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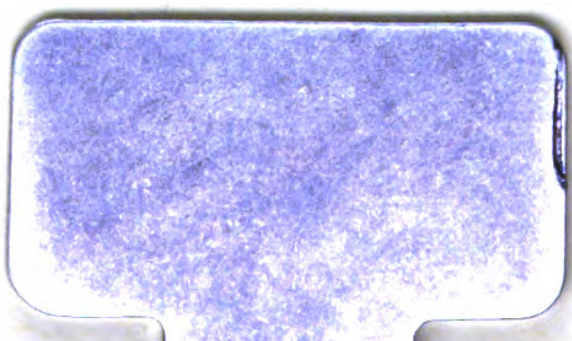


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Wounded
in the house
of His friends.



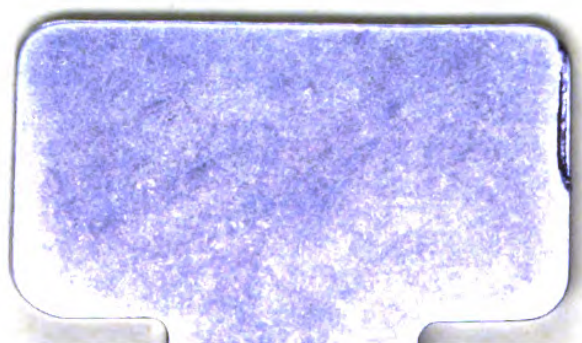
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WOUNDED
IN THE
HOUSE OF HIS FRIENDS.

BY
F. M.

“ I was wounded in the house of My friends.”—ZECH. xiii. 6.

Second Edition.

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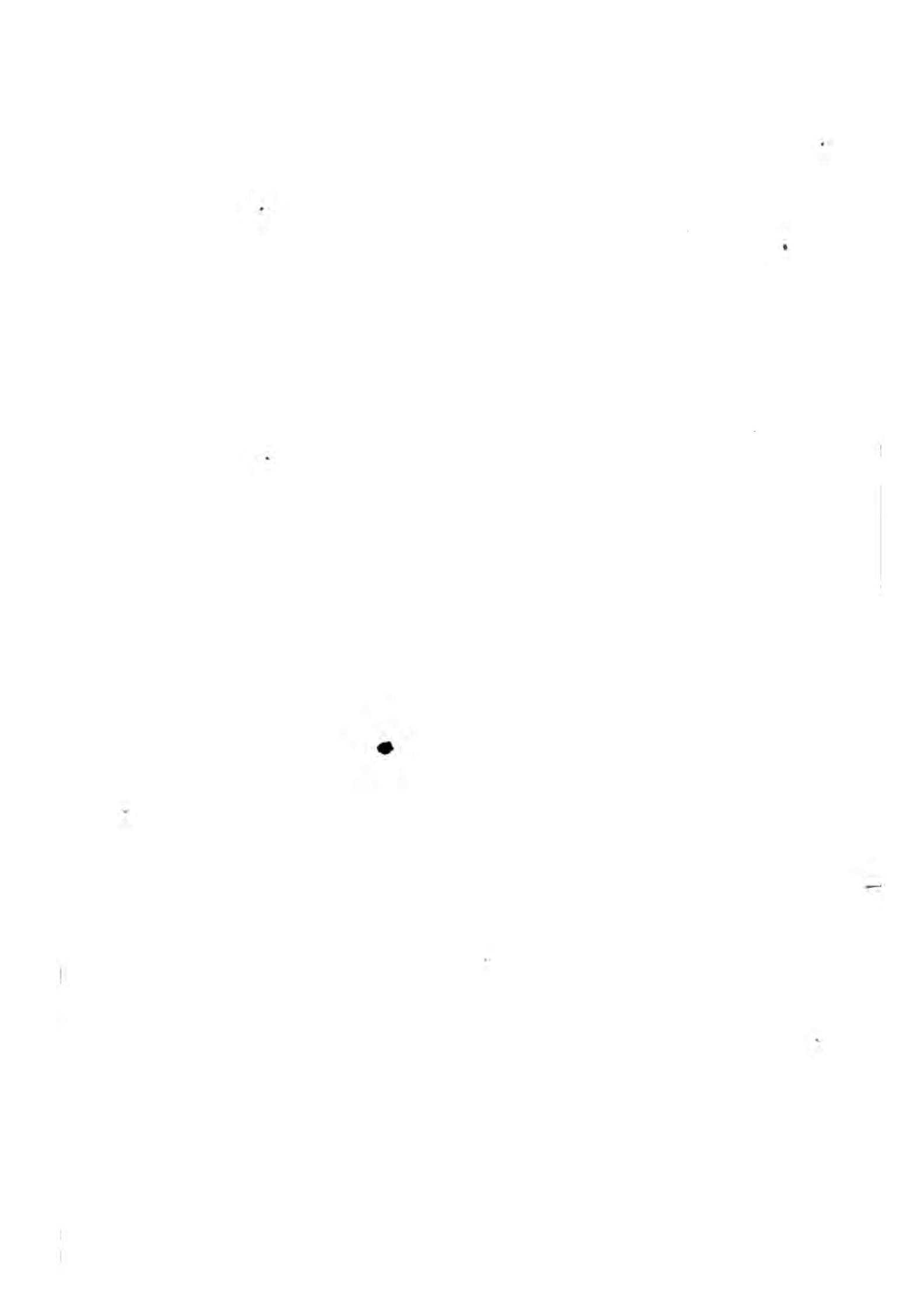
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P R E F A C E.



IT is a matter of controversy whether the words chosen for the title of this book referred originally to the Lord Jesus or not. In either case they seemed to the writer an appropriate title under which to group a few thoughts on certain passages which open out to us the heart of God, and show how deeply wounded *He* often is in the house of *His* friends.



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CHAPTER I.

“I was wounded in the house of My friends.”—ZECH. xiii. 6.

“A WOUNDED spirit who can bear?” When the wounded one is one of ourselves there is healing, there is binding up, for “HE healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds;” but who shall bind up the wounds which His people inflict on the Lord?

Wounded in the house of His *friends*. It was not an enemy, then He could have borne it, He would scarce have felt it, but it was *thou*—it was *I*—His friend. It was we, whom He had taken into fellowship with Himself—it was we, on whom He had concentrated all His love—it was we, in whose house He loved to abide—it was *we* who inflicted these wounds.

Oh! when we think of it we are so ashamed that we almost determine never to return to Him again, since after having enjoyed communion with Him, we have used the power which only a friend

has, to wound deeply. How often have we thought it would be better not to be so much His friend, if we only fall again and again, and grieve Him whom we love. The coldness and indifference of a friend is felt keenly, that of an acquaintance scarcely at all. And yet when we come to think of it, there are cases of human love and friendship where the love is so intense that coldness and indifference would be utterly impossible. Does not this fact serve to heighten the enormity of our sin, when we know how, times without number, we have been indifferent to and distrustful of Him whose love was so great that He died for us, and was forsaken of His Father because He took upon Him our sin. And why did He do this? Because He wanted to have us—you and me—for His *friends*. And now—His “friends” have wounded Him.

Yes, we have wounded Him. And we cannot forgive ourselves for having treated this Loving One so basely. In our despair we give up reading His Word, it is no longer a delight; for we say to ourselves—“What is the good of my reading His Word, finding out what He would ‘say to me’—if I *do* it not?” We try to pray, but our prayer seems beaten back on us, and at last we give it up, we seem just simply *unable* to offer a

petition to Him whose heart we know we have wounded.

And we think this keeping away from Him, this condition of utter crushedness, is the best thing we can do by Him. We keep away because we do love Him still, and because we think if we get near again, it will only be to wound Him again later on, when we have been admitted perhaps to even closer fellowship than ever before. We think this deep sadness, this punishing of ourselves, is *love and humility*. Is it? Shall I tell you what it is? It is *enlarging the wound* of that Loving One, it is piercing His heart ever more and more deeply. Love delights to have its object near; and all the time we are keeping away from Him we are grieving Him sorely. Whenever we have this desire to keep away from our wounded Lord, we may be sure that we are listening to Satan's voice, not that of the Holy Spirit, for He draws us *to Christ, never away from Him*. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Surely He suffers enough pain when the vast majority reject Him; "will *ye* also go away," and walk no more with your Friend?

We crave for forgiveness, but do not *believe* He has given it us; we keep away, whereas His one

desire is to have us back close to His heart again. Do you think it does not grieve Him to see us disbelieving the fulness and freedom of His forgiveness? Do you think that loving heart does not yearn for your return—does not, if I may speak after a human manner, *ache* at the sight of your self-imposed misery? Is He less tender now than He was when “His soul was *grieved* for the misery of Israel” (Jud. x. 16)?

If you are at this moment keeping away from Him because you know you have “wounded” Him, will you not go to Him at once and tell Him all your grief, pour out all your sorrow, all your sin, and ask, nay, *claim* His forgiveness? “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John i. 9). Yes, hasten back, run into those outstretched arms that shall clasp you once more to His heart. Though we can wander from our Father’s home, we never can wander from His love. His is an “everlasting love.” Our love to Him grows faint and cold, but His to us is always burning and intense. As one has quaintly described it —“His love is always at boiling point.” Alas! how often ours is below zero! “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” Our God knows no variableness, neither

shadow of turning. He who says in Malachi i. 2, "I have loved you," goes on to say, "I change not" (iii. 6). He loved us all through our wandering, all through our coldness and indifference and forgetfulness.

And now, you have told Him all, have you not? And you believe He has forgiven you. Do you? Honestly? Is there no lingering suspicion that "He *must* punish me for it—He must show His displeasure by taking me only *very slowly* into His favour again —He must show me that I cannot sin with impunity?" Then you think of Him as one who grudges His forgiveness. Is this possible—from Him who is perfect Love? If you do not believe you are forgiven, you make God a liar, and declare Him to be *unfaithful* and *unjust*. Not only is there full and free forgiveness for you, but there is something more—He is faithful and just "*to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

A child that is fully and freely forgiven is wholly restored to favour again. The past is blotted out, the sin no more remembered. He admits us once more into fellowship with Himself.

When we have once repented of and confessed our sin, let us no more look at self, even to loathe it, but let our heart be occupied with His love whose fervour is such that He cannot bear to have

us—sinning and grieving Him though we so often do—at a distance from Him. Shall not the contemplation of His lovingkindness draw us nearer to Him than ever before? Since “the Lord delighteth in thee,” wilt thou not abide with Him, and let Him satisfy His heart at thine in the secret place of love?

“*Blessed* is he (literally—Oh! the happiness of him) whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. *Blessed* is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. . . . I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and *Thou forgavest* the iniquity of my sin.” Well may we go on with the Psalmist to exclaim—“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart” (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 5, 11). “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities. . . . As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him” (Ps. ciii. 2, 3, 12, 13). “If My people, which are called by My name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I

hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin" (2 Chron. vii. 14). He does not do things by halves —when He forgives, He forgives *completely*. "I will cleanse them from *all* their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me" (Jer. xxxiii. 8). Over and over again He thus assures us of His full, free forgiveness.

If you are not believing, and therefore not accepting, His forgiveness, you are bringing dishonour to His name. He expects the result of His forgiveness to be that His people shall be to Him "a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them" (ver. 9).

"Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities: and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. vii. 18, 19).

God sometimes speaks to His people so touchingly in His Word, it is a marvel that the pathos of some of these heart-cries of His does not break

our hearts. Let us consider together a few of His exceeding plaintive utterances—utterances wrung from Him when “wounded in the house of His friends;” let us together “sorrow a little for the burden of the King of princes.” Often He complains of them to their prophets or leaders; but I think when He most keenly feels their coldness and their long forgetfulness of Him, He more often addresses His wanderers personally. He feels their conduct too much to complain to others about them—He must take them aside, alone with Him, and plead with them with all the plaintiveness of wounded love. And sometimes it seems as if He could not even tell *them* all He feels about their treatment of Him—sometimes these utterances seem like a soliloquy, a smothered, scarcely audible cry, that *will* burst from His lips because His heart can no longer keep His conflicting emotions of deep love and deep sorrow pent up; they must have a vent.

Of all the tones the human voice is capable of, there is none so moving, so heart-breaking to the hearer, as the low, scarcely audible accents of deep emotion. Loud-toned reproaches frequently harden us, loving ordinary tones fall often on accustomed, heedless ears, but these low, smothered accents—unmistakably *wrung* from a heart full of the pain

of wounded love—these arrest our attention, these are the accents that touch us, that melt our hearts when we find it is we who have caused this anguish of soul. And if these tones from our fellow-men move us, shall we remain unmoved when God Himself is the utterer?

CHAPTER II.

“My people would not hearken to My voice: and Israel would none of Me. . . . Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways!”—Ps. lxxxii. 11, 13.

WHO can fathom the anguish of that cry? “MY PEOPLE would not hearken to My voice: and Israel would none of Me.” There is always such tender love in these two words “My people,” His name for His redeemed; again and again they tell of His joy, His delight, His pride of possession. Perhaps you scarcely realise what delight He has taken in possessing *you*, and when He has acquired His longed-for treasure, with what loving pride He says “Thou art Mine” (Isa. xliii. 1). Strange! that He should think so much of possessing us, and yet we possess HIM, and think little of our wealth.

If you are wandering from Him at this moment, does not this cry which the pain of an unrequited

love has wrung from the lips of your Saviour bow down your whole soul with sorrow? will it not bring you now—at once—to His feet in tears and repentance? Have you no pity for Him to whom your coldness, your absence from His side, has caused such grief?

Oh His grace! Oh the depth of His love! Let us read it once more as presented to us in this very Psalm. “Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee. . . . If thou wilt hearken unto Me; there shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god” (ver. 7-9). He knows what trouble cherishing idols in our hearts will bring us, and so He beseeches us, with all the earnestness of love, to hearken unto Him, for if we do so HE will take care there shall no strange god be in us. If we were only willing and obedient, and would always keep our eyes and our heart fixed on Jesus, it might be said of us too, “*The Lord alone* did lead him, and there was no strange god with him” (Deut. xxxii. 12).

Hear Him as He mourns over us with tender yearning—“Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways!”

“Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

If we had only trusted Him, and put our cause

unreservedly into His hands, HE would have "*subdued*" our enemies, and turned HIS hand against our adversaries! But if we *will* wander from Him and let other lords have dominion over us, He sometimes gives us the rein and lets us have our own way—"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."

Still His heart is aching for them, knowing all the misery that following their own hearts' lust will bring them. They are free agents—His love is so large, so majestic, that He will not force them to concentrate their love on Him, though He longs that they would do so; they are at liberty to give Him their whole love and devotion, or they are at liberty to give it all to the world. Only they must take the consequences. In the one case, He brings them into "a wealthy place;" in the other, they must "suffer loss."

And we have used the liberty He has in His majesty given us, we have used it *to wound and grieve Him*. "Greater love hath no man" than His, and yet "*Israel would none of Me.*"

CHAPTER III.

“I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness. . . . What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? . . . My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. . . . My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. . . . It is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.”—JER. ii. 2, 5, 11, 13, 19.

“I REMEMBER *thee*.” Is it not enough to make us ashamed of our forgetfulness of Him? He never—not even for one moment—forgets us. And if we did but set our love on Him and become absorbed with Him, as He has set His love on us, and is, so to speak, wrapped up in us, we could never forget Him. It is not only us that He remembers, He remembers too “the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness.” Yet what a cold thing our

love for Him was, even at its best and warmest. Does not this declaration of His remembrance of it, show us, more than anything else perhaps, how He prizes our love, what a value He sets on it, how He longs and watches for it, and desires to possess it entirely? His own is so great that He cannot be indifferent as to how much of ours we will give Him in return. He so desires it, that, as one has said, His heart is melted when He has it, He is overcome by it—"Turn away thine eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me" (Song of Sol. vi. 5). We have thought our God invincible, but here we find there is one thing that can overcome Him—our love! And He delights to be thus overcome. Shall we not let Him be? Shall we not cry with the Psalmist, "I *will* love Thee, O Lord?"

In those days when our heart did burn with love for Him, "Israel was holiness unto the Lord" (ver. 3). It is when our love is waning, that holiness loses its beauty and desirableness in our eyes.

And how is it that all this has changed? He Himself wants to know; He asks what iniquity we have found in Him, that we are gone far from Him, and have walked after vanity—emptiness—a thing of *nought*. He brought us into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness

thereof; "but when ye entered, ye defiled My land, and made My heritage an abomination" (ver. 7).

Yes, it has been so: men have seen that ours was a good land and a desirable, and have been on the point of entering it themselves, because they saw when they looked upon us that we had found it a fruitful and good land. But a little time elapses, and they look on us again, and lo—we have "defiled the land." Sin has come in, we have had contact with dead things, and everything that we touch becomes defiled (Num. xix.) And thus we have hindered some who would have entered. "Wherefore I will yet plead with you. . . . Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." Yes, "MY PEOPLE" have been worse than the heathen, for they hold to their gods, which are yet no gods, but MY PEOPLE have changed their glory (a reality, not a nothing, Isa. lx. 19; Zech. ii. 5) for that which doth not profit.

This forsaking the living God and letting idols usurp His place in our hearts, is the initial step which leads many and many a one into the broad paths of sin. Thus it was in Jer. v., where we find Him saying (ver. 31): "The prophets prophesy falsely,

and the priests bear rule by their means, and MY PEOPLE *love to have it so*; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" Truly "a wonderful and horrible thing" (ver. 30). "Thou hast fretted Me in all these things." "Among My people (those whom He had set apart to be holy unto Himself) are found wicked men" (ver. 26).

Well may He exclaim "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, for My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Could you believe anybody would be so foolish? Fancy hewing out *broken* cisterns! *Hewing* them, too, deliberately expending their labour and strength on them; forsaking the fountain of living waters (than which there could be no better, no fuller supply) for cisterns that cannot possibly hold water! Not only have we no water wherewith to refresh our own weary, thirsty souls, but we can no longer water others. He has provided that we shall have a continual exhaustless supply for ourselves, and that from us shall flow rivers of water for others (John vii. 38).

We have gone into captivity, and the enemy has spoiled us. "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself *in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy*

God when He led thee by the way?" Have you in heart gone back into the world? "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt?" Ah! what indeed? Thou hast been redeemed *out of* Egypt, and thy Redeemer brought thee into the good land He had promised thee (Deut. vi. 23; Ex. vi. 6-8).

It is indeed "an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." No wonder when we wake up to find how we have grieved Him who treasures up the memory of our love in time past—no wonder that, in our shame and grief at having so wounded *Him*, "we lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us, for we have sinned against the Lord our God" (iii. 25); no wonder that we cry, "There is no hope; no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (ii. 25; xviii. 11, 12)—I elected to follow "strangers," and now after them must I go: no wonder that we exclaim "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but IN ME is thine help." There *is* hope, there is "lifting up" (Job xxii. 29), even for you, dear reader. Do you say—How can there be? In this fact, that He who remembers our love, *forgets our coldness*. He remembers us, but will not remember our sins (xxx. 34; Heb. x. 17). Our gracious God

has a wonderful memory, He remembers some things so long, and forgets others so quickly! He remembers just the best things about us, and forgets the things we are ashamed of, sorely though we have wounded Him in them. In case it should be possible that through the multitude of our sins, He should be, as it were, almost obliged to remember them even against His will, He says, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember thy sins. *Put Me in remembrance*" (Isa. xliii. 25, 26). He remembers what is done by their enemies to the hurt of His people (1 Sam. xv. 2), and visits it on their oppressors. He takes into consideration our weakness, He graciously remembers that we are dust (Ps. ciii. 14). A woman can forget her child, yet will not He forget us (Isa. xlix. 15). "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me" (Isa. xliv. 21,— "all thy lovers have forgotten thee," Jer. xxx. 14). Though we have behaved so basely towards Him, this is all He has to say to us! And then there is more still, He not only "hearkened and heard them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name," and spake to one another about Him, but He had a book of remembrance written to commemorate what had so delighted Him to hear (Mal. iii. 16).

Shall we not cry from the depth of our heart,
 “ We will remember Thy love ” (Cant. i. 4)? “ The
 desire of our soul is to the remembrance of Thee ”
 (Isa. xxvi. 8).

My Lord, dost thou remember this of me,
 My love, so poor, so cold?
 Oh, if I had but loved Thee more!
 Yet Thou hast pardoned. Let me pour
 My life’s best wine for Thee, my heart’s best gold
 (Worthless, yet all I have), for very shame
 That Thou shouldst tell me, calling me by name,—
 “ Thus saith Jehovah, I remember thee! ”

My Lord, dost Thou remember this of me,
 The day of Thine own power?
 The love of *mine* espousals sweet,
 The laying wholly at Thy feet
 Of heart and life, in that glad, willing hour?
 That love was Thine—I gave Thee but Thine own,
 And yet the Voice falls from the emerald throne,—
 “ Thus saith Jehovah, I remember thee! ”

My Lord, dost thou remember *this* of me?
 Forgetting every fall,
 Forgetting all the treacherous days,
 Forgetting all the wandering ways,
 With fulness of forgiveness covering all;
 Casting these memories, a hideous store,
 Into the crimson sea, for evermore,
 And only saying, “ I remember thee! ”

WOUNDED IN THE

My Lord, art Thou indeed remembering me?

Then let me not forget!

Oh, be Thy kindness all the way,

Thy everlasting love to-day,

In sweet perpetual remembrance set

Before my view, to fill my marvellous gaze,

And stir my love, and lift my life to praise,

Because thou sayest, "I remember thee!"

F. R. HAVERGAL.

CHAPTER IV.

“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me.”—LAM. i. 12.

“Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.”—JOHN v. 40.

“What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”—ISA. v. 4.

SOME may have taken up this book, and felt that so far there has not been a word for them—for they know nothing about having the Lord Jesus as their Friend. I think, however, we may carry on the thought of His “friends” as being those whom He would have made His friends had they been willing to accept His friendship; towards whom at least He has proved Himself one by showing Himself “friendly”—even up to the point of death on their behalf (Prov. xviii. 24; John xv. 13).

Sometimes, perhaps, you have thought it would

be as well to have Him for your Friend : you have now and then caught a glimpse of His beauty, and desired to know more of Him. But you have never really *come* to Him, have never actually *laid hold* of eternal life (1 Tim. vi. 12).

“Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace : thereby good shall come unto thee.” He longs for you—“All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not.*” “*Ye will not* come to Me, that ye might have life.” And yet He pleads so earnestly—“What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

Why not face your position once and for all? You are still unsatisfied, and you hear there *is* satisfaction to be found in Him, and in Him alone. Prove it now for yourself. Stir yourself up to take hold of Him (Isa. lxiv. 7). Go to God and say, “I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.” He is not hard to be entreated. “Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. xxix. 13). “The

Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." If we "engage" our heart to approach unto Him, He promises to cause us to draw near, and says of such an one—"he *shall* approach unto Me" (Jer. xxx. 21. See Jas. iv. 8).

"I would, but *ye would not.*" If you continue to refuse His love, there will come a day when you will not be able to refuse His justice. The King's repeated invitation cannot be made light of with impunity, though for a time we dare to despise it and go our own ways, preferring our "farm" and our "merchandise" (Matt. xxii. 2-8). "Those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me," He says in another place (Luke xix. 27). He punishes at last, because, He says, "When I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before Mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not." "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord" (Prov. i. 24, &c.) The Spirit will not always strive with man, the command goes forth at length—"Let him alone" (Hos. iv. 17). There does come a time when it is *too late* to seek the Lord, when if you persist in having none of Him, He will have none of you. "I never knew you: depart from Me" (Matt. vii. 23). "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

But this is still the day of mercy and long-suffering love. It is not too late yet to turn to Him. If you call now He will answer you (Isa. lxxv. 24). Will you refuse the love of Jesus any longer? It was for love of *you* He died, it was for love of *you* He was despised and rejected, it was for love of *you* He was forsaken and accursed of His Father. Is it not enough that He was wounded of the Father for your transgressions, but *you* will wound Him still, day after day, year after year, by refusing His so dearly bought gift

of salvation? Ah! I think it must need all the intercession of the Son to preserve you from the wrath of the Father when He sees you rejecting His Son's sacrifice of Himself in your stead—when He sees that all His Son's agonies (not alone of a painful death on the cross, but the far deeper ones of identification with sin and the consequent hiding of His Father's face from Him, so that He no longer knew Him as Father, but as the offended God) were in vain. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" they know not how it pierces Thy heart to see them refusing My love.

If a fellow-creature loved us deeply, at least we would not wound him even if we could not love in return. But you have been base enough to wound One who, all the while you were treating Him thus, still loved on. What a thrill of delight it gives one to know oneself the object of some one's whole love, the centre of their thoughts! This, even this, *you* are to the Lord Jesus. Yet, perhaps, you scarcely ever think of Him. Now and then, in some great difficulty, some great sorrow, when you find no help anywhere around, in your despair you lift up an agonised cry to Him for succour ("they have turned their back unto Me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us," Jer. ii. 27). And He has an-

swered you : and in your first feeling of relief you have expressed your gratitude aloud in a deep-drawn "Thank God." But afterwards you have reasoned it all out, till gradually you have lost sight of what at first you were ready to admit—that your deliverance was His effecting ; you will acknowledge now that it was only due to second causes. And so you have relapsed again into thinking God very far off, taking no notice of, and no interest in, your everyday life, only to be appealed to when dire emergencies arise.

And He ? How does He feel about such conduct, such coldness and ingratitude ? He sent the difficulty, put you in that strait place where you could neither turn to the right hand nor to the left, to draw your thoughts to Him, to urge you to flee to Him for help. Surely One who can deliver you in times of great difficulty, One who loves you enough to deliver you when you only turn to Him as a last resource, must love you so much that He cannot but watch over and care for you in every little detail of your life.

The fact is, you have never believed that God's love is the same warm, personal, active thing as the love of a fellow-man. You admit that Jesus died for sinners, and that you are one ; and you have a hazy idea that His death did benefit *you* ; more-

over, you acknowledge that to die for sinners was an act of love. But that was nearly 2000 years ago ; since which God's love for you has become inert, and you no longer occupy a prominent place in His thoughts. Is this love's way—even among ourselves? Much less can it be so with Him who *is* Love. "The love of God"—an expression you are continually hearing—conveys but little to your heart, it is to you merely a term expressive of His general kindness and favourable feeling towards those whom He has created. But as to thinking of God's love as you do of a human love—why you never dream of such a thing.

And yet it is. Think of the warmest, deepest, most glowing love you can—perhaps your own for some one, or some one's for you. Well, love exactly such as that, just as personal, just as real and living, just as absorbing and satisfying—nay, far more so—is GOD's love for *you*. You have never felt it so? No, because you have never really *believed* it. Believe it, and you will have the joy and delight that result from feeling it.

Perhaps, reader, you say you have definitely accepted salvation. And yet your whole life is lived for self, and the interests of this world seem to absorb all your time, efforts, and thoughts. If you have placed yourself under an obligation to the

Lord Jesus for your very life (in that He has redeemed you from destruction and bought you, at a terrible price, out of Satan's hands), is it not mean to give Him back so little love and gratitude? "I have redeemed thee, thou art *Mine*," "*precious* in My sight," "*the dearly beloved of My soul*"—these are some of the exultant expressions of His love for His blood-bought ones. And yet you will not acknowledge His claim, nor believe in the intense reality of His love for you. You hardly ever think of Him in the course of your daily occupations, you grudge to speak to Him for a few minutes even of a morning, you "have not time," your business calls are imperative and you must hurry off to them; and as for hearing Him speak in His Word, you really cannot, it is all very well for those who have plenty of leisure for such things, but you have a great deal too much to do.

Would that you could see the grieved look in the face of the patient, loving Jesus, when thus you wound Him. If you only knew how He yearns over you, longing ardently to see a little return for "His great love wherewith He loved" you. Must it always be unrequited and repelled? You do not care for His love, but oh, He cares for *yours*.

"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). It cost God the giving

up of His only and well-beloved Son when He “went to redeem” you “to be *His own*”—words which show what a value He sets on you (1 Chron. xvii. 21). And yet—“He came unto His own, and *His own received Him not*” (John i. 11). You would not dream of robbing your fellow-man, “yet ye have robbed Me,” says God (Mal. iii. 8). “Wherein have we robbed Him?” In that ye have not rendered “unto God the things that are God’s”—*yourselves*, body, soul and spirit, your time, your talents, your all.

Far from acknowledging yourself “not your own” but His Who has bought you, you leave Him altogether out of your daily life. You worship Him, at least outwardly, once a week, and perhaps even thank Him then for that love in the past; but beyond this you seem to think your Saviour has no claim whatever upon you. “This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart (the one thing He asks for, the one thing He longs for) is far from Me.” You have aspirations now and then after something higher and nobler and more truly joyous than your life is—and that is all.

Oh! let the love you have wounded plead with you. Perhaps it is a new idea to you, that you are daily, hourly *wounding* One who loves you with

an unutterable, unsurpassable love. All the time you are busy here and there, absorbed in your business or pleasure, He—your Friend who has loved you unto death—is by your side, longing for a thought, a word, a look. Did you but cherish the thought of His presence, how gladly would He give you His Almighty help, His all-wise counsel! “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 will sup with him, and he with Me.” “How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?” Shame, shame on us, that we can treat that Loving One as we would not think of treating a fellow-creature; our own honour would not allow us to treat any other so. And yet we—dust and ashes—dare to treat the Lord of glory thus. Oh! that you would *believe* the love that God hath to you (1 John iv. 16). It is recorded of the Lord Jesus that when on earth “He marvelled because of their unbelief,” and I think there is one thing that causes Him astonishment and wonder even now at His Father’s right hand in glory—that we *can* refuse to believe in Him and accept His love. “How long will it be ere they believe Me?” “What *could* have been done more . . . that I have not done?”

The Love still follows, as we tramp on—
A sorrowful fall in its pleading tone :
“ With mercies great will I gather thee ;
I have called thee by name—return to Me.
Thou wilt tire in the dreary ways of sin ;
I left My Home—to bring *thee* in.

 In its golden street
 Stand no weary feet ;—
 Its rest is glorious—its songs are sweet.”

And we shout back angrily, hurrying on
To a terrible home, where rest is none :
“ We want not your city’s gilded street,
 Nor to hear its constant song ”—
 And still God keeps on loving us !
 Loving—all along !

And the tender Voice pursues each one :
“ Dear sinner, what more could thy God have done ?
Thou hast made Me to serve with thy bitter strife—
Thy sin has wearied, in Heaven, My life.
My Heaven ! yet its light I could not see,
When, alone in the darkness, I died for thee.

Thy sin of this day,
 In its shadow, lay
 Between My face and One turned away ! ”

And we stop, and turn for a moment’s space,
To fling back His love in the Saviour’s face, —
To give His heart yet another grief,
 And glory in the wrong—
 And Christ is always loving us !
 Loving—all along !

One is bending low before the King ;
And the Angels listen—with quivering wing :
A wondering awe on each glad, grand face,
At the joy of their Lord on His throne of grace.

WOUNDED IN THE

He has entered the city, and sings its hymns ;
While the gold of its streets through tears is dim :
“ To Him who *so* loved me and washed me white,
 That marvellous Love
 No sin could move,
 Waited and wearied not —sought and strove—
Followed unchanging, the whole dark way,
 And led into full, eternal day.”

S. G. PROUT.

CHAPTER V.

“Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”
—DEUT. v. 29.

“THAT it might be well with them.” He longs so that His children should be perfectly happy, enjoying the fulness of blessing, always in the enjoyment of deep calm peace. And this can only be in hearkening unto, and keeping all His commandments always. Our great wise loving King made His commandments solely with a view to the blessing of His people. And it grieves Him deeply when we do not keep them—not because they are His royal mandates we have refused to obey, though that might be enough to grieve Him, but because He knows what trouble the *not* keeping them will inevitably bring upon us. And so in anguish of heart, when He sees us suffering the consequences of our unbelief and disobedience, He cries “Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My com-

mandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa. xlviii. 18). "This thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, *that it may be well unto you*" (Jer. vii. 23).

As a King He might have issued His commandments without giving a reason for them, but the Father's heart cannot suppress the reason. Four times running He reiterates—"that it might be well with thee" (Deut. v. 29, 33; vi. 3, 18). And yet incentive and warning alike fail to make us obedient.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Oh! if we would only believe that HE IS ALWAYS DOING ALL HE CAN *for our good*. How can it be otherwise, seeing that He who loves us with His whole heart is Almighty and Allwise too? Yet how apt we are, when He sends something that is contrary to our will and desire to consider it a *cross*. We accept it, it is true, but do His will sadly and resignedly as though it were a punishment, instead of believing it to be, what He means it for—a blessing. Did we really believe that all He bids us do and suffer is for our good, "that it might be well with us," sent on purpose by Him who is ever thinking upon us and

working with the sole view of consummating our greatest possible happiness, how differently should we set about doing what are now to us disagreeable tasks! We should do away for ever then with all disappointment.

His loving heart can keep back nothing that is good from us—"no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; . . . yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good . . . with My whole heart, and with My whole soul" (Jer. xxxii. 40, 41).

Perhaps He has withheld from you something which you think, nay are sure, would have been good for you? And you have felt almost a grudge against Him because He would not let you have it? I think the only way in which we can regain peace after doubting thus whether He really loves us as much as He says He does, is to determine to walk by faith and not by sight, to be resolute in turning away from *our* thoughts of what is good for us, and just *believing*, against every evidence of sight and sense, that since He has withheld it, it was *not* a "good thing." Joy and peace, and vindication of His wise love, will very soon fill our heart, even though perhaps we may not understand "the end of the Lord" in His dealings with us. Sometimes

even in this life we are permitted to see it, and our heart's pæan rises—"He hath done *all* things well;" but more often "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Nothing less than "the *finest* of the wheat" will satisfy Him for the food of His people, and He would have us drink of the river of *His* pleasures (Ps. lxxxvi. 16; xxxvi. 8). Sometimes, it is true, He makes us go "through fire and through water," but it is only because His love sees that which our short-sighted eyes cannot—the "wealthy place" that He would lead His own into. The forty-third of Isaiah, in which He forewarns His people of "fire" and "water," assuring them at the same time of His presence with them in each, is especially rich in terms of endearment and promises of what wonders He will perform for His own; redemption, identity of name, and possession, testifying of the very closest and dearest relationship and bond of union between Him and His people.

"His commandments are not grievous." Let us briefly enumerate what they are:—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." "His commandment is life

everlasting." "This is His commandment, That we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment. And he that keepeth His commandment, dwelleth in Him, and He in him." "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

It is by keeping His commandments that we can give proof of our love for Him, and He promises to manifest Himself to those who keep them and to make His abode with them (John xiv. 21, 23;) and if we keep them we are assured that our prayers will be answered—"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John iii. 22).

"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments." "In keeping of them there is great reward." "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day, *for thy good.*"

CHAPTER VI.

“Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob ; but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel.”—ISA. xliii. 22.

THE pained cry seems to burst forth unbidden and irrepressible from the heart of Infinite Love. Listen, hear Him out of the depth of His sorrowful, pierced heart, saying, “Thou hast been weary of Me.” You cannot hear it unless you listen intently, for He is too pained to be angry, it touches Him too deeply to be uttered in loud tones ; besides His heart is so full of love that there is never any room for anger towards His own, His redeemed.

Does not the whole of this chapter make us ashamed, if we are conscious that the utterance of the twenty-second verse is for us ? Surely we have not forgotten the time when we were, it seemed, forever expelled from the Kingdom because of our sin ; nor how the King devised “means that His banished be not expelled from Him” (2 Sam. xiv. 14), the only means being the sacrifice of His

only and well-beloved Son, whom He sent forth to suffer death, the penalty of sin, in our stead. Read the whole chapter, and see how having made you His own, He pledges Himself to guard His treasure from all that may hurt it, telling us that whatever our circumstances may be He will be with us. And have we not been cheered and strengthened again and again in many a difficulty, by the thought that He—the Almighty and All-loving One—is with us?

He goes on to assure them that He will even work miracles for His own, "I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen" (ver. 20). Yet this cherished people cared not for Him, were indeed *wearry* of Him. Who can fathom the anguish of that thought? Can you? Think—there is one whom you love above all others on earth, one on whom your whole affection seems concentrated; you delight in pouring gifts upon her, you do all in your power to shield her from harm, you would die for her, and more—you would be willing to be hated and despised of others for her sake. Judge of God's feelings by yours in such a case, if your love were not returned, if you were looked coldly upon by her, if you were ignored and forgotten of her, if you were obliged to say, "Thou hast been *wearry* of me."

“The Lord hath a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel. O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants” (Mic. vi. 2-5). “I will bring you into the wilderness . . . and there will I plead with you face to face” (Ezek. xx. 35).

Love condescends to plead with the erring sinner. He reminds them of all He has done for them, and how all through He had nothing in His hand and heart but blessing for them, “because the Lord thy God *loved* thee” (Deut. xxiii. 5).

And we *have* been weary of Him. There have been times in our life when all has seemed failure, and despair has so filled our hearts that we have been weary of men, and weary too of our loving patient Jesus. Perhaps it is so now with you? What is it that has brought this black cloud over your bright sky? A little while ago your love for Jesus was so warm, you could do or suffer anything for His sake. And now you are weary of Him. “I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense; . . . but *thou* hast made ME to serve with thy sins, *thou* hast wearied ME with thine iniquities” (ver. 23, 24). Alas!

sin has come in, and you have permitted some other love to absorb you and draw you away from your Lord. It may be self-love, it may be some human love, it may be love of the world in one of its varied forms. Perhaps you scarcely know what it is, only you know you feel utterly weary, and wish in yourself that you could die.

The Lord feels your weariness of Him deeply ; with pain the utterance is forced from His lips—“Thou hast been weary of Me.” But, such is His love, He hastens to call His poor unhappy child to rest on His bosom. “Come unto Me, all ye that labour (literally, *are weary*), and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Yes, come to Him, rest once more in those arms, look up into that Face which awhile ago was full of grief that you *could* be weary of Him, see it now beaming with tender pity and love. Hear Him say, “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (ver. 25). “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto Me ; for I have redeemed thee” (chap. xliv. 22).

“Sing, O ye heavens ; for the Lord HATH DONE IT” (ver. 23).

CHAPTER VII.

“ My people are bent to backsliding from Me.”—Hos. xi. 7.

“ **THEY** have made their faces harder than a rock ; they have refused to return ” (Jer. v. 3). It is not only that they have gone back, but that after they have done so, and know it, they continue wilfully to go far from Him. And has the same thing never happened to us ? Have there not been times when Satan has so blinded our eyes, that we seem entirely to have lost sight of Jesus ; there is no longer any beauty in Him that we should desire Him ; times when Satan seems to have complete hold over us, when he persuades us that we have been hypocrites all along ; we never were children of God, though we deceived ourselves and others into thinking so ; we never could really have loved Him, or we should not have left Him ; that we had better far be downright for Satan, than pretend to be God’s and yet not be wholly for Him ?

We are conscious at such times that we have wounded the Lord, but our love is so cold and dead that we do not care. We are "bent to backsliding from Him," and though utterly miserable, still we *will not* go back to Jesus, but seek instead to drown our misery in anything that offers pleasure, however unsatisfying.

What is the root of the matter? Sin covered: we have sinned and will not confess our sin. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13). Until sin is confessed God withdraws Himself—"I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early" (Hos. v. 15). "When I kept silence . . . Thy hand was heavy upon me" (Psa. xxxii. 3, 4). As long as we cover sin, God uncovers it; the moment we uncover it, God covers; directly we confess, He forgives and forgets. (See 2 Sam. xii. 13.) Our God is "*ready* to pardon:" however great our sin, He will forgive it, indeed the very greatness of it forms a plea with Him—"For Thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; *for* it is great" (Psa. xxv. 11).

Perhaps you think you have committed the unpardonable sin? Unless you have wilfully and

backsliding" (Jer. viii. 5), still Infinite Love is looking out and longing for, and beseeching for your return. Hear Him, again and again—"Return again to Me" (Jer. iii. 1). "And I said *after she had done all these things*, Turn thou unto Me. . . Go and proclaim these words . . . and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful. . . Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God. . . Turn, O backsliding children. . . . Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (vers. 7, 12—14, 22). There is ever a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, even the blood of Jesus Christ which "cleanseth us from all sin." *At any moment* we may return to God and begin anew to serve Him, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," pressing onward again "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Even if Satan has succeeded in persuading you that you never were a true Christian, there is nothing to prevent your *becoming one* this very moment.

"Behold, we come unto Thee: for Thou art the Lord our God." "So will not we go back from Thee."

saying, "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, . . . and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (Isa. xlix. 25, 26).

If your own unhappiness does not drive you to Him, let His deep feeling of your treatment of Him. Pause for a moment and listen to that low pained cry—"MY PEOPLE are bent to backsliding from Me." Is it nothing to Him, think you? Hear Him further—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: *for* I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee." "Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, therefore My bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." He is grievously hurt that the object of His love should be *bent* to backsliding from Him. Will you not return to Him this moment, and give Him the joy of having His loved one near Him once more?

Even if you have "slidden back by a perpetual

Soon is the cistern dry which thou hast hewn,
 And thou wilt weep in bitterness full soon.
 Return ! ere gathering night shall shroud the way
 Thy footsteps yet may tread, in this accepted day.

Return !

O erring, yet beloved !
 I wait to bind thy bleeding feet, for keen
 And rankling are the thorns where thou hast been ;
 I wait to give thee pardon, love, and rest ;
 Is not My joy to see thee safe and blest ?
 Return ! I wait to hear once more thy voice,
 To welcome thee anew, and bid thy heart rejoice.

Return !

O fallen, yet not lost !
 Canst thou forget the life for thee laid down,
 The taunts, the scourging, and the thorny crown ?
 When o'er thee first My spotless robe I spread,
 And poured the oil of joy upon thy head,
 How did thy wakening heart within thee burn !
 Canst thou remember all, and wilt thou not return ?

Return !

O chosen of My love !
 Fear not to meet thy beckoning Saviour's view ;
 Long ere I called thee by thy name, I knew
 That very treacherously thou wouldst deal ;
 Now I have seen thy ways, yet I will heal.
 Return ! Wilt thou yet linger far from Me ?
 My wrath is turned away, I have redeemed thee."

F. R. HAVERGAL.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Wherefore say My people, We are lords; we will come no more to Thee? Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.”—JER. ii. 31, 32.

“My people have forgotten their Resting-place.”—JER. 1. 6.

ALAS! here it is again, that spirit of independence which is for ever bringing us misery. “We are lords, we will come no more to Thee”—we will judge for ourselves—we will do as we like—we will have our own way. Is it any wonder, then, if we find ourselves later on in “a wilderness,” “a land of darkness?” It is all our own fault. “Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when He led thee by the way?” A maid, He says, cannot forget her ornaments, nor a bride her attire, but God’s redeemed can forget Him, days without number. Does not the thought that we can ever forget HIM make us loathe ourselves? Forget Him Who never

forgets one of His children, Whose thoughts are always, every single moment, concentrated on His child, Whose Almighty energies are continually put forth for his blessing, Whose whole love is centred on him? Forget such an one? Is it possible? Forget Him who has redeemed us at terrible cost to Himself? Forget Him who is ever with us, ready to help, ready to guide, ready to make the rough places smooth, ready to deliver us in every trial, danger, and temptation; and in order that we may rely on His help and support, has promised us He will never leave us nor forsake us? Ah! we do not see that tender yearning look in the eye that is so fondly fixed on the object of infinite love, or our love too would find an all-absorbing object, our hearts, our lives, our wills would be given irrecoverably to Him. And why do we not see? It is the old story—lack of faith—faith the evidence of things not seen. Our forgetfulness of Him, our coldness, our independence—are all the consequences of not really believing in the depth of His love. We cannot fathom it, but we can, if we will, believe literally all He says of His love for us.

Would it not hurt you if the one who is dearer to you than all the world besides, and the thought and remembrance of whom is unconsciously almost, but very really, running through and underlying

and accompanying all your thoughts and actions—would it not wound you deeply if that one could “forget” you, and for long seasons sometimes? The forgetfulness of his friends bears a prominent place in the enumeration of Job’s sorrows—“My familiar friends have forgotten me.” Nor is it otherwise with the Lord Jesus; one of His last commands (Luke xxii. 19) shows how He too delights in being remembered by His friends. The Lord feels His people’s forgetfulness of Him deeply; again and again the pained cry comes, “My people hath forgotten me” (ch. xviii. 15; see ch. xiii. 25; iii. 21; Isa. xvii. 10; Ezek. xxii. 12; xxiii. 35). In Hos. xiii. 6 we find their forgetfulness of Him was the effect of the same cause which produced it here (in Jer. ii.)—self-exaltation and independence—“they were filled, and their heart was exalted; *therefore* have they forgotten Me.”

“My people have forgotten their Resting-place.” He Himself is their Resting-place, or “place to lie down in”—as the margin more literally and expressively renders it. He would lead His people into perfect rest and stillness for secret communion. “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” HIMSELF our place to lie down in—how shall we not rest? Care, anxiety, misgivings, fears—all are lost sight of, they no longer weigh us down and

wear us out with their strain, for are we not *lying down* in our Resting-place? No straining of our energies, no struggle, but instead—perfect rest and quiescence, a relaxing of every muscle, while we just lie down, lean back on our Resting-place. This is what He wants to be to His people at all times. “Thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid.” “My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, when it shall hail.”

We have not enough stillness of soul before Him, we do not listen for His voice. We are ready enough to speak to Him, putting forth request after request, but He too desires to speak to us, to tell out all His love. “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and *speak to her heart*” (Hos. ii. 14, marg.) The Bridegroom loves to hear the voice of the Bride (Song of Sol. ii. 14); what a poor cold love hers must be, if she cares not to listen to His! Prayer is not communion; prayer may satisfy *us*, but it does not satisfy *Him*. Oh! let Love take thee aside and tell Itself out in thine ear.

“Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest (or *lie down*—it is the same word in the original) at noon.” The soul goes out after Him, and

desires to rest where He rests. "The people . . . found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when *I* went to cause him to rest" (Jer. xxxi. 2). It is when we "sit still" "under His shadow," that we are revived and strengthened by His fruit (Isa. xxx. 7; Song of Sol. ii. 3). "In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength;—*and ye would not*" (Isa. xxx. 15).

While we have been forgetting Him—our Resting-place—we have been getting lower and lower, going "from mountain to hill," and from the hill down to the plain, but even there that voice from the heights still follows, crying "Come unto Me . . . and *I* will rest you" (*καὶ γὰρ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς*).

Put side by side these two verses—surely their juxtaposition will shame us into sorrow and repentance, and a return to Him Who loves so deeply that our forgetfulness of Him wounds Him sorely—"O Israel, *thou shalt not be forgotten of Me*" (Isa. xliv. 21)—and—"My people have forgotten Me."

Is it a light matter, think you, this forgetfulness of Him? Nay, for forgetfulness of Him implies distance from Him, it being impossible to forget one to whom we are very near. God says it is "a very horrible thing"—"Thus saith the Lord, Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such

things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold-flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?" or, as we have it in the margin—"Will a man leave My fields for a rock, or for the snow of Lebanon? shall the running waters be forsaken for the strange cold waters?" (Jer. xviii. 13, 14).

Yet—"MY PEOPLE HAVE FORGOTTEN ME."

CHAPTER IX.

“But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”—ISA. xlix. 14, 15.

“I have forsaken Mine house, I have left Mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies.”—JER. xii. 7.

How often we have said “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me;” and deeply have we grieved Him when thus we have doubted Him whose love far exceeds that of a mother for her child—“they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Perhaps you are having a juniper-tree experience now, and are longing to shake off the thought that God is far off and has left you alone to cope with difficulties you cannot surmount; and in your utter weariness and despair you think He has forsaken

and forgotten you. Prayer and the Word are burdensome to you, you take no pleasure in either, they have lost all sweetness, they are even distasteful. "God-forsaken" you call yourself—what hope is there for you? None, if it be true. But, thank God, it is not true: it is one of Satan's delusions, whereby he has sought to tempt the child of God from his allegiance. "They that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him" (Ps. lxxi. 10, 11). You have listened to Satan's voice: now listen to God's. "*Thou shalt not be forgotten of Me*" (Isa. xlv. 21). "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John x. 28). "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke xii. 6, 7).

"*The Lord will not forsake His people, for His great Name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people*" (1 Sam. xii. 22). "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil. . . . Ye shall find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart"

(Jer. xxix. 11, 13). "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early" (Hos. v. 15).

In Canticles iii., the Bride having quitted His side and become occupied with something short of Himself, wakes up to the fact that He is no longer with her; she seeks Him, at first lazily, and does not find Him; but at length she seeks Him eagerly, determinately, with all her heart; and then He is found of her. "I held Him, and would not let Him go." If He had not made her feel increasingly what a loss was hers in His absence, she would not have stirred herself up to take hold of Him again, but would have been contented with just longing for Him, taking no steps to find Him, not even leaving her couch to do so.

He feels it when He has to punish His people—"For the hurt of the daughter of My people am I hurt." What must His heart be suffering when He can even exclaim, "Oh that I might leave My people, and go from them!" (Jer. ix. 2). But *He cannot*—He is chained to His people by the chains of love, and though their behaviour is such that nearness to them must often be pain to the Sinless One, and He must long to put Himself for ever out of reach of contact with their sin—long to "leave" His people because of their iniquity, yet His love

for them is stronger than His hatred of their sin, and renders the accomplishment of the desire conveyed in these words utterly futile. It is one of the impossibilities of the Almighty !

“ I have forsaken Mine house, I have left Mine heritage ; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies.” When we think of the depth of His love, even for those who have wandered *so* far from Him as we read His people had at this time ; when we hear how fondly He lingers over His terms of endearment—“ My beloved ” (Jer. xi. 15)—“ the dearly beloved of My soul ”—when thus we take into consideration His undiminished and unchangeable love, then, and not till then, shall we understand something of the pain and anguish of this outcry. Yet only by leaving her, only by letting her be harassed by her enemies, can He bring her to that state of destitution and nothingness, that shall cause her to cry earnestly to Him that He would graciously receive her again, and bind her to Him henceforth for ever with the cords of love.

Ah ! little do we think when the enemy has the upper hand over us, and we are in sore affliction and misery, of the pain our God is suffering all the time. To see the object of our warmest affection oppressed, evil entreated, sorrowing and in despair—is it not hard to bear, almost unbearable ? Then what must

it be to Him whose love to us poor sinners infinitely exceeds any human love ! He preceded this statement of what He had done to His people, by the cry, "What hath My beloved to do in Mine house?" (Jer. xi. 15). That was rather strong, and showed how incompatible her conduct had been, with being in His house ; she had forfeited all right to be there. But the twelfth chapter is infinitely stronger both in its disapprobation and in its agony of love.

He does forsake us while we are sinning. He forsook even His own Son while sin was on Him, He hid His face even from Him when He was Sin-bearer. For at that moment it was God dealing with sin as Judge (2 Cor. v. 21), not the Father dealing with the Son of His love. God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" and cannot look on iniquity—*this* is the answer to the agonised cry that issued from the suffering Saviour's lips, and often escapes from ours—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He ever turns away when He sees sin, and hides His face from us (Isa. lxiv. 7). The moment we forsake the sin, that moment He returns and causes the light of His countenance once more to shine on us. "For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath He hid His face from him ; but when he cried unto Him, He heard" (Ps. xxii. 24). "I will not contend for ever, neither

will I be always wroth . . . for the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him. I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on turning away (*marg.*) in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him" (Isa. lvii. 16-18). "The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against Me, therefore hid I My face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies. . . . Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for My Holy Name. . . . When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen; but I have gathered them unto their own land, and *have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide My face any more from them*" (Ezek. xxxix. 23-29).

And so, though we read ever and anon such passages as "I have forsaken Mine house, I have left Mine heritage," yet is it also true that "Israel hath *not* been forsaken of His God . . . though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel" (Jer. li. 5).

If Satan tempts you to think God has for ever forsaken you, when a cloud has risen between you and the One you love, and Who has hidden His face from you for the moment because of your sins, remember that "*your iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and *your sins* have hid His face from you that He will not hear;" it is not His doing, it is yours. But "behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear," therefore go at once and confess to Him all your folly and your sin; do as he did who said, "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him" (Isa. viii. 17). We have the assurance that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Will you not now believe God rather than Satan? God-forsaken? No such thing. But God-loved, God-cherished, God-united.

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken but thou shalt be called Hephzibah . . . for *the Lord delighteth in thee*. And as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

Even our sins cannot "separate us from *the love of Christ!*"

CHAPTER X.

“Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them: and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.”—ISA. lxiii. 8-10.

LOVE thinks well of its object. One would have thought that God must have known the sinful hearts of His people too well to call them “children that will not lie.” So He did, in one sense—“I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously” (Isa. xlviii. 8). And yet it would seem sometimes with Him as with us—the exceeding greatness of His love led Him to think too well of them, made Him forget for the moment the wickedness and ingratitude of the objects of it. “So He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He re-

deemed them: and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." With what result? Surely His people's lifelong gratitude and whole-hearted devotion. Alas, no! with this result—*"they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit."*

Well may He call heaven and earth to note the unparalleled ingratitude. "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and *they have rebelled against Me*" (Isa. i. 2). Is not this indeed to be wounded in the house of His friends?

"Therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them." Was this love? we exclaim. Does it not rather betoken a spirit of vindictiveness such as exists among men? Nay, He only fought against them that so they might the sooner return to their allegiance and acknowledge Him as Lord, for only thus, He knew, could it be well with them. It was to bring them to the condition of the Psalmist when he exclaims, "Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled" (Ps. xxx. 7), and in trouble we ever flee to His side. "His anger endureth but a moment; in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved; Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand

strong: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled." "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. liv. 7, 8).

We find the same thought over and over again in Nehemiah ix., where we are told how His people went in and possessed the land, and "Thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land and gavest them into their hands. . . . And they took strong cities . . . and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat and were filled and became fat, and delighted themselves in Thy great goodness. Nevertheless, they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs . . . *Therefore* Thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: *and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them* from heaven; and according to Thy manifold mercies Thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hands of their enemies. But after they had rest, they did evil again before Thee: *therefore* leftest Thou them in the hand of their enemies,

so that they had the dominion over them: *yet when they returned, and cried unto Thee, Thou heardest*; and many times didst Thou deliver them, according to Thy mercies, and testifiedst against them, *that thou mightest bring them again into Thy law*" (24-29). See too Ps. cvii. 10-16, 17-20. In Ezekiel xx. we have the same dealing with His people, when they had rebelled against Him "and their heart went after their idols;" there He gives the reason plainly—"that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord" (ver. 26). He goes on to say, "I will bring you into the wilderness . . . and there will I plead with you face to face . . . and I will cause you to pass under the rod . . . and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me . . . and ye shall know that I am the Lord." The end was their acceptance once more, and the assurance that God would be sanctified in them before the heathen. His becoming their enemy is only, as it were, momentary, He will not (as we have seen in the last chapter) forsake them finally.

"I was wroth with My people" (Isa. xlvii. 6). "To be wroth with those we love," says the poet, "doth work like madness in the brain;" a strong but very apt expression of the agony which results from

the conflict of two such deep-seated passions. It does not cost Him nothing when He says to His own loved ones, "I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity" (Jer. xxx. 14). Thanks be to His Name, though He sometimes wounds His own in love, He ever comes Himself and heals us (ver. 17). "I wound and I heal" (Deut. xxxii. 39).

"O Lord, I will praise Thee ; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me" (Isa. xii. 1).

"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord"—lovingkindness being the one thing that filled His heart, even when it is expressed in these strange words: "Therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them."

CHAPTER XI.

“My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them.”—Hos. iv. 12.

“Is thy Counsellor perished?” (Mic. iv. 9 ; Is. ix. 6). Wherefore when thou wast in perplexity and in need of counsel camest thou not to ME? Do you think He did not feel it when you ignored Him and would none of Him or His wisdom, but sought counsel from those who were even less able to give it you than your own poor perplexed mind was able to guide you? Does not the Spirit specially record the fact of some, that they “asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord” (Jos. ix. 14)—showing how grave a matter He knows it to be, this leaving Him out of our counsels?

Even if He had not said “Counsel is Mine, and sound wisdom”—even if He had not told us it was our wisest course to ask counsel of Him who cannot err, He must have been “wounded in the house of His friends,” when we left Him out of our plans and

did not seek counsel and direction of Him whose delight and right it is to be consulted in every detail of our lives. Even among ourselves experience shows that it is the one who loves us most that cares about every little detail; thus is it, too, with Him. "The Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," says, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will counsel thee with Mine eye" (Ps. xxxii. 8. *marg.*) But if we are not "looking unto Jesus," if our eyes are not toward the Lord, if we have turned our back upon Him and gone to seek counsel from "stocks and staves," we cannot catch His eye, that eye that would have counselled and guided us so well (Ps. lxxiii. 24). Of old when His people would not hearken unto Him, and would none of Him, He gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, "and they walked in their own counsels;" and we may be quite sure of this—that when we walk in our own counsels, or ask counsel at stocks and staves (idols which we have allowed to usurp His place in our hearts), that God will bring such counsel to nought. (Neh. iv. 15; Hos. x. 6; xi. 6.)

See what was the consequence of this very thing to Saul—"So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the

word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; *and inquired not of the Lord: therefore He slew him*" (1 Chron. x. 13, 14). Take care lest He say to *you*—"Because ye have set at nought all My counsel, I also will laugh at your calamity; . . . they would none of My counsel . . . therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (Prov. i. 25-31). "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me . . . and have not asked at My mouth" (Isa. xxx. 1, 2).

Sometimes we do ask counsel of Him, and will not wait patiently for His answer, but rush off to seek counsel of our fellow-men. Thus it was with His people of old—"they *waited* not for His counsel" (Ps. cvi. 13). Some, alas, went further—"they *contemned* the counsels of the Most High (Ps. cvii. 11)—after they had perhaps waited for it; but just because it did not please them, they ignored and contemned it, following their own or others' evil counsels.

Reader, are you in perplexity and sorely in need of counsel? Go and seek it of the Lord, He will give you an answer; only wait for it. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge

Him, and He shall direct thy paths." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Do not misunderstand me about going to friends for advice at critical moments. The Lord does often use one of our fellowmen to give us His counsel, making him His mouthpiece. But I do not think He ever thus uses any but His own faithful servants, those who are so near Him that they understand His mind. Nor should we go to even these till we have first sought and waited for counsel of Himself: then having asked Him, if it be His pleasure, to reveal His will through another and to give him wisdom to advise aright, we may go and seek counsel of our friend. This will not be asking counsel of stocks and staves, for our one desire is to do His will; we are not turning the back on Him and ignoring Him, nor leaving Him out of our counsels.

CHAPTER XII.

“ My people is risen up as an enemy.”—MIC. ii. 8.

“ HE that is not with Me is against Me.” Alas! how little we think when we are not wholly on His side, that we are *against* Him and therefore have constituted ourselves His enemies. His *friend* has turned to be His *enemy*. Yet so it is—“no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” How lukewarm many of us are! so much so that He exclaims, “I would thou wert cold or hot”—one thing or the other. We think so lightly of this sin of lukewarmness, yet if we turn to Lev. xviii. 28, we find the same term used there in speaking of the consequence that will follow as the just punishment for the grossest sin, as is used in Rev. iii. 16, of the imminent consequence of lukewarmness. Of old those who did not wholly follow

the Lord were shut out from seeing the land (Num. xxxii. 11). And there are but few steps between not following wholly and following "afar off." It is when our heart is "divided" that we "shall be found faulty" (Hos. x. 2). Friendship with God and friendship with the world cannot co-exist. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And the Lord feels this enmity just as much as, nay more than, we should, if our dearest turned against us. Of all Job's many afflictions and sorrows there was probably none that touched him more to the quick than that which he describes in the words, "All my inward friends abhorred me: and *they whom I loved are turned against me.*"

Perhaps you are at this moment feeling very lukewarm towards the Lord—almost cold and indifferent? Is it not because your heart has been "divided," you have not followed Him *wholly*? You "have given the hand to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with" their "bread," (Lam. v. 6), whereas there is only One Bread that can satisfy. "Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us." "Their heart went after their idols" (Ezek. xx. 16). What was it your heart

went after? Meet the question bravely, determine to find the answer; and know that *that* which your heart went after is *your idol*, since it has supplanted the true God in your love and absorption.

“MY PEOPLE is risen up as an enemy,”—those whom He loves so intensely are turned against Him. It is not, perhaps, that we are determinately His enemies, but His love is so great that He feels very keenly the slightest swerving of our hearts from Him. So much so that he that is not *with* Him is *against* Him, he that turns aside from His friendship is felt to be “an *enemy*.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“ MY sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill : yea, MY flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, AND NONE DID SEARCH OR SEEK AFTER THEM.”—
EZEK. xxxiv. 6.

WHAT want of sympathy with Him, what want of love for Him, is here betrayed. He looked that His own should have been earnest in seeking the lost, but alas ! they are occupied with self ; it may indeed be their spiritual concerns that are absorbing them, but none the less is their conduct culpable and lamentable in His sight who sees the multitude perishing. Have we been selfishly enjoying our feast of good things, pressing forward to get more and more, and giving no thought to those who know not even that a feast is spread for them and that they may come “ buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price ? ” Have we let our “ soul delight itself in fatness,” have we eaten and drunk and seized on our treasure

and gone and hidden it? (2 Kings vii. 8). "We do not well: this day is a day of good things, and we hold our peace." We have not told them of the hand of our God which was good upon us (Neh. ii. 18).

"Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" If we do not seek the lost we are neglecting the commandment which is second only in importance—"thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" nay, are we not neglecting too the first and great commandment, for surely did we really love God, our hearts would go out towards those over whom He yearns with an intensity of desire, but who as yet know not of His love? "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him" (Prov. xi. 26), and shall we be accounted less deserving of censure if we withhold the Bread of Life? "Give ye them to eat" is the Lord's command.

"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently" (Jer. xlvi. 10, *marg.*: it is the same word as occurs in Prov. x. 4, and xii. 24). "Curse

ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

When Jesus "saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. ix. 36); and shall our hearts remain unmoved when we see *His* sheep wandering and scattered? The thought too of how ardently He longs to have them brought in, that so He might the sooner return, ought to energize His own in seeking the lost. Like Him, we are sent "unto the lost sheep," we too are to seek that which is gone astray, for "it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of" them should perish (Matt. xviii. 12, 14). It is by tending His sheep that He has bidden us give proof of our love for Him: yet—"none did search or seek after them." Cold indeed must our hearts be towards Him, if we have no love for the souls He died for. Shall we not seek to bring them into the "green pastures" which the Good Shepherd has made *us* to lie down in?

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?" "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard" is His command to each of us. Some are called to go forth and labour, others, debarred from active work, seem set

apart for that of intercession, nor may these be ideal. Real prayer often takes quite as much out of one as active work; St. Paul describes it as "labouring fervently," agonizing, striving. One is as much work for God as the other, and "as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike" (1 Sam. xxx. 24). Well for us if we shall hear the words from the Master's lips—"she hath done what she could." Perhaps those of us to whom this portion of work in the vineyard has been assigned are wont to envy our more outwardly active brethren their share, forgetting that if there are advantages on their side, so are there also on ours. For prayer brings us into constant intercourse with the Master, keeping us ever at His side; it is less spiritually dangerous too, the quiet work of intercession being unheeded by man; and above all, in it we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus in His present work, "seeing He ever liveth to make intercession" (Heb. vii. 25). Possibly it has never occurred to us, that we have been wounding Him when we have not cheerfully done the work which He has given us to do (be it little or great, in our eyes), but have either been idle, or have *set ourselves* some work to do, unbidden and therefore unblest of Him; nor that He has been wounded when we

have not helped forward His cause in the mission fields abroad, as far as lay in our power, willingly and lovingly.

“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.” We are to seek for those who have never yet been in the fold, as well as those who have wandered from it. To “*search and seek after them*”—put forth strenuous energy to find them, not languidly wish them well without taking one step to bring them home.

He says of those who give no heed to His perishing sheep—“I will require My flock at their hand.” The souls shall not perish because of our neglect, the Lord Himself—“I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out and will deliver them” (ver. 11, 12); but we shall have missed the high privilege of being “labourers together with God,” “ambassadors for Christ;” we shall have missed the giving Him joy, for if He feels it so much when His flock are allowed to wander, none seeking after them nor caring that *His* sheep are lost—correspondingly great will be His joy when through our means His sheep are brought home.

CHAPTER XIV.

“For the transgression of My people was He stricken.”—
ISA. liii. 8.

SURELY we could not sin so lightly if we really understood the full force of this agonised cry. Oh! that we could keep the sound of it ever in our ears. “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” That “HE” had been stricken at all was pain enough, but the knowledge that it was *My people’s* transgression that had brought about such a result, must have added incalculably to the grief of the Father’s heart. The agony of the cry is concentrated on those two words, “My people.” What love He bore them, that for their sakes He could even strike His only, well-beloved Son! He “*spared not* His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” “Thou hast loved them *as* Thou hast loved

Me," said Jesus. Perhaps there is no text in Scripture that shows more vividly the depth of the Father's love to us poor sinners, than that in which the Lord Jesus says, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, *because* I lay down My life" for the sheep. "God SO loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son."

Plaintive and deeply touching in its sadness as is this utterance of the Father's, to us it has a bright side. "The transgression of My people" for which He was stricken, bows us down with shame; but "He was stricken," tells of forgiveness and restoration. If we have been wandering from Him and refusing to return, whether from wilfulness or from shame at having wounded our Loved One, let us look again at the latter part of this sentence. *He* was stricken for this very transgression of ours; and the fact that *He* has suffered the penalty due to us, the actual transgressors, speaks of free forgiveness for us, even for this sin of wandering, if by faith we have accepted Him as our substitute whom God accepted as such. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered" (or borne—it is the same word as is used in Isa. liii.

12—"He *bare* the sins of many")—"all their sin" (Ps. lxxxv. 2). God does nothing by halves—*all our sins* were laid on Jesus, *all His worth* is laid on us.

One feels while dwelling on this text that one is on holy ground: human words seem almost an intrusion and a profanation, rather let us meditate for a while on this cry of anguish wrung from the Father's heart, let us sympathise with Him on what our transgressions cost Him.

CHAPTER XV.

“For the hurt of the daughter of My people am I hurt. . . . Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?”—JER. viii. 21, 22.

ARE you still afraid to draw near? still holding back because of your sense of sin? It is they that are sick that need the physician. There is a Physician, there is balm—why then is not thy health recovered? It ought to be. When we go to the great Physician and tell Him all that has been wrong with us, He gives at once the Balm that heals. He makes *whole*—there are no partial cures with Him. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” As long as we keep away from Him, it cannot be well with us, nor—I say it reverently—with Him either, for “for the hurt . . . of My people am I hurt.” “How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep,

and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" The ninety and nine are all safe at home, but the Shepherd Himself cannot rest till the one poor wanderer be resting too. The greatness of the rejoicing which followed on the return home of the prodigal son, gives an insight into the weight of sorrow that had been removed from the father's heart. Grief at the absence of the loved one must have been greatly augmented too by the knowledge of what that wandering one was suffering in the far country. Ah! I think if the wanderer had only been able to see the look of wounded love that was ever on that Face at home, varied but by one of eager looking out for his return, remorse at having caused such grief would have accomplished in one moment, what utter destitution and misery only effected after, it may be, long years.

That we suffer loss during these seasons of interrupted communion we gather from Numbers ix. 11 (where those who were "unclean" lost a whole month), though in His grace He recalls us to all our privileges as His redeemed.

There is a passage in 1 Sam. vii. that shows very touchingly how deeply God feels our departures from Him; He says (ver. 2), "*The time was*

long; for it was twenty years:" contrast this with His calling 1884 years "a little while!" And yet though He feels our wanderings thus keenly, His love and grace are so great that He entirely forgets them afterwards, making no count of them at all; as we gather from 1 Kings vi. 1, where we find a discrepancy of 131 years—the exact aggregate of the years of servitude mentioned in Judges. We wrong Him if we think He remembers our sins against us, when once they have been confessed and forsaken. His thoughts are not as our thoughts, but "thoughts of peace." "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me." "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee." His thoughts towards His repentant children are all of love; love covers and blots out and forgets all their past sins.

We see some of His thoughts concerning His own brought out in John xvii., where in commending them to the Father, Jesus speaks of them as having "kept" His word. They would not have dared to say that of themselves, knowing well how often they had wounded their Lord by their questionings and unbelief, but He presented them to the Father as one with Himself, covered with the robe of righteousness, and so "all fair" with "no spot" in them (Cant. iv. 7). "Perfect through

My comeliness which I had put upon thee" (Ezek. xvi. 14). If He would invest us with such beauty, shall we not "*let* the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," and acknowledge ourselves "complete in Him?"

The plaintive utterances which we have been considering, have revealed to us a few of the wounds we have at various times inflicted on the Lord, but there are many other occasions on which we have wounded Him; as for instance, when He has not had the first place in our heart's love and devotion; when we have not wholly trusted Him; when we have not given Him our cares, anxieties and burdens, but have kept them and suffered them to weigh us down to the ground, hiding Him from our view. We have wounded Him when we have been discontented with our circumstances, for they were *His* ordering,—the outcome of much loving thought for our welfare. We have wounded Him when we have denied Him and been ashamed to be known as His followers. There was a time when, like the disciples, we "forsook all and followed Him," but have there not been times too when, as in their case, these words have been reversed, and "they all forsook Him and fled" has been descriptive of us? We have wounded Him when we have spoken ill of,

or felt unkindly towards, some who are His "friends—" loved by *Him* but not by *us*. Each unkind word of, or to them, has wounded their Friend. And is it no wound to Him to be misunderstood by those He loves? Yet how often we have misunderstood Him and thought Him harsh and unloving in His dealings with us. How often He has had to say to us, "Do ye not yet understand?" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" Is it true of any of my readers that "ye say that He is your God, yet ye have not known Him?" you have never cared to be much with Him, have never *lived with Him* (and that is the way to get to know a person)? "My people is foolish, they have not known Me." Since He has "given us an understanding that we *may* know Him" (1 John v. 20), let us press on to have a thorough personal knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; let us emulate Paul, the desire of whose heart was expressed in the words, "That I may KNOW HIM." "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Dan. xi. 32). God says, "Apply thine heart unto My knowledge," "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." The Lord Jesus Himself says, "I know My sheep, and *am known*

of Mine ;” and if we really know a person we cannot misunderstand him nor misinterpret his motives and actions. He is wounded, too, when He sees us so occupied with the things around us, that we are not longing and looking for His Coming, are not *living* in that “blessed hope.” How it must refresh and gladden His heart to see proof of His people’s warm love in an eager expectation of His return. There is no more crucial test whereby we may try ourselves concerning our love for Him than this—whether that thought is a bright and ever-present one.

Can we imagine any more base act than to wound a *guest* ? And yet that is what we have done again and again—wounded Him *in the house of His friends*. But why should we multiply instances of our having wounded Him ? can we not sum them all up by saying that *whenever we have sinned* we have wounded Him ? For He died to “make *an end of sins*,” and every time we yield to sin we make the inference deducible that His work was imperfect, and that He has not done all He promised to do, that He has *not* “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,” has *not* “delivered us out of the hand of our enemies,” and that He is *not* able to “save His people from their sins ;” to save them from the power of sin as well as from

its penalty. How it must grieve Him to see His people not believing in the fulness of His salvation, not looking ever unto Him and trusting Him to keep them from sinning.

Our heart's desire now is that we may never wound Him again. Let us ask the Lord to search us with His full light, that there may no longer be anything between our soul and Him. He has promised to do so (Zeph. i. 12); and when He searches it is real work, He will do it thoroughly; nor can there be restored communion till His light is let in. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me."

Though the Bride wandered from her Beloved yet she got closer afterwards, obtaining a deeper insight into the unchangeableness of His love, learning too His thoughts about herself, "His desire is toward me." He who knew her best and had searched out all her secret and perhaps unknown sins with His light, He to Whom all her blackness and vileness were known—*He* it is whose "desire" is toward her, Who greatly desires her beauty (Ps. xlv. 11). To think that He should see any beauty in *us*! And yet there have been times when we have seen no beauty in HIM "that we should desire Him."

Are you still keeping away from Him because

you have wounded Him, and crying "How long wilt Thou not have mercy?" His answer is "*I am returned* to Jerusalem with mercies: My *house* shall be built in it" (Zech. i. 12, 16)—words in which He assures us once more of His indwelling presence and of restored communion. If your cry has been "Let my Beloved come into His garden," you may be quite sure His reply is, "*I am come into My garden*" (Cant. iv. 16; v. 1). "He restoreth my soul." "Before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking I will hear."

Perhaps there is no time when His heart yearns over His own more tenderly than when they have wounded Him. I think that artist must have known the mind of the Lord well, who chose, as his subject whereby to illustrate the "time to love" (Ecc. iii. 8), this verse—"The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Though wounded so sorely in the denial of all knowledge of Him by His "friend," the Lord only gave him one tender look of sorrowful love. No wonder that look broke Peter's heart. And often now when we think we must have grieved Him irreparably by our sin and forfeited for ever His favour and love, He is gazing on us tenderly, sorrowfully, with just that look, which no words can picture, but which must touch us to the quick, while we hear Him say,

“I am Jesus Whom thou” woundest—Jesus, thy forgiving Saviour and Friend. How tenderly loving and thoughtful He was afterwards concerning this one who had wounded Him, sending him a special message—“Tell His disciples *and Peter*, that He goeth before you into Galilee.” He knew how Peter was now in turn pierced to the heart because he had treated his Lord thus shamefully, and how the memory of that look of wounded love had haunted him all through those three days, and how he had longed just to meet his Master once more to pour out his repentance and grief in His ears. “There shall ye see Him.” And when he had done so, we can imagine the adoring gratitude and devotion that filled his heart as he noted that that pained expression had changed to one of glad free forgiveness, and joy at the recovery of the sheep that had wandered. And when we too shall “see Him” (Rev. xxii. 4) on the Resurrection Morn, we shall rejoice that we can discern in that Face no signs of how we wounded His heart again and again on earth. “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” What a meeting that must have been! These few words are all the record we have given us concerning it; no eye was permitted to see it, no pen to describe it; nor may we draw aside the veil, except at such times

as when we take the place of Peter, and then we too are silent, knowing that we have stepped behind the veil which hides the Holy of holies from our daily view, and have heard unspeakable words and been the objects of unutterable love, which it is not possible for man to describe.

It has been rather a sad subject that we have been considering together: but if the sight of His wounded hand shall have moved us, whereas His voice—the *Bridegroom's* voice that speaks only of love—had failed to do so (Song of Sol. v.), then the contemplation of the subject will not have been fruitless. It cannot but have been that the Holy Spirit, having taken of His wounds and shown them unto us, has, in causing us to sympathise with our Lord, in the treatment He has received at the hands of His friends, said to each of us, "*Thou art the man,*" and has in turn wounded *us*. And now our cry is—"My heart is wounded within me" (Ps. cix. 22). Faithful have been the wounds of our Friend (Prov. xxvii. 6). "As many as I love, I rebuke." But He would not leave us wounded. "He maketh sore, and bindeth up, He woundeth, and His hands (those hands which *we have wounded*) make whole" (Job v. 18). "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us: He

hath smitten, and He will bind us up." He hastens to pour in the oil and the wine that shall heal us, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds;" and "though thy wound is grievous," He says, "I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds." "He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." "He healeth the stroke of their wound." "I am the Lord that healeth thee" was one of the earliest names by which He made Himself known to His people (Ex. xv. 26). He has been wounded not only *for* our transgressions, but *by* them too, and yet—oh the wonders of grace—*by His stripes we are healed* (Isa. liii. 5).

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly." "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." The "God of all comfort" says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people. . . . Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

"He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them."

“Ye shall . . . praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you!”

“Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.”

And I have wounded Thee—oh, wounded Thee!—

Wounded the dear, dear Hand that holds me fast
Oh, to recall the word! That cannot be!

Oh, to unthink the thought that out of reach hath passed!

Sorrow and bitter grief replace my bliss;

I could not wish that any joy should be;
There is no room for any thought but this,

That I have sinned—have sinned—have wounded Thee!

How *could* I grieve Thee so! Thou couldst have kept;

My fall was not the failure of Thy word.
Thy promise hath no flaw, no dire “except,”
To neutralise the grace so royally conferred.

Oh the exceeding sinfulness of sin!

Tenfold exceeding in the love-lit light
Of Thy sufficient grace, without, within,
Enough for every need, in never-conquered might!

With all the shame, with all the keen distress,

Quick, “waiting not,” I flee to Thee again;
Close to the wound, beloved Lord, I press,
That Thine own precious blood may overflow the stain.

WOUNDED IN THE

O *precious* blood ! Lord, let it rest on me !
I ask not only pardon from my King,
But cleansing from my Priest. I come to Thee
Just as I came at first,—a sinful, helpless thing.

Oh, cleanse me now ! My Lord, I cannot stay
For evening shadows and a silent hour ;
Now I have sinned, and *now*, with no delay,
I claim Thy promise and its total power.

O Saviour, bid me “ go and sin no more, ”
And keep me always 'neath the flow
Of thy perpetual fountain ; I implore
That Thy perpetual cleansing I may fully know.”

F. R. HAVERGAL.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Ye are My friends.”—JOHN xv. 14.

THAT manifestation of love which is called Friendship, and its strength as a motive power to action on behalf of its object and those dear to it, must have been well known to Jehoshaphat when, in interceding with God for the Israelites (2 Chron. xx. 7), he urged as his strong plea that it was “the seed of Abraham *Thy Friend*” for whom he was beseeching God’s help and deliverance. Perhaps we are rather apt to envy Abraham his appellation—“the friend of God” (Jas. ii. 23), more especially when we hear God Himself speaking of him as “Abraham My friend” (Isa. xli. 8). And yet we are called to share the self-same privilege, the Lord Jesus claims *us* as His friends!

There is always something specially pleasing in the idea of having been *chosen*. A friend, a bride, each is chosen; and it is a very precious thought to each of us that the Lord Jesus has *chosen me* for

His friend. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Perhaps, reader, in your heart there is a secret unexpressed longing to be loved supremely by one person? If so, know that there is One Person who has "set His heart" on *you* (Job vii. 17; xxxiv. 14), centred His whole affection on you, and to live in the sunshine of that love all the day may be yours. His friendship with Abraham began just as His friendship with each of us began—He *chose* him (Neh. ix. 7), and "from the beginning He chose *us* out" (2 Thess. ii. 13; Eph. i. 4). "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special (translated "*peculiar treasure*" in Ex. xix. 5) people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. vii. 6). He could give no reason for His fervent love—it was love that *could not* but pour itself out, just "*because the Lord loved you*" (ver. 7, 8).* "The Son of God loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem

* The verb here translated "set His love" is a very strong one, not at all the ordinary word used for love, it means to be attached with very great love as though joined to any one; it occurs in chap. x. 15, where it is translated "had a delight," and in chap. xxi. 11, where it is rendered "hast a desire;" it is the word used in Isa. xxxviii. 17, and there translated "in love to;" and in Gen. xxxiv. 8, it is rendered "longeth for."

us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works" (Tit. ii. 14, R. V.) "The Lord hath *set apart* him that is godly *for Himself.*" "My chosen," He adds with increasing tenderness after that other dear appellative "My people" (Isa. xliii. 20). "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest."

And we can best please Him by *setting our love on Him* (Ps. xci. 14). "Give Me thine heart," He says. "I love them that love Me." "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." The Lord Jesus wants to be so much to us; He wants companionship with us and heart-to-heart intercourse; He wants to reveal to us a little out of the depths of His heart; He desires that there shall be "nothing between but love." His blood-bought Bride, we are united to Him, actually *one with Him.* Marvellous thought! HE wants to commune with *us*, HE is unsatisfied till He has *our* love, He craves for it, for love is Love's necessity. Does not the knowledge that He *so* loves us, fill us with holy awe and wonder? Love begets love: "with my whole soul have I desired Thee;" "we love Him because He first loved us." Oh! when He comes to each of us with that eager question—"Lovest thou Me?" may we give Him great joy and glad-

ness of heart by the response—"Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou *knowest* that I love Thee."

"I will betroth thee unto Me for ever" (Hos. ii. 19). When we say to Him, "Thy love is better than wine," He answers back, "How fair is *thy* love, My sister, My spouse! how *much* better is thy love than wine!" (Cant. i. 2; iv. 10)—He prizes and thinks more of *our* love than we do of His. Friendship's love has been known to pass "the love of women," but we have been called "to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," love "strong as death," love that keeps and guards us "as the apple of His eye" (Deut. xxxii. 10; Zech. ii. 8).

Friendship has calls as well as privileges. The Lord lays down a condition when He offers us His friendship—"Ye are My friends, *if* ye do whatsoever I command you." Abraham stood the test nobly when his Friend asked his only son's life at his hands—"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest . . . and offer him . . . for a burnt offering" (Gen. xxii. 2). God sometimes asks us to make great sacrifices for love of Him (and He knows what sacrifice is, seeing "He *spared not His own Son*, but delivered Him up for us all"), and never should we hesitate for one instant to give up even the object most dear to our heart, if He

demands it of us, could we but realise what joy it gives Him to see *such* proof of our love for, and confidence in Him.

It is characteristic of a friend (*the* Friend, as it is in the original) that he "loveth at *all* times" (Prov. xvii. 17), and though our love to Jesus changes and wanes, His towards us never does. From the beginning His "delights were with the sons of men," and "Jesus . . . having loved His own which were in the world . . . loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1). "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." We have a "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother"—even the One who says "Lo, I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world," "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Intimacy is one of the chief characteristics of friendship. God will have no reserve from us if we have none from Him. But we must see to it that there is nothing between our soul and Him; directly there is, the friendship is marred, the communion interrupted. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" "Hence-

forth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). All could not have been right between Elisha and his God when the Shunnamite's son died, or there would not have been that cry as of a neglected friend—"the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me" (2 Kings iv. 27). We may have as close a friendship with the Lord as Moses had, with whom "The Lord spake . . . face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. xxxiii. 11). "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Our faithful God has called us "unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord," "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" (Prov. xviii. 24). This brings us to *Testimony*—witnessing for Jesus. Shall we be behind-hand with Jonathan, who "delighted much in David," so much so that he "spake good of David unto Saul his father," took his friend's part and spoke up for him to the incensed king, when to do so was probably as much as his life was worth (1 Sam. xix.)? Shall we not speak good of our

David when we see Him despised and hated, and hear Him evil spoken of—speak up for Him when to do so shall bring upon us scorn and contempt? “Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, and My words, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of the Father, with the holy angels.” If we say, “I know not this Man of whom ye speak” (and sometimes we can deny Him by silence quite as much as by direct speech), there may come a time when He will say, “I know you not.” Nor does the world think better of us for forsaking our Friend; it notices if we deny Him, or even seem to. “Is this thy kindness to thy Friend? why wentest thou not with thy Friend” (2 Sam. xvi. 17). It is very touching to notice in the history of God’s people Israel, how all their departure from Him could not make Him cease to acknowledge them as *His people*. Have we always been as ready to claim connection with Him before the world?

If we love and admire a person very much, we seek to be like him; and by studying our Friend we shall grow like Him (2 Cor. iii. 18). “As He is, so are we in this world.” “We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” We shall be *satisfied* hereafter

when we awake with His likeness (Ps. xvii. 15). He longs to see His image in us, and to make us holy even as He is holy. "The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all His commandments . . . and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. xxvi. 18, 19). "The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself, as He hath sworn unto thee." "Ye shall be holy unto Me: for I am holy and have severed you" (Lev. xx. 26).

Our Friend too likened Himself to us—so far as was consistent with complete sinlessness. He took upon Him our form, suffered hunger, thirst and weariness, was misunderstood, despised and scorned—that He might be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . . He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). "As in water face answereth face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19). The certainty of meeting with sympathy from your friend has much to do with the promotion of that confidence which is essential to friendship.

There are many mutual characteristics in friendship. Friends delight in being alone together (Cant. ii. 10; Mark vi. 31; iv. 34; Hos. ii. 14); to speak to one another (Ex. xxxiii. 9, 11; xx. 22; Numb. xi. 17; Deut. v. 24; Ezek. iii. 22; Jer. xii. 1;

Ex. xxxiv. 35; Luke xxiv. 32); to hear each other speak (Cant. ii. 14; 1 Pet. iii. 12; Ps. lxxxv. 8; Hab. ii. 1; 1 Sam. iii. 9; Luke x. 39; Prov. viii. 34; Isa. xli. 1); to gaze upon one another (Cant. ii. 14; vi. 5; Ps. xxxiii. 18; xxxiv. 15; 1 Pet. iii. 12; Ps. xxv. 15; cxli. 8); to give up for one another (John iii. 16; Gal. ii. 20); to give one another the best (Mark xii. 6); to think of one another (Ps. xl. 5, 17; Jer. xxix. 11; Ps. civ. 34; lxiii. 5, 6); to fulfil one another's desires (Ps. xxxvii. 4; xxi. 2; cxlv. 19; John xiv. 13; Ps. xl. 8; cxliii. 10; Col. i. 9, Eph. vi. 6); to be with one another (John xii. 26; xvii. 24; Mark v. 18; Phil. i. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 17).

Above all, you have perfect confidence in your Friend, trusting Him completely at all times.

Friends understand one another. "*Thou understandest,*" "*The Lord understandeth*" (Ps. cxxxix. 2; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9), how often has this thought soothed and comforted us when others have misunderstood us! But then we must remember that the understanding must not be all on our side, for, as we have seen in the last chapter, HE looks to be understood too of us.

We depend much (too much sometimes) on our friend's prayers, and in times of difficulty, sorrow, and weakness, derive great comfort from the know-

ledge that he is praying for us. Do we rely as much on the prayers of our Friend in heaven who pleads with the Father on our behalf, even when we have not asked Him to do so? (John xvii. 9; Heb. vii. 25).

There is the mutual satisfaction and delight too which result from the fact of possessing one another and being one another's. "I am Thine," is our glad response to His "Thou art Mine." "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." He makes Himself mine, *even as* I am His!

He asks us to let Him satisfy us; He says, "Delight thyself in the Lord;" shall we not do so? "If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle, *then* thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God" (Job xxii. 23, 26). He does take such "pleasure in His people" (Ps. cxlvii. 11; cxlix. 4). They are "His delight" (Prov. xi. 20). He says, "I will joy in My people." "He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest (or be silent) in His love; He will joy over thee with singing." To think that we can give Him joy who "*for* the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame!" Since He finds such joy in us, shall we not find ours in Him and in Him alone? Shall He not be to each of us

“God, my exceeding joy?” “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

Not only have we the reason given us for the Father’s love to the Son—because Jesus loved us unto death (John x. 15, 17), but we are also told why the Father loves *us*, “the Father Himself loveth you, *because ye have loved Me*” (John xvi. 27). Thus have we fellowship with the Father—the object of His love and ours being “this same Jesus.”

“Thou hast ravished My heart.” “As the Father hath loved Me, SO have I loved you.” “Greater love hath no man than this!”

“What one nation in the earth is like Thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be His own people? . . . for Thy people Israel didst Thou make *Thine own* people for ever’ (1 Chron. xvii. 21, 22). “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” “What nation is there so great, who hath God *so nigh* them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?” “A people near unto Him,” is our glorious cognomen. “It is good for me to draw near to God,” and blessed indeed is “the man whom Thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.” The cry of His heart is, “Come ye near

unto Me." "Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the Lord, come near." "Now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." There is no necessity to go far from Him, He has promised that *nothing* "shall separate us from the love of Christ." "I drew them with cords of a man (the Man Christ Jesus was the connecting cord that drew us to God), with bands of love" (Hos. xi. 4). "With lovingkindness have I drawn thee." How near He is to us, we gather from such passages as, "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand" (Isa. xli. 13); "Thou holdest mine eyes waking" (Ps. lxxvii. 4); "Thy hand presseth me sore" (Ps. xxxviii. 2); "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me;" "Underneath are the everlasting arms;" "In the shadow of His hand hath He hid me;" "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings;" "In the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice;" "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust."

Nor is His love satisfied with being *with* His friends, and having them *near* Him,—He would be *in* them, and have them in Him. "Lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee;" "Abide in Me, and I in you;" "He that abideth in Me, and

I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (and it was for the bringing forth of fruit that He chose us as His friends—John xv. 16 ; "I looked that it should bring forth grapes"—Isa. v. 4). "Christ liveth in me." "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in one." "If a man love Me, he will keep My words ; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

There is a beautiful gradation observable in the name by which the soul, at different stages of its growth in grace, addresses or speaks of the Lord Jesus. At first He is Jesus—Saviour—Lord—Shepherd—Master, &c. ; but at last she loses all sight of His other attributes in the one thought of His *love*, which has called forth hers ; henceforth she has no other name for Him but that which speaks of love—"My Beloved," "My Well-beloved, | "Whom my soul loveth"—the ineffable name that she uses not only *to* Him, but *of* Him (Cant. i. 7 ; iii. 1-4). How it tells of her absorption and satisfaction in Him ! Well known indeed must have been her love for Him, since she needed to give no other description of Him when she enquired of the watchmen, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth ?"

"The chiefest among ten thousand," "He is

altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

It is the same with Him:—"My love" is the name by which He delights to call her. And what name could more fitly and comprehensively epitomise and memorialise all He had done for her, and all she had become to Him? His love it was that led Him to redeem her to Himself for a bride, and gave Him the right to call her "My love," "My beloved" (Jer. xi. 15), "The dearly-beloved of My soul" (Jer. xii. 7; see Deut. xxxiii. 12; Ps. cxxvii. 2; Dan. ix. 23; x. 19; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Rom. i. 7).

God's name for His Son shows the same loving absorption—"My Beloved" (Matt. xii. 18), "My Well-beloved" (Isa. v. 1); and the knowledge that it is in "The *Beloved*" that we are accepted, must ever be exceedingly precious to our hearts. *Our* Beloved, the same as *God's*! Thus have we fellowship with the Father in His delight in Jesus.

The apostle John spoke of himself as "that disciple *whom Jesus loved*;" it was thus he delighted to submerge his name and identity, by calling attention to the fact that Jesus *loved* him—even him! What more beautiful can there be, than to hear the soul calling Jesus—"Whom my soul loveth," and calling itself—"whom Jesus loved!"

And surely none have greater right to the use of these two names than those by whom the Lord has been WOUNDED IN THE HOUSE OF HIS FRIENDS. If we loved Him before there was so much to forgive, how can we help loving Him with a far deeper love now that we have heard Him say, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven?" even as the prodigal son's love for his father before he left his home, can surely have borne no comparison with his love for him after his return from the far country whither he had wandered, and whence he was so warmly welcomed, being joyfully reinstated in all the privileges of sonship.

"Unto HIM THAT LOVED US, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

"Wounded"—Whose that voice of sorrow? Whose that mournful cry of pain?

"Wounded"—'Tis the voice of Jesus. Shall the Master call in vain?

Voice that tells of grief unuttered—Wanderer, *canst* thou turn away,

When in low hush'd tones *He* pleadeth? Wilt thou not return to-day?

Once, beside the Cross of Jesus thou didst watch in silence
 there,
 Broken down with sin and anguish, with the sadness of
 despair ;
 'Twas that sight of love unfathom'd gently drew thee to His
 side,
*There He gave thee life and pardon, whispered "In My Love
 abide."*

Thou hast wandered, thou hast left Him ; wounded *Him*, thy
 Lord, thy Friend,
 Pierced His heart with bitter sorrow, yet He loveth to the
 end.
 Listen ! Through the stillness cometh—"Thou beloved of My
 soul,
 I was bruised for thy transgression, and I died to make thee
 whole.

"I, the lonely Man of Sorrows, drank that bitter cup for
 thee ;
 Passed through death—that death accursed ; yet hast thou
 forgotten Me.
 Oh ! how oft would I have gather'd thee beneath my wings
 to rest,
 Could I leave thee lone and weary, heavy laden and
 oppressed ?"

Friend of Jesus—*what* thine answer, when He asketh "Lov'st
 thou *Me* ?"
 Canst thou meet His look of pity?—look of tenderest
 sympathy ?
 Canst thou listen still unbroken, gaze into His face un-
 moved ?
 Wounded Lord, Thy love hath conquer'd, at the Cross again
 'tis proved.

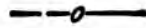
Mighty Love! Thou wondrous ocean, strong as death, un-
quench'd, untold,
Till the Lord of Life and Glory did the Father's heart unfold.
Jesus healeth—*He* restoreth; when thou at His feet dost
bow,
Everlasting Love doth meet thee, saith—"Forgiven . . .
until now."

A. CONEY.

THE END.



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