of its contents except from the words of Carpzovius, that ‘the Alchymists dream that under the the shadow of his words Solomon has delineated (in the Song) the whole secret concerning the Philosophers’ Stone.’

Symon, Patrick, Bishop of Ely, 1694.—His commentary on the Song is of great value, notwithstanding Mr. Macaulay’s satirical reference and quotation. In brief space he throws much light upon it both from his own judicious thoughts, and from the Christian Fathers and Hebrew Doctors.

Bossuet, Jacques-Benigne, Eveque de Meaux, 1690.—This treatise has given rise to more imitations and more discussions, than any other work on the Song of Solomon in modern times. The criticism one is disposed to pass upon it, is much affected by the light from which it is viewed. If we rise from reading the insipid and noxious puerilities of the literal interpreters, we are refreshed by the beauty of thought, the elegance of expression, the loftiness of sentiment, in Bossuet himself; and by the important and edifying passages he cites from the Fathers. There is extremely little introduced that is of a Popish character; and the reference to the Virgin Mary is confined to a single paragraph at the end of the commentary, showing how the Fathers applied some of the passages to her. But they are only such as those we have referred to in Ambrose and Gregory; and the general current of the allegorical exposition is excellent.

On the other hand, this celebrated work has wrought much mischief in the Church; and affords one of many proofs that genius and learning will only lead ourselves and others astray in interpreting the Word of God, without humility, spirituality, and scriptural soundness of mind. The daughter of Pharaoh whom he has so magnified has become a stumbling-block and a snare. Lightfoot, before Bossuet, expresses indeed the same view and very decidedly, but he does not write a book upon it; and Carpzovius maintains that Bossuet has merely served up again the offensive speculations of Grotius (*idem recoctum*), of whom he allows that he would have been one of the greatest of men (*vir summus*) if he had let the Divine oracles alone. In this light all the talent and learning of Bossuet have only served with many to bring down among the things of earth the high and holy mysteries of the Word of God, by giving the lustre of his genius and his name to an interpretation of this book which is entirely groundless, most injurious to scriptural truth, and sadly subversive of spiritual edification.

It is rather curious that when Bossuet's division into seven days is so famous and so often referred to, it should never be quoted correctly—at least in any instance that has come under our notice. In Commentaries, Biblical Introductions, and Cyclopædias, his sixth day, which commences at chap. vii. 11, is always quoted chap. vii. 12—which a reference to our English Bible would have shown to be without meaning. His fifth day commences at chap. vi. 10 in our Bibles, which in Bossuet's is chap. vi. 9; and one of the first transcribers seems to have concluded without examining, that on the same principle he must take a verse in advance on the sixth day likewise, and to have been followed by all the rest.

Calmet, Augustin, 1726.—*Commentaire littéral sur le Cantique des Cantiques*.—His views are substantially the same as Bossuet's, dividing the Song into seven or eight days. His plan leads him to enlarge more on external description, but he equally maintains and illustrates the spiritual sense. He is remarkably candid—as an instance of which we may note that he more than once refers to our Scottish Expositor Durham. He says of Grotius—and no doubt justly—that he has taken liberties with this book which horrify (*font horreur*) all who have a respect for the Scriptures, and is severe on Theodore Beza for translating it into Latin verse the cast of which he holds to be irreverent.

Marckius, Joannes, Amsterdam, 1703.—A commentary of nearly a thousand quarto pages—his own remarks are often excellent, but the volume is rendered bulky by long quotations which he often rejects as not to the purpose. It is not equal to Sanctius in elucidation of the text, nor sometimes in elevation of tone in the interpretation.

Gill, John, D. D., 1724.—This exposition of the Song of Solomon is a vast treasure of varied learning, sound doctrine, and spiritual experience; but it is neither sufficiently condensed, nor is it so digested by the author as to present to the reader a clear idea of his own interpretation.

Lowth, Bishop.—His Prelections we notice for the sake of the notes of *Michaelis* on the Song of Solomon, appended to the twenty-first Lecture. Michaelis upholding the inspiration of the book, maintains its purely literal meaning, does not agree with those who regard it as Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, asserts that he can find no marriage ceremony in it throughout, and holds it to be the expression of the chaste affections of married persons. But in order to account for the absence, the longing, and the various incidents that occur, he is obliged to have recourse to the complicated relations that arise out of polygamy—surely no likely subject for sacred song.

Percy, Bishop.—Song of Solomon newly translated. London. 1764. (Published without the author's name.) We have nothing to add to our previous remarks on this author (p. 25), except to state that they refer exclusively to his work on the Song of Solomon.

The Song of Solomon Paraphrased, with remarks on the late New Translation. Edinburgh, 1775. This is partly in refutation or rather

correction of Bishop Percy's, for it adopts not a few of his general ideas, while it justly censures his tone and many of his remarks.

Harmer.—Outlines of a New Commentary on Solomon's Song, 1768.—This is one of the most ingenious, modest, and interesting of all the treatises on the outward sense of the Song—for while the author not merely allows but advocates the allegorical meaning, he scarcely enters on it. His theory on which he strenuously maintains that the whole structure of the Book rests, is extremely wild, viz., the introduction of Pharaoh's daughter into Jerusalem, with the rivalry of Solomon's former Jewish Queen, whom he introduces largely into the Song to account for its scenes and incidents. The darkness of complexion in Pharaoh's daughter, he accounts for by her journey through the desert from Egypt at an unseasonable time of the year.

Hodgson, Bernard, D. D., Oxford, 1786.—A good translation, and accompanied with critical notes on the Hebrew, and with quotations from the classics. The mystical sense of the Song is never referred to—not denied, still less acknowledged. A curious instance of the minute improvements which learned divines would sometimes make on the authorized translation, occurs in chap. vi. 9 'my dove is but one,' which Dr. H. renders 'she alone is my pidgeon'—an emendation which, if our older dictionaries are correct, errs in grammar as well as in orthography and taste, for they define dove to be 'a female pigeon' (Bailey).

Dathius, Joannes Augustus, 1789.—Strongly repudiates every sense but the literal; his critical notes are brief, but frequently useful.

Williams, T., 1801.—Not characterized by any remarkable features, but a useful work, in which the spiritual sense is both acknowledged and brought out.

Good, Dr. John Mason.—Song of Songs or Sacred Idyls, 1803.—A work of great beauty, in which the author allows and defends the allegorical, but confines himself to the literal sense. He 'regards the entire Song as a collection of distinct idyls upon one common subject, and that the loves of the Hebrew monarch and his fair bride.' There is no light thrown on what is higher and spiritual, except by adducing mystical poems of other nations;—his translation in prose is excellent, departing very slightly from that of our Bible; but his poetic translation, like all others on a purely literal basis, loses in our judgment every spiritual idea or possibility of its application. In a critical point of view succeeding commentators are much indebted to him; but had the interesting author written his work on the Song at a later period of his life, after his religious views underwent a great change, it would, no doubt, have been a much more valuable gift to the Church of Christ. Dr. Good refers frequently to 'the beautiful Italian version of Melesegenio,' which is often mentioned by subsequent expositors; it is however in none of the libraries to which we have had access; and although we had hoped to see it through the kindness of Dr. Good's family, his copy could not be discovered amongst his books.

Dr. G. while not dividing the Song into days, maintains 'the unity and mutual dependence of the whole fasciculus of idyls of which the Song of Songs consists, contrary to the opinion of Signior Melesegenio.'

Davidson, William, Esq., 1817.—When we found this excellent author interpreting the Song of Solomon of the Christian Church from the time of John the Baptist, we apprehended that in our historical sketch we had been ploughing a field that was already reaped; but his view is entirely different, for he places the death of Christ in the first chapter. It is the work of a most painstaking author, full of reverence for the Word of God, and with a heart entering deeply into his sacred subject.

Fry, Rev. John.—Canticles. Second Edition, 1825.—This volume has had a wholesome influence in redirecting Christian attention to a neglected portion of Scripture. Its arrangement is founded on that of Good, but goes further regarding the entire distinctness and independence of the various Songs or Idyls—a theory which forms the foundation of Mr. Fry's Exposition. Although this basis is quite untenable the work itself is excellent, the tone pure and elevated, the simply parabolic or allegorical character of the Song maintained throughout. What we chiefly desiderate is the spiritual interpretation of such descriptions as that of the Beloved as the Chief among ten thousand; which are regarded as either having never been designed to convey special instruction in their particular features, or having left us without any key to their interpretation; while we would receive those descriptions as forming the most important and instructive parts of the Song of Solomon.

Rosenmulleri Scholia in Salomonis Canticum, 1830.—He has a most candid and most conclusive disquisition on the nature of the book, proving that it is one Song throughout, that it cannot be understood literally, and must be a pure allegory. In his subsequent notes, indeed, he confines himself to the explanation of the outward sense, but he states his own opinion to be, that it is a mystical communion between Solomon and Wisdom, which would be the exact truth if he acknowledged wisdom to be the Eternal Word of God.

Taylor, Charles.—Fragments of Calmet, 1838.—His translation and arrangement of the Song of Songs—relating merely to its outward structure as Solomon's marriage festival—evinces great research, abundant ingenuity, the utmost delicacy and refinement of feeling, along with a most exuberant and credulous fancy in filling up an external scenery and narrative.

Meditations on the Song of Solomon, London, 1848.—This little treatise is the production of a mind highly appreciating and enjoying the spiritual character of the Song of Songs, as well as having thoroughly studied the book. We were not a little gratified to find that the author divides it regularly into five parts exactly as we have done, without the slightest difference; but he does not enter into his reasons for these divisions.

The Song of Solomon compared with other parts of Scripture, 1852.—A volume full of Christian simplicity, unction, and fervour; the reception

of which by the Christian public, demanding already a fourth edition, proves that where the Spirit of God rests upon the heart and mind and breathes through them, as in the case of Miss Newton, the testimony of that Spirit is not without a response.

Macpherson, Peter, A.M., Edinburgh, 1856.—The song of Songs shown to be constructed on architectural principles. We trust that the ingenious author's reverence for the Word of God, and literary acquirements, will yet be of good service in the exposition of Scripture. But his supposition, that this Song consists of verses written round an archway, is so entirely gratuitous, that it is only misguiding and deceptive. Were he to take the human figure instead—were he to write the lines on the shoes, the skirts of the garments, the girdle, the arms, the shoulders, and the head—he would have the same passage of misapplied Scripture to proceed upon, and might form a fancy sketch much more complete.

Kitto, John, D. D., in his Pictorial Bible, presents much useful information on the Song of Solomon. In his introduction he proves that the Persians (whose example had long ago been adduced) and the modern Egyptians employ language not unlike the Song of Solomon for religious purposes. This is a species of evidence to which we confess we were disposed to attach little value, but on further consideration we find it not unscriptural. 'Hath a nation changed their gods which are no gods? yet my people have forgotten me;'—have the nations composed mystical songs to their gods which are no gods; and will God's own people cast away their spiritual Song, the work of the Holy Ghost, as if it were the mere utterance of earthly affections? Dr. K. adds 'It seems to us that Dr. Pye Smith's objection would have ceased could he have seen the allegorical interpretation to be so natural, as we cannot but think that it now appears.' A little more knowledge, then, would have set Dr. Smith right; and in its absence a little more humility would have served the same end still more effectually.

Burrowes, Rev. George, Philadelphia, 1853.—The excellent work of Dr. Burrowes is specially fitted to remove the prejudices of men of taste against the Song of Solomon, as the medium of spiritual communion between the soul and Christ. We welcome it as a valuable contribution to us from our Transatlantic brethren, and we rejoice in its reception in America being such as to have called forth already another edition.

METRICAL AUTHORS.

Fenner, Dudley.—The Song of Songs translated out of the Hebrew into English meeter, with as little libertie in departing from the words as any plain translation in prose can use; and interpreted by a short commentarie. Middleburgh: Richard Schilders, Printer to the States of Zealande, 1587. This is a faithful and an excellent translation, accompanied by an admirable exposition. British Museum.

The Loves of the Lord with his Troth-plight Spouse: Contained in the

Song of Songs, paraphrased with soliloquies and petitions upon every division. The anonymous author of this rare work is obviously well acquainted with the original; the Paraphrase is much superior to most metrical paraphrases that have followed it; along with spiritual apprehension there is often true poetic beauty, with liveliness and variety of verse. The copy in the Edinburgh College Library appears to be the only one in our public libraries; for it is not mentioned in the Archdeacon of Cashel's valuable Catalogue of English Bibles and works on the Bible and parts thereof.

Jonston, Arthur (Physician to Charles I.)—Cant. Sol. Paraphrasis Poetica—has been extolled for its beautiful Latin.

Ker, Joannes (Professor of Greek in Aberdeen), Paraphrasis Gemina. Edin., 1727.—Though a century later we have placed this Paraphrase beside Jonston's, as being of the same character. It is written in equally elegant Latin, and appears to us more fully to attain the spirit of the original, which is extremely difficult in such compositions. His notes are admirable, and clearly bring out the author's view of the spiritual character of the Song.

Woodford, Samuel, D.D.—Paraphrase on the Canticles in English Rhythms, printed for John Baker at the Three Pidgeons and Henry Brome at the Gun in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1679.—This Paraphrase is copious and rather diffuse; it includes both the outward scene and the spiritual meaning; is a superior composition to many others of the paraphrases, but as a whole is not very remarkable either for spiritual fullness or poetical beauties.

Lloyd, John, A.M. (Vicar of Holy Roode).—Song of Solomon in a Pindaric Poem. London, 1682.—He criticizes Fenner and Ainsworth as fit only for the days of the Ballet of Ballets, but we cannot say that we think his own effort successful, though he has paid sufficient attention to the smoothness of his verses. We were about to copy four tolerable lines when the Library of the British Museum closed for the day.

Barton, William, M.A., late Minister of St. Martin's in Leicester.—The Canticles Paraphrased. Fourth Edition. London, 1688. (Printed in his 'Six Centuries of Hymns and Spiritual Songs.') As we have quoted the other poetical paraphrases in some part of our exposition, we subjoin four lines:—

The watch and those who walk the round,
That me in this affliction found,
Smote, wounded, and profanely tore
The sable veil my sorrow wore.—CHAP. V. 7.

Fleming, Robert, Jun., V.D.M.—The Mirror of Divine Love unveiled in a Poetical Paraphrase of the high and mysterious Song of Solomon, printed for John Salusbury at the Rising Sun in Cornhill, 1691.—The Bride is interpreted only of the individual soul, and that one of dis-

tinguished grace. The notes are excellent; and from our high respect for the writer (author of the celebrated treatise on the Rise and Fall of Papacy), we have read the paraphrase more than once with the view of presenting an extract, but have found no lines that do justice to the author. The Song is first turned into Pindaric verses, and then the whole book presented again in a common metre for singing, and in a less enlarged Paraphrase. This last metrical Paraphrase was the work of a single day!

Mason.—Song of Songs, First turned, then Paraphrased in English Verse. Twelfth Edition. London, 1725.—The most remarkable feature in this Paraphrase appeared to us to consist in the number of editions it had gone through, from which, however, we apprehend that we must undoubtedly have overlooked some of its excellencies.

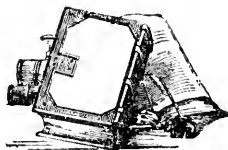
Rowe, Mrs. Elizabeth.—Paraphrase on the Canticles. 1739.—The breathings of a poetic temperament combined with spiritual affections, but too ardent for our taste.

Erskine, Rev. Ralph.—Poetical Paraphrase. Second Edition. London, 1742.—Full of the marrow of the Gospel, with abundance of uncouth lines and many verses in succession without any special excellence, but ever intermingled with most noble and divine passages.

Francis, Ann.—Poetical Translation, 1781.—Flowing verses, with no excess of thought; chiefly profitable as showing how impossible it is even for a pious and cultivated mind, like that of Mrs. Francis, to make a merely literal version or paraphrase the medium of spiritual communion. She frames her translation on Harmer's most fanciful hypothesis of an Egyptian and a Hebrew Queen, is said to have been assisted in her work by Parkhurst, and holds the allegorical and spiritual meaning as the great design of the Song.

Graduate of Oxford, Late.—Metrical Version of the Song of Solomon. London, 1845.—The fruit of a thoughtful, cultivated, and poetic mind, and containing some beautiful passages. It brings out the literal beauties of the Song, but does not exclude the spiritual sense—though introducing it too sparingly, or rather perhaps too seldom.

Metrical Meditations on the Canticles. Second Edition. 1856.—A work of deep thought, patient labour, spiritual discernment, and poetic taste.



A

METRICAL VERSION

OF

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

BY

WILLIAM SKINNER RENTOUL.

*(Written for the American edition of Rev. Moody Stuart's Exposition of
that beautiful inspired Song.)*

WM. S. RENTOUL, PHILADELPHIA.

1869.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The author of this metrical version has aimed at presenting a literal translation of THE SONG, so far as practicable consistently with the freedom necessary to metrical compositions.

In the occasional *filling up*, or paraphrastic expressions, he has assiduously studied to present the sense and interpretation conveyed in the admirable Exposition to which this version is appended. How far he has succeeded in these aims it is for the candid reader to form his own judgment. He trusts that this effort to present to the American reader a pleasing and agreeable modern Metrical version of this the chief of the inspired songs contained in God's Word—and hence most fittingly titled 'The Song of Songs'—will, at least, be favourably received by all who love that Word; and that it may contribute in some degree to endear this charming spiritual song more to God's dear people.

In the division of *The Song* into *five* Canticles, and in the opening and closing of each of these, he has followed Rev. Moody Stuart, sustained as he is by the general consent of expositors; as will be observed by reference to the table forming page 28 of this edition. He has further distinguished the five canticles, by clothing each in a varied metrical vestment; thus relieving the composition from the monotony incident to a uniform structure of verse. The captions of the subdivisions are the same as in the Exposition.—

W. S. R.

Philadelphia, May, 1869.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year of our Lord, 1869, by
WILLIAM S. RENTOUL,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

IN FIVE CANTICLES.

The Song of Songs, of Solomon.*

CANTICLE I.

(CHAP. I. 2.—CHAP. II. 7.)

Subject.—THE BRIDE SEEKING AND FINDING THE KING.

<i>The Anointed King:—His Kiss—His Love—His Name—His Chambers.</i>	<i>The Bride's Portrait of Herself:—The Tents of Kedar, and Curtains of Solomon—The Sun-burnt Slave-girl.</i>
1 With kisses of his mouth Let Him me fondly kiss! For better is Thy love than wine; More grateful far it is.	5 I black yet comely am, Ye Salem's daughters, know: Dark as the tents of Kedar; fair As Solomon's curtains show.
2 Because of savour good Thy precious ointments prove, Thy name is—Ointment pouréd forth: Hence Thee the virgins love.	6 O look not on my face; It black and swart is turned: Because the sun hath looked on me, My skin is parched and burned.
3 Me draw! thee to o'ertake Right gladly run will we: The King into his chambers hath Me brought, his bride to be.	7 Displeased and chafed with me My mother's children were: To keep the vineyards me they set; Mine own not kept with care!
4 In Thee will we be glad, And joy all joys above; We more than wine thy love regard: The upright ones Thee love.	<i>The Shepherd whom the Soul loveth:— His Pasture and Noontide Rest—The</i>

* See Exposition, p. 3.

Footsteps of the Flock, and Feeding-Place of the Kids.

8 Tell me, Love of my soul!
Where Thou thy flock dost tend:
Tell me thy place of noon-tide rest,
That thither I may wend!

9 For why, O why, should I
My footsteps turn aside
To follow thy companions' flocks,
And by their tents abide?

10 Now if thou dost not know,
Of women thou most fair!
Go, trace the footsteps of the flock;
See where their footprints are.

11 I charge thee thus go forth,
And lead thy kids with thee,
And feed them near the shepherds'
Let this thine answer be. [tents:

The Chariots of Pharaoh—The Chains of Gold—The Beautiful Crown.

12 O thou my Love! behold
I have thee likened most
To prancing chariot-horses swift
In Pharaoh's mighty host.

13 Thy cheeks, they comely are
With rows of jewels bright;
Thy neck, it beauteous also is,
With chains of gold bedight.

14 For thee we now will make
A golden-circled crown
With silver studs, thy head to grace
And speak thy Lord's renown.*
or,

14 [For thee we now will make
A golden-circled crown
With studs of silver, thee to grace
And spread thy fair renown.]

The Spikenard at the Feast—The Myrrh in the Bosom—The Camphire in the Vineyard.

15 While at his table sits
The King, with banquet spread,
My spikenard doth on all around
Its fragrant odours shed.

16 A bunch of Myrrh to me
Is my belov'd most dear:
Within my bosom it shall rest,
Through darksome night to cheer.

17 To me my well-belov'd
Like to a cluster shows
Ofragrant camphire, which within
En-gedi's vineyards grows.

The Green couch of the Shepherd King.

18 How fair art thou, my Love!
Most fair! with eyes of doves.—
Behold thou 'rt fair! my lov'd one;
Yea pleasant in thy loves.

19 Also our couch is green;
Our house, its beams are made
Of goodly cedar; and with fir
Our galleries are laid.

The Rose of Sharon—The Lily among Thorns—The Apple-tree in the Wood.

20 Lo! I am Sharon's Rose,
And th' Lily of the vales.—
As blooms the lily midst the thorns,
And sweetest scent exhales;

21 So is my Love amid
The daughters' num'rous throng.
As th' apple-tree 'mong trees, so is
My Loved one sons among.

22 Beneath his pleasant shade
Delighted I did rest;
And the fair fruit upon his boughs
Was sweet unto my taste.

* That is, it was a nuptial crown—see Stuart's Exposition *in locum*.

The Banquet-hall:—The Banner of Love—The Banquet of Wine—The Hands of the King—The Hinds of the Field.

23 He to his banquet-house
 In kindness did me bring ;
 And over me his banner, Love,
 In graceful folds did fling.

or,

23 [He to his banquet-hall
 In kindness hath me led ;
 And his unchanging love hath
 placed
 For banner o'er my head.]

24 With flagons filled with wine

O stay my swooning soul!
 With apples comfort me! through
 I'm faint and sick withal. [love

25 Beneath my fainting head
 His left hand he doth place;
 While his right hand encircles me
 Within his fond embrace.

26 Ye Salem's daughters, hear!
 I give you solemn charge:
 Ev'n by the roes and by the hinds
 That roam the field at large

27 I charge you, stir not up
 Nor rudely wake my Love;
 Do not disturb his rest, until
 Himself be pleased to move!

CANTICLE II.

(CHAP. II. 8.—CHAP. III. 5.)

Subject.—THE SLEEPING BRIDE AWAKED.

The Roe upon the Mountains—The Glimpse through the Lattice.

1 Hark! My beloved's voice I hear!
 Behold he comes! he comes to me;
 Leaping upon the mountains high;
 Skipping upon the hills so free!

2 He's like a roe or a young hart:
 Lo! now behind our wall he's seen;
 Now through the windows doth he
 look,
 Showing himself through lattice-
 screen.

The Garden of Flowers—The Song of Birds—The Voice of the Turtle.

3 Thus to me my Belovéd spoke;
 Rise up, my Love, my fairest one!
 Come forth with me; for winter's
 The rain is over and is gone; [past;

4 The lovely flowers on earth appear:
 The singing time of birds is come;
 The turtle's voice is heard again,
 Again he makes our land his home.

5 The fig-tree her green figs puts forth;
 The vines with tender grapes
 smell sweet;
 Arise, my Love! my fair One, come!
 Come forth with me the spring to
 greet!

*The Dove in the Clefts of the Rock (or, Christ Comforting his Afflicted Church:)
 —The Foxes that Spoil the Vines.*

6 O my sweet Dove! that hidst thyself
 Now in the rock's deep clefts, anon
 In secret eaves of mountain crags,
 Afflicted, desolate, and lone;

7 O let me see thy countenance,
 And let me hear thy plaintive
 voice;
 Forsweet thy voice, and fair thy face:
 Come forth and cause my heart
 rejoice!

8 The wily foxes take for us,
 Nor let the little foxes 'scape,
 For they the vines despoil: for now
 Our vines put forth the tender
 grape.

The Bride's interest in her absent Lord
 —*The Bride longing for break of Day.*

9 My well-belovéd One is mine
 And I am his—his darling one:
 He 'mong the lilies feeds his flock,
 Defends, and guides them, as his
 own.

or,

9 [My well-belovéd One is mine.
 And I am his, his darling spouse:
 Among the beauteous lilies he
 Delights to feed and loves to
 browse.]

10 Till day shall break } and sha-
 [or,] While breaks the day* } dows flee,
 Return, my loved One, and be thou
 Like to a roe or a young hart
 On Bether's hills of rocky brow!

The Midnight Search—The King found,
and Conducted Home.

11 By night, while on my couch I lay,

I sought Him whom my soul doth
 love;
 Besought and prayed his quick re-
 turn—
 In vain, alas! my call did prove.

12 Now will I rise and thread, said I,
 The city's streets; its ways ex-
 plore;
 To seek the darling of my soul—
 In vain!—will he be found no
 more?

13 But while my fruitless search I
 pressed,
 I met the watchmen of the night:
 To whom I said—Saw ye my Love?
 O have you seen my soul's delight?

14 I passed them but a little way,
 When lo! I found my darling
 spouse!
 I held him; would not let him go;
 But brought him to my mother's
 house.

15 Ye daughters of Jerusalem!
 Now list and ponder this my
 charge!
 Even by the wild and timorous roe—
 And hinds, that roam the field
 at large,

16 I charge you that ye stir not up,
 Nor break the slumbers of my love!
 Do not disturb his sweet repose,
 Until himself be pleased to move!

CANTICLE III.

(CHAP. III. 6.—V. 1.)

Subject.—THE BRIDEGROOM WITH THE BRIDE.

The Bridal Procession:—The Pillars | *—The King's Chariot—The Crown of*
in the Desert—The Angelic Swordmen | *Espousal.*

* See Note on this verse, in Appendix of the Exposition.

1 Lo! Who* is this who comes
 Up from the desert drear;
 While in his princely train
 Pillars of smoke appear;
 Perfumed with myrrh and frankin-
 cense,
 All odours merchant-men dispense?

2 Behold his palanquin—
 'Tis Solomon's, Prince of Peace!
 Three scores of valiant men
 To guard it do not cease:
 Threescore of the most valiant ones,
 Chosen from Israel's warrior sons.

3 Sword-bearers all they are,
 In war expert and skilled;
 His sword upon his thigh
 Each wears, prepared to wield
 His weapon for his King's just right,
 In case of sudden fear by night.

4 King Solomon for himself
 A fitting chariot made;
 Of choicest cedar-wood
 From Lebanon's leafy shade;
 Its pillars purest silver showed,
 Its seat was made of burnished gold.

5 Of princely purple hue
 Its covering above;
 While, lo! the midst thereof
 Was wholly paved with love
 For th' daughters of Jerusalem—
 For such as fear and love his Name.

6 Ye Zion's daughters! now
 Go forth, the King to see,
 Ev'n Solomon, with the crown
 Of glorious majesty,
 Placed by his mother on his head
 That nuptial day his heart was glad.

*Portrait of the Bride by the King:—
 The Spotless Bride—The Doves' Eyes
 —The Goats on the Mountain—The
 Shep from the River—The Scarlet*

*Fillet—The Broken Pomegranate—
 The Tower of Armoury—The Twin
 Roes.*

7 Lo! thou art fair, my Love!
 Most beauteous and most fair!
 Thine eyes like eyes of doves
 Within thy locks appear:
 As goats on Gilead's mount are seen,
 Such is thy flowing hair, I ween.

8 Thy teeth like sheep smooth-shorn,
 Just washed in streamlet bright:
 Each of them beareth twins,
 Most seemly to the sight;
 None barren nor bereaved is there,
 But all well-matched and lustrous
 are.

9 Thy finely chiselled lips
 Are like a scarlet thread;
 How comely is thy speech!
 Thy temples, overspread
 By thy fair locks, a modest glow.
 Like grained pomegranate broken,
 show.

10 Thy neck like David's tow'r
 Built for an armoury;
 A thousand bucklers stout,
 Trophies of victory,
 Upon it hang—a glorious sight!
 All of them shields of men of might.

11 Thy graceful-swelling breasts
 With two twin-roes compare;
 In form and youthful grace
 Exactly matched which are;
 Among the lilies fair they feed,
 That shed their beauties o'er the
 mead.

*The Bridal Evening:—The Bride-
 groom's Farewell--The Garden of
 Spices—The Spices of the Garden—
 The Betrothing Supper.*

12 Until the day shall break

* Or, What and Who? See Note in the Appendix of the Exposition.

- And darkling shades flee hence,
To th' mount of myrrh I'll go,
And hill of frankincense:—
Lo! thou art fair, my Love! all fair!
No spot thy comeliness doth mar!
- 13 From Lebanon, Come, my Spouse!
With me, from Liban white:
Look from Amana's top,
Shenir's and Hermon's hight:
Where rav'ning lions' dens abound,
And prowling leopards' haunts are
found.
- 14 O thou, my Sister-Spouse!
Thou ravished hast my heart;
One of thy suppliant eyes
My soul, as with a dart,
Hath overcome; one chain of gold
Of thy neck, doth me captive hold.
- 15 How precious is thy love,
My Sister-Spouse, to me!
'Tis better far than wine
Though newly pressed it be:
The odours of thine ointments, more
Than spices all, I hold in store.
- 16 Like honey-comb, my Spouse!
Thy lips drop words of grace;
While underneath thy tongue
Honey and milk have place:
Thy garments grateful odours shed,
Like scent by fragrant Lebanon
spread.
- 17 A garden that 's inclosed,
My Sister-Spouse! come, see!
Whence streams shall issue forth,
Imparting life to thee:
A spring shut up and unrevealed;
A fountain now securely sealed.*
- 18 Thy plants, my Sister-Spouse!
That in this garden grow
Are now all fully ripe,
- With beauty all aglow:
Pomegranates red, of grateful zest;
With all fruits pleasant to the taste.
- 19 Camphire and spikenard there,
And saffron, sweets dispense;
With calamus, cinnamon,
All trees of frankincense;
There, too, are myrrh and aloes
found;
Yea, there all spices choice abound.
- 20 A life-restoring fount
Forth from this garden flows;
A well of living streams
Its pleasant glades disclose;
Refreshing to each weary one,
As streams from snow-capped Le-
banon.
- 21 Awake, O north-wind! wake,
Upon my garden blow;
And come, thou genial south!
And cause its spices flow:—
Let my Belovéd now make haste,
And to his garden come, and taste
His pleasant fruits, before they
waste!
- 22 Into my garden, lo,
My Sister-Spouse, I'm come!
My myrrh I gathered have,
My spices I've brought home:
The honeycomb supplied my food,
With honey dropping from the
wood.†
- 23 My wine I've also drunk,
My wine and milk—for thee:
Eat, then, O ye my friends!
Thus show your love for me:
Drink, O belov'd! this bridal wine;
Drink freely, for it seals you mine;
Yea, drink abundantly—it seals Me
thine!

* See Matt. xxvii. 60, 66; also the Exposition.

† See 1 Samuel xiv. 26.

CANTICLE IV.

(CHAP. V. 2.—CHAP. VIII. 4.)

Subject.—THE BRIDEGROOM'S WITHDRAWAL AND RE-APPEARANCE; AND THE BRIDE'S GLORY.

- The Night after Sunset:—The Waking* 5 I oped to my Belov'd—
Sleep—The Sorrowing Search for the
King. But my Belov'd was gone!
 Displeas'd, he had withdrawn,
 And left me all alone!
 I listened for his voice
 With trembling soul—in vain!
 In vain I searched and call'd;
 He answer'd not again!
- 1 I heavy was with sleep,
 Yet was my heart awake:
 'Tis my Belov'd that knocks!
 Thus with his voice he spake:
 'My Sister, ope to me!
 My Love, my Dove, most chaste;
 My head and locks with dew
 Are fill'd:—come, ope with haste!
- 2 Then spoke my foolish heart
 To my Belov'd one:
 'My coat I have put off;
 How shall I put it on?
 My feet I've newly washed,
 And bathed my snowy skin.
 I now my feet should soil
 If I should let thee in.'
- 3 But now my well-belov'd
 Put gently forth his hand
 The fast'ning to unbar—
 Who entrance might command!
 Then did my heart relent;
 My bowels for him yearned:
 I rose to ope for Him
 I had so coldly spurned.
- 4 And lo! while I the bolt
 Was hast'ning to undo,
 My hands with fragrant myrrh
 Did drop, my fingers too:
 The handles of the lock
 Were with its sweets bedew'd—
 Fit emblem of that love
 Which now my soul imbued.
- 6 While my Belov'd I sought,
 The city's watch me found;
 They grievously me smote,
 And sorely did me wound:
 The keepers of the walls
 With mocking did me hail;
 They falsely me reproach'd,
 And tore away my veil.
- 7 Ye Salem's daughters, hark!
 Now list ye while I speak:
 If my Belov'd ye find
 Whom in distress I seek;
 I charge you thus for me
 Your love and kindness prove—
 O tell my well-belov'd
 That I am sick of love!
- The Beauty of the Beloved:—The White*
and Red—The Chieftainship—The
most fine Gold—The Raven's plumes
—The Doves by the Waters—The
Aromatic Flowers—The Lilies—The
Gold Rings—The bright Ivory—The
Marble Pillars—Lebanon and its Ce-
dars—The Sweetness—And entire
Loveliness.
- 8 Tell us, we thee beseech,
 Of women thou most fair!

- What is thy well-belov'd
More than all others are?
What more is thy Belov'd
Than others that are dear,
That thus thou dost us charge
Should he to us appear?
- 9 O would ye also know
Him whom my soul doth love;
And why he is to me
So dear all else above?
My well-belov'd is white
Commixed with ruddy glow:
Among ten thousand chiefs
The chiefest He, I trow.
- 10 His head is finest gold;
And bushy are his locks:
His black and glossy hair
The raven's plumage mocks:
His eyes as ring-doves gleam
While they in streamlet lave;
Milk-washed and fitly set,
Like doves 'mid sparkling wave.
- 11 Like banks of flowers his cheeks,
Which shed a rich perfume;
Like towering trellises
Of flowers in beauteous bloom*:
His lips like lilies are
Of brightest crimson hue;
They drop with fragrant myrrh,
Refreshing as the dew.
- 12 His hands are covered o'er
With rings of gold most fine
Encasing beryl-gems
That with rare lustre shine:
His body white and pure,
Like polished ivory bright:
His girdle sapphires blue,
Most comely to the sight.
- 13 His legs for stable strength
Like marble pillars show,
On golden sockets set—
- So do his sandals glow:
Like glorious Lebanon
Majestic is his mien;
Ev'n Lebanon arrayed
With lofty cedars green.
- 14 All sweetness is his mouth;
Grace from his lips doth flow:
Yea, wholly lovely is
My well-belov'd, I know:—
Ye Salem's daughters kind,
This is my Friend and Love;
In whom my soul delights
All other joys above.
- The Bridegroom's Brief Return:—The
Morning Twilight—Last Portrait of
the Bride by the King—The Bride's
Portrait by the Queens.*
- 15 We pray thee, tell us now,
Of women thou most fair!
Unto what secret rest
Doth thy Belov'd repair:
Say, whither thy Belov'd
Hath gone and turned aside;
For with thee will we go,
And seek him far and wide.
- 16 My well-belov'd is now
Down to his garden gone:
To smell its fragrant flowers,
And feed its fruits upon:
There doth he lilies eull;
'Mong them he loves to feed:—
I am for my Belov'd,
And He is mine indeed!
- 17 Thy beauty, O my Love!
With beauteous Tizrah vies:
Like lovely Salem thou
Art comely in mine eyes:
As when an arméd host
Its banners both display,
So thou the foe dost strike
With terror and dismay.

* See Burrowes' translation and Com. *in locum*.

18 O turn thine eyes from me,
 For o'er me they prevail!
 Thy hair is like the goats
 From Gilead mount that hail:
 With flocks of sheep new-washed
 Thy pearly teeth compare;
 Each of them beareth twins,
 And none bereaved is there.

19 Thy temples' modest blush
 Between thy looks is seen,
 Like grained pomegranate's glow
 When it hath broken been.
 Thrice twenty queens there are,
 With princesses a throng—
 Fourscore—of lesser rank,
 And countless virgins young:

20 But lo! my Spouse is one,
 My dove, my undefiled;
 Her mother's darling she,
 Her choice, her only child:
 The virgins her beheld
 And blessings on her shed;
 The queens and princesses
 Her praise abroad did spread.

21 Oh, who is she, say they,
 That looketh forth as morn:
 Fair as the silv'ry moon
 Whose beams the night adorn;
 Clear as the radiant sun
 Diffusing purest light;
 Dazzling like heav'nly hosts
 With starry banners bright?

*The Garden of Nuts—The Chariots of
 Ammi-nadib—The two Armies.*

22 To the nut-garden I
 Went down to gather fruits;
 To view the valley plants
 Put forth their verdant shoots:
 To see if budding vines
 Bespoke the opening year;
 Whether pomegranate blooms
 Betokened spring-time near.

23 The while its nuts I culled
 And marked these signs of spring,
 Before I was aware
 My soul was on the wing:
 I suddenly was set
 On chariots swift and strong,
 Ev'n of Ammi-nadib—
 The King's angelic throng.*

24 Return, O Shulamite!
 Return! return! they cry;
 Ev'n Salem's daughters, while
 My soul did mount on high
 Return to us, return,
 That we may look on thee!—
 In th' Shulamite, lo! what?
 Two hostile hosts you'll see!

*Portrait of the Prince's Daughter:—The
 Beautiful Shoes—The well-set Jewels
 —The Goblet not wanting Wine—
 The Wheat railed with Lilies—The
 Twin Roes—The Tower of Ivory—
 The Fish-pools of Heshbon—The
 Tower of Lebanon—Carmel—The
 Purple—The Galleries.*

25 How beauteous are thy feet,
 In glitt'ring sandals seen,
 O prince's daughter fair!—
 Thy jewelled zone, I ween,
 Which all thy vests unites
 In one compacted band,
 How skilfully 't is wrought
 By cunning workman's hand!

26 Thy girdle-clasp appears
 Like to a goblet round
 Well-filled with choicest wine
 With mantling rubies crowned:
 Thy brodered vesture fine,
 Of golden tissue bright,
 Is like a heap of wheat
 Railed round with lilies white.

* Acts ii. 1-4.

27 Thy graceful breasts appear
 Like two twin beauteous roes;
 Thy free and stately neck,
 Like ivory tower it shows:
 As Heshbon's fish-pools deep
 Hard by Bath-rabbim's gate,
 So do thy clear, full eyes
 Reflect thy heavenly state.

28 Like Lebanon's border tow'r
 Damascus-ward that looks,
 Is thy intrepid face
 No enemy which brooks:
 Like Carmel's gorgeous mount
 Thy head-dress on thy head,
 Its glittering jewels bright
 Their various colours shed.

29 Thy lovely golden hair
 Which doth thy head adorn
 With purple drops is stained,
 Like crown by martyr worn:—
 Lo! how the king, detained
 In th' galleries, doth gaze;
 Charmed with his faithful spouse,
 Held captive with amaze!

The Betrothing of Jerusalem's Daughters:—The Palm-Tree—The Wine that awakes the Sleeping.

30 How beautiful thou art,
 O loved and loving one!
 How pleasant for delights;
 The graces all thine own!
 Like upright, stately palm
 Thy stature and thy mien;
 And like its clusters ripe
 Thy full-formed breasts are seen.

31 Lo now, resolved, I said
 I'll to the palm-tree go;
 I'll clasp its fruitful boughs,
 Its precious fruits will know:
 Now are thy swelling breasts
 Like clusters of the vine;
 Like fragrant citrons sweet
 Thy breath, of scent divine.

32 And from thy palate forth
 Flows thy melodious voice,
 Like wine for My Belov'd,
 The purest and most choice,
 Which freely forth is poured
 For fainting souls and weak,
 Causing their sleeping lips
 Gently to move and speak.

The Seal of Espousal—The Garden in the Fields—The very Brother.

33 I my Belovéd's am,
 And his desire am I:—
 Come now, my well-belov'd!
 To th' country let us hie:
 Let us go forth, and midst
 The villages abide:
 To th' vineyards let us speed
 At early morning tide.

34 There let us view the vines,
 If yet their buds appear;
 Whether the tender grape
 Bespeaks the coming year;
 If the pomegranates green
 Their crimson blooms display:
 There I'll give thee my loves
 In converse by the way.

35 Lo, there the choicest flowers*
 Their fragrant odours shed,
 And at our gates in store
 All pleasant fruits are laid:
 Ripe fruits, both new and old,
 Which I have kept for thee,
 O my Belovéd One!
 Who art so dear to me.

36 O that thou wert to me
 Ev'n as a brother near,
 That sucked one mother's breasts,
 Me to protect and cheer!
 When thee I found abroad
 I'd openly thee kiss,
 And none could blame impute,
 Or say I did amiss.

* See Burrowes' Translation and Commentary.

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| <p>27 Yea, I would thee conduct
 Into my mother's house,
 Where thou would'st me instruct,
 My loving, tender Spouse!
 There would I cause thee drink
 My grateful spiced wine;
 And my pomegranate juice,
 The choicest, should be thine.</p> | <p>38 His left hand, to support,
 Beneath my head should be;
 The while his right hand should
 Embrace and comfort me:—
 Ye Salem's daughters, hark!
 Do not disturb nor break
 The rest of my Belov'd,
 Till he be pleased to wake!</p> |
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CANTICLE V.

CHAP. VIII. 5-14.)

Subject.—THE LITTLE SISTER.

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| <p><i>The Relying Weakness—Its Signet-like Adhesion—Its Death-like Strength and Grave-like Cruelty—Its Vehement Flame and Quenchless Fire—Its Priceless Worth.</i></p> <p>1 Lo! Who is this who comes
 Up through the wild's rough
 On her Belovéd One [scenes;
 Who trusting leans!</p> <p>2 Under the citron-tree
 Thee gently I did raise.
 There thee thy mother bore
 In gracious days.*</p> <p>3 O set me as a seal
 Thy loving heart upon;
 A seal upon thine arm,
 My Lovéd One!</p> <p>4 For strong as death is love;
 Relentless as the grave
 Is jealousy—from which
 No arm can save:</p> | <p>5 Its ardent, flaming zeal
 Is as hot coals of fire:
 'T is like the lightning-flash
 Of God's own ire.†</p> <p>6 No waters love can quench,
 However great they be;
 No floods can love o'erwhelm
 In the deep sea.</p> <p>7 Though one would give for love
 His treasured hoard most prized,
 Ev'n all his wealth; it would
 Be quite despised.</p> <p><i>The Closing Song—The Little Sister—The Vineyard Transferred—The Last of the Four Mountains.</i></p> <p>8 We have a sister young;
 No mother's breasts hath she:
 No children dandled are
 Upon her knee.‡</p> |
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* This latter clause is addressed to Christ by the Bride, the church, and refers to his incarnation for her salvation; while the former clause of the stanza is spoken by Christ to the church, and has reference to his manifestations of love to her. The apple or citron tree is, throughout the Song, an emblem of *love*. (See Fausset's Com. *in locum*.)

† 'The fire-flame of God.'—*Old Translation*.

‡ Isaiah lxvi. 12.

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| <p>9 What shall we do for her
 In her betrothal day,
 When spoke for she shall be?
 We pray thee, say.</p> <p>10 Now, if she be a wall
 Upon it will we build
 Turrets of silver, which
 Adornment yield.</p> <p>11 And if a door, we will
 Inclose that palace gate
 With during cedar boards
 Of princely state.*</p> <p>12 A palace wall am I;
 My breasts like turrets round:
 Then with Him I was one
 That favour found.</p> <p>13 In Baal-hamon hath
 King Solomon, Prince of Peace,
 A goodly vineyard, leased,
 To yield increase,</p> <p>14 To keepers; every one
 Was for the fruit to bring</p> | <p>A thousand silver pieces
 To the king.</p> <p>15 My vineyard, even mine,
 Will all my care receive;
 Thou shalt, O Solomon!
 Thy thousand have:</p> <p>16 While those its fruits who keep
 Shall have, for their just share,
 Two hundred pieces, to
 Reward their care.</p> <p>17 O thou, my Bride! who dost
 Within the gardens dwell;
 And who their flowers and fruits
 Dost tend so well;</p> <p>18 The true companions hark
 And to thy voice give ear:
 Cause Me to hear it too—
 In prayer sincere!</p> <p>19 Make haste, my well-belov'd!
 As a roe or young hart be;
 From th' spicy mountains haste
 And come for me! †</p> |
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* Psalm cxliv. 12.

† Rev. xxii. 20.



