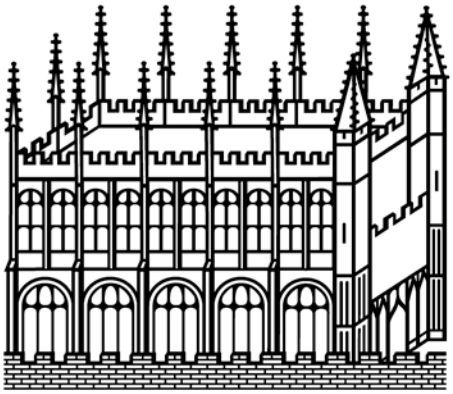

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# HOMILETICAL

# COMMENTARY

ON THE

# SONG OF SOLOMON.

BY

THOMAS ROBINSON, D.D.,

*Author of "Suggestive and Homiletic Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans," "Homiletical Commentary on the Book of Job," "Wanderings in Scripture Lands," "The Evangelists and the Mishna," &c.*

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# PREFACE.

THE following work, like its predecessor on Job, was originally intended for the Van Doren Series. According to the design of the undertaking of which it now forms a part, its object is neither critical nor exegetical, but homiletical; the projector's aim being rather to supplement existing Commentaries, and to afford a practical aid to preachers who are supposed, more or less, to possess them. The work has, therefore, been thrown into such a shape as was thought most likely to meet the requirements of those who, with comparatively little opportunity for study, are called to dispense the Word of Life.

While this, however, was the main object, the Author has at the same time endeavoured to make his book as readable and profitable as possible to the private Christian. He has, therefore, introduced comparatively little in the way of critical elucidation of the text; and, as in the case of his work on Job, has given to such matter a place by itself at the end of the commentary.

The author, as far as he was able, has availed himself of the labours of those who have preceded him in the same field. Their views, however, in regard to the meaning or application of the text, will in general only be found among the appended notes. His own views, which are given rather in the commentary than in the notes, he has endeavoured to form, after giving the text the most careful consideration he was able, independently of what he has found in the numerous commentators consulted. His aim and desire has been, first to 'receive of the Lord,' and then to 'deliver' to His Church.

Of a book like the Song of Solomon, there will naturally be found a great diversity of interpretation. The exact meaning and application of a passage intended by the royal penman, or by the Holy Spirit who inspired him, it must necessarily be difficult in many cases to determine. This will no doubt be generally obtained in proportion as we may be under the teaching of the

same Spirit. 'For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God which is in him' (1 Cor. ii. 11). To obtain such teaching, however, we require to occupy a very humble place: 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes' (Matt. xi. 25). It is, however, not only in reference to single passages that a great variety of opinions is often found to exist. The same variety is found in reference to the nature and object of the book itself; some, though few, strangely regarding it as merely treating of earthly matters, with only a moral object in regard to the conjugal relation (the *profano-erotic* or *ethical* view), while the great body of expositors, both ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian, have regarded it as a Divine allegory, exhibiting spiritual things under the veil of natural ones. Here, however, we again find diversity. First, as to the *ground* or *basis* of the allegory; whether it is based upon an actual occurrence—a historical basis; and if so, what? Or whether it is formed upon an ideal transaction conceived by the poet himself under the Spirit's inspiration. Secondly, as to the spiritual *meaning* of the allegory; whether *experimental* in relation to the individual believing *soul* (the *mystico-spiritual* sense); or *doctrinal*, in relation to the Church as a whole (the *mystico-doctrinal*); or *prophetical*, whether in relation to the Church (the *mystico-prophetical*); or to Christ Himself (the *typico-Messianic*); or *historical*, in relation to the Church or nation of Israel (the *mystico-political*). To most of these applications of the allegory, few of which, perhaps, are entirely exclusive of the rest, reference will be found in the notes appended to the commentary.

The author's own view as to the basis of the allegory will be seen, both from the commentary and the introduction, to be rather that of DELITZSCH, ZOCKLER, and others; according to which, Solomon is regarded as having, during an excursion into the country, in which he was attended by his nobles, met unexpectedly with Shulamite while engaged in rural pursuits, and struck with her charms, having asked and obtained her hand, brought her to the palace as his bride. The incident, however, he considers to have been probably rather a conception of the inspired poet than an actual fact, or at least possessing but a very slight substratum of reality; a conception bearing a strong resemblance to that of one of our own English poets, who, in one of his Oriental Eclogues, written doubtless without the slightest reference to the Song of Solomon, makes Abbas, a Georgian king, to have done exactly the same with Abra, a shepherdess, what Solomon is supposed, according to this view, to have done with Shulamite. This view the author

conceives to be more probable than either the older and more common one, which makes the basis of the poem to be the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter; or the more modern one of EWARD and others, adopted also by Professor GODET, of Neufchatel, which makes Solomon to have carried off by force the object of his passion, and to have taken her to his palace, where he endeavoured in vain to detach her affection from the youthful shepherd to whom she was already betrothed.

That the form is a sacred allegory setting forth, under an external veil, the love, union, and communion existing between Jehovah or Messiah on the one hand, and the Church or people of God on the other, with allusion to points in the history both of the Church and its Head, is the view that, under various modifications, has been generally adopted both by Jews and Christians.

That such a view is the correct one, is rendered the more certain by the fact that similar allegorical or parabolic representations are not uncommon in the Scriptures; and that everywhere, both in the Old and New Testaments, the relation between God, or more properly the Messiah, and His Church or covenant people, is exhibited under the figure of a marriage: the former being frequently styled the Husband or Bridegroom, and the latter the Bride. In the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel, for example, the Jewish church or nation is represented as having been found by Jehovah as an outcast infant in the open field, rescued and reared, adorned and beautified by Him, and ultimately taken into union with Himself as His Bride. 'And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine' (Ezek. xvi. 6—8).

LANE, in his valuable work on Modern Egypt, observes that, from the character of the Moslem songs sung at the *Zikrs*, or special religious services composed for the purpose, and intended only to have a spiritual sense, though not understood in that sense by the generality of the people, he cannot have any doubt as to the design of Solomon's Song. And although Sir William

Jones speaks doubtfully in reference to the existence of sacred allegory in ordinary Oriental poetry, Dr. KITTO remarks that the practice of setting forth spiritual subjects under the emblem of love is not confined to Arabian countries, but is found in Persia, India, and among the Rabbinical Hebrews; and gives it as his opinion that the allegorical or spiritual interpretation of the Song of Solomon is not only the right one, but the only possible one; and that, if the poem have any historical basis, the circumstances are so modified as to suit the spiritual purpose of the allegory, but would have been most unsuitable in a real history.

The reader will observe, that like some other expositors, I have divided the Song into parts, and these again into separate scenes. There can be no reasonable doubt that, while the remotest idea of performance is of course entirely out of the question, the poem is scenic or dramatic in its structure; exhibiting, as it does, without formally announcing it, a variety of characters in dialogue, in various situations, and under various circumstances; while, in the general presence of the 'daughters of Jerusalem,' a resemblance may even be seen to the chorus of the ancient Greeks. The separating of the parts of the poem, however, and the assigning to the speakers their proper place in the dialogues, while highly important to the right understanding of the passages, is often one of the most difficult tasks of the expositor. The speaker is indeed often, though not always, indicated either by the title given to the party addressed, or by the grammatical form of some of the words, apparent in the original, but not in an English translation.

None who is familiar with the Psalms of David and the writings of the prophets, will wonder at the language of ardent love and longing mutually expressed in the Song by the Bride and Bridegroom, viewed as representing the Lord Jesus Christ and His redeemed people. It may well be asked, why should earthly love be less ardent than that which is Divine and heavenly? and why should perfect excellence, and boundless, unmerited, self-sacrificing love be regarded with less ardour and affection, and be spoken of in colder terms, than that which is unspeakably inferior? Is it too much to say that the ardent language of many a Jacobite song, in reference to a prince who at best afforded but a specimen of fallen and imperfect humanity, might put to the blush many who profess attachment to the Prince of Life?

The Author is aware that, in some quarters, the Divine Book on which he has been engaged lies under a prejudice, as if unsuited for homiletical use. He trusts, however, that the attempt, now very imperfectly made, to provide a help in that direction, may not be in vain. If either the preacher

of the Gospel should derive benefit in his arduous but blessed and important employment from the commentary now prepared, as the writer is thankful to learn has been the case with that on Job or if the Christian reader should find himself assisted by it in his meditation on that portion of the inspired Word which the author has found so precious to himself, he will feel abundantly rewarded for the labour it has cost him. He prayerfully commends it, with all its imperfections, to the blessing of Him whose aid has been invoked in its preparation, and who has graciously promised in regard to His own Word: 'IT SHALL NOT RETURN UNTO ME VOID.'

*Morpeth.*

*August* 13*th*, 1877.

# *HOMILETIC COMMENTARY*

ON

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

## Introduction.

**I. Authorship.** The poem generally regarded as the work of King Solomon. Perhaps, though not certainly, indicated by the title. See on chap. i. ver. 1. Reasons in favour of this view:—1. General consent both of Jewish and Christian writers, ancient and modern. 2. The prevailing circle of images and references to facts and things; indicating the author to have lived in the time of Solomon, and to have been well acquainted with natural history, as Solomon is known to have been (*Kiel*). 3. The author well acquainted with all parts of the land of Israel, and greatly susceptible of impressions from the beautiful (*Delitzsch*). 4. Solomon known to have been largely employed in poetical composition (1 Kings iv. 32). 5. A relationship with the Book of Proverbs, known to be Solomon's, indicated by the language (*Hengstenberg*).

**II. Canonicity and Inspiration.** All but universally admitted. Formed part of the Jewish canon in the time of the Saviour, and always received as inspired Scripture by the Christian Church. Independent arguments for its inspiration;—The majesty of the style; the sublimity of the matter; its harmony with the rest of Scripture, especially in the leading idea of the bridal relation of the Church to Jehovah or the Messiah; its power, felt in all ages, in moving the affections towards the Divine Saviour.

**III. Unity of the Book.** The poem generally regarded as a united whole rather than a collection of independent odes. Arguments in favour of its unity:—1. The title—a "Song," not Songs. 2. The same persons introduced throughout, and in the same character; as—the King, called also Solomon, appearing as the friend and beloved of the virgin; the Virgin herself, called more definitely Shulamite, who appears throughout as the Fair One, the love, sister, and bride of the king; the Daughters of Jerusalem. 3. The same commencements and conclusions of long passages or divisions of the book; as at iii. 6; vi. 10; viii. 5; ii. 6, 7; iii. 5; viii. 3, 4. 4. The recurrence of the same ideas, and even of whole sentences, as in ii. 10–13 compared with vi. 11, vii. 12–14; iii. 1–4 with v. 2–8; iv. 1–3 with vi. 5–7; iv. 5 with vii. 4; i. 15 with iv. 1. 5. The same language throughout, even to the smallest peculiarities (*Hahn*). 6. Unity of scene. 7. The plan and tendency of the whole (*Ewald*).

**IV. Internal Character of the Composition.** An allegory, with a probable foundation in some historical fact or event in Solomon's life, as the occasion of it; the bridal relation between the Church and Christ being exhibited under the figure of a similar relation between King Solomon and Shulamite, a beautiful and pure-minded rustic maiden. Arguments in favour of the allegorical nature of the poem:—1. The general belief of both the Jewish and the Christian Church, both in ancient and modern times. 2. The unity and harmony of the Book, on this supposition, with the rest of Scripture. 3. The apparent reference to it in this sense by the writers and speakers of the New Testament, as Matt. ix. 15; John iii. 29; Rom. vii. 4; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 23—32; Rev. xix. 7; xxi. 9; xxii. 17 compared with Song iii. 11; iv. 8, 9, 10, 11; v. 1; and vii. 10; Matt. ii. 1 with iii. 2, and v. 6; Matt. ii. 11 with iii. 6; Matt. xviii. 12, 13, and Luke xv. 4—7 with ii. 2, 8, and vi. 8, 9. 4. The undeniable resemblance of the Song to the 45th Psalm, about whose allegorical meaning all are agreed. 5. Apparent indications in the poem itself; for example: "Shulamite" apparently used as a symbolical name (viii. 10), and as the name rather of a plurality in unity than of a single person (i. 3, 4; ii. 9, 15; v. 1; vii. 13; viii, 8, 12). "Baalhamon" not the name of any known real place, but apparently expressive of the world and its peoples as in a state of unrest and dispeace (Ps. xlvi 4, 7; Isaiah lvii. 20). 6. The acknowledged difficulty of giving a satisfactory explanation on the merely natural or historic theory, as indicated by the great want of unity among those who have adopted it.

**V. The External Character or Form of the Composition.** A dramatic poem, or a poem in the nature of a drama, embracing a variety of scenes and characters; these characters sometimes speaking in dialogue, and sometimes alone; with a subordinate party generally present and often taking part in the dialogue, in some respects corresponding to the Chorus of the ancient drama. The form of the poem thus in some degree resembling that of Job; the difference being that in Job each speaker is formally announced by the poet, which is not the case in the Song, the change and personality of the speakers being left to be inferred by the reader from the speeches themselves—a circumstance often rendering the interpretation more difficult, but greatly contributing to the energy and liveliness of the composition.

**VI. The Object of the Book.** Various objects probably contemplated by the Divine Author, whatever may have been the design of the human one. The leading object justly regarded as being to exhibit the intimate relation subsisting between the Church, whether viewed as a whole or in each of its true members individually, and its Divine covenant—Head and King, the Messiah, or Son of God in human nature; the relation being that of a Bride and Bridegroom—a relation constantly recognized in the Prophets in especial reference to the Church of the Old Testament (Isaiah liv. 5, 6; Jer. ii. 2; iii. 14; xxxi. 32; Hos. ii. 19, 20; iii. 3; Ezek. xvi. 32—38); and in the Evangelists and Apostles in reference to the Church of the New (Matt. ix. 15; John iii. 29; Rom. vii. 4; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 23, 32; Rev. xix. 7—9; xxi. 9; xxii. 17). As a part of this object, the Book designed to shew the amazing love of God in Christ as implied in that bridal relation; the transcendent excellence of the Divine Bridegroom; the privileges, duties, and responsibilities connected with this relation on the part of the Church as His Bride; the injury sustained by her from a conduct unbecoming it, and, on the other hand, the blessedness and honour connected with a faithful observance of its duties and improvement of its privileges. Practically, the edification of the Church the object of this as of the other parts of Scripture

(Rom. xv. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16); the aim of her Divine Head in giving this precious portion of Holy Writ being thereby to elevate, purify, sanctify, comfort, warn, direct, preserve, and stimulate the members of his mystical Body in every age; the Book exhibiting, with this view, a picture of the experience of believers while on earth—their hopes and longings, joys and sorrows, temptations and conflicts, falls and recoveries, love and service.

A coincident object of the book probably to afford a prophetical shadowing forth of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Bridegroom, and of the general history of the Church after these events; as well as a dim allegorical picture of its development up to the time of their occurrence.

Possibly also a subordinate object contemplated in the Book in relation to marriage, viewed as an earthly though Divine institution; its duties being here, as in Eph. v. 23, &c., mirrored forth, on the one hand, in the affection and demeanour of the heavenly Bridegroom to His Church; and, on the other, in the duties belonging to the Church in relation to her Divine Husband.

**VII. Divisions and Contents of the Book.** The divisions variously made, but very generally considered as five or six, with several subdivisions. The first division may be viewed as extending from chap. i. 2 to ii. 7; the second, from chap. ii. 8 to iii. 5; the third, from chap. iii. 6 to v. 1; the fourth from chap. v. 2 to vi. 9; the fifth, from chap. vi. 10 to the end of the Book. The last possibly divided at chap. viii. 4. The subjects under these divisions, as regards the allegory, may for convenience be distinguished thus:—Part First: The Meeting of the Betrothed. Part Second: The Nuptials. Part Third: The Marriage Feast. Part Fourth: The Coolness and its Consequences. Part Fifth: Married Life and its Incidents. The Book might be said to have three great divisions:—Before the Marriage; The Marriage Itself; and, After the Marriage. The divisions might be further reduced to two: The Period before and the Period after Marriage. Chap. iii. 2 apparently the centre of the poem.

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

## Title of the Book.

### Chapter I. Verse 1.

*"The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's."*

It is well, with Dr. Chalmers, to begin the study of this sacred book with the prayer: "My God, spiritualize my affections; give me intense love to Christ."

Two parts in the Title of the book as here given:—1. Its name and character—"the Song of Songs." 2. Its ascription—"which is Solomon's." The First part of the Title,

*"The Song of Songs,"*

Indicates—

I. *The* Nature *of the Book.* A Song. Hence—

1. *Pleasant and joyous.* Song the language of joy. Indicates joy in those who sing, and aims at awakening joy in those who hear. This one of the 'songs in the night' given by our Maker and Saviour (Job xxxv. 10). The Holy Spirit the author of joy, and therefore the author of songs. This book all the more attractive from its being a song. Both old and young love songs, and are attracted by them. The subject of this book of a pleasing nature, and fit to be treated in a song. Marriage a joyful event, celebrated with festivity and music. The subject of this song a Divine and heavenly union. The song a spiritual Epithalamium, or Nuptial Ode. A song of the bride-chamber (Matt. ix. 15). A Gospel song, and one for Gospel times; the whole subject being the love of Jesus Christ to sinners and the salvation He brings to them. Gospel grace puts a new song in the mouth (Ps. xl. 3; xcviii. 1). The Gospel began with songs and ends with them. This book one of the 'spiritual songs,' in which believers are to 'speak one to another' (Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16). A large part of the Bible taken up with songs. The Word of God intended to be attractive. The Lord's ransomed ones to 'return and come to Zion with songs' (Isa. xxxv. 10).

2. *Profitable.* A song, like poetry in general, fitted to stir and move the affections. Songs found to have the most powerful influence on the minds and morals of a people. "Give me the making of the songs and ballads of a nation, and I will leave the laws to others." By the Jews the poetical parts of Scripture were especially esteemed, and often learned by heart.

II. *Its* Excellence. A 'Song of songs.' A Hebrew expression denoting excellence; as king of kings, heaven of heavens, &c. This not only excels all human, but all Divine songs. The Jews called other Scripture songs 'holy,' but this the 'holy of holies." The book worthy of this title on account of—

1. Its *Character as a Composition.* The most "beautiful example of Hebrew poetry in its highest style of metaphor and arrangement." More especially, however, on account of—

2. Its *Subject.* The bridal relation between the Son of God and His saved people. Christ's excellence and beauty, and His love to the Church as His bride. The Church's excellence and beauty as a reflection of His, and her happiness and honour in consequence of her bridal relation to Him. This song has the Holy Ghost for its author; the union and communion between Christ and believers for its matter; and the glory of God and the comfort of His people for its end. Here are prophecy, history, and the spiritual life, divinely woven into one symbolical robe of matchless beauty. The song a many-sided mirror reflecting the Lord's dealings with His Church, viewed both collectively and individually, as well in the Old Testament as in the New. Reveals mysteries of Divine love into which the angels desire to look. This book, next to the Gospels, the fullest of Christ, and therefore the sweetest to the Christian who is enlightened enough to understand it. A fountain at which prophets and apostles and the Lord Jesus Himself

refreshed their spirits. Next to David's Psalms, the favourite book of the Bible with the Fathers of the Church. Its foundation laid in the Psalms; especially in that gem of Psalms, the forty-fifth. David sung the Bridegroom's future appearing, His conflicts, his sorrows, and his triumphs: Solomon sung His alliance and fellowship with His blood-bought bride. The song a labyrinth of exquisite flowers transplanted from heaven to earth. Wafts a perfumed breath of celestial spring from paradise to this world. The song "a maze of sweets, and a lovely obscurity." A heaven-given riddle in connection with the marriage of the Lamb, the true Samson; and only to be ploughed with His own heifer. Requires 'the mind that hath,' not earthly but, heavenly 'wisdom.' A mine of precious diamonds, demanding patient and prayerful labour and the Spirit's light to explore it and discover them.

The Second part of the Title—

"*Which is Solomon's,*"

Ambiguous. Probably indicates—

I. *The* AUTHOR *of the Book.* The literal Solomon, King of Israel, and wisest of men. *Best proof of wisdom, to celebrate the love of God in Christ, and to stir up ourselves and others to love Him in return.* Gradation in Solomon's writings: the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, or the Song. In Proverbs, Solomon sings of moral virtues and their benefits; in Ecclesiastes, of the vanity of earthly things; in Canticles, of Divine love and fellowship. Canticles a striking contrast to Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes, a mournful complaint of the disappointment found in the creature; Canticles a joyous song of the infinite satisfaction found in the Creator. Ecclesiastes points to earthly pleasure, and says: 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again'; Canticles points to God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and says: 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall never thirst.'—Solomon, with his hands full of state affairs, yet found time for spiritual meditation and the celebratiou of Divine love. *Worldly business, and diligence in it, no hindrance to love to Christ, and due concern for the spiritual interests of ourselves and others.*

II. *The* SUBJECT *of the Book.* The spiritual Solomon, the true Prince of Peace and King of Israel,—Solomon's great antitype. The true Solomon and his love to the Church the great subject of the Song. Solomon exhibited in the Bible as one of the types of the Messiah. Is so—

1. In his Names: 'Jedidiah,' Beloved of the Lord: 'Solomon,' the Peaceful.
2. In his Wisdom.
3. In his Riches and Magnificence.
4. In the wide extent of his Dominions.
5. In the peaceful character of his Reign.
6. In the prosperous and happy condition of his Kingdom.
7. In the erection of the Temple of God at Jerusalem.

Christ prefigured by Aaron as a priest; by Moses as a prophet; by David and Solomon as a King,—by the one in his conquests and by the other in his peaceful enjoyment of them. Solomon not called here, as in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the King of Israel. His personality here lost sight of in his typical character. The type overshadowed by the antitype. *Christ, in one aspect or another, the central figure in all the Books of Scripture.* "Search the Scriptures; for they testify of Me." This said even of Old Testament Scripture. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." "He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (John v. 39; Rev. xix. 10; Luke xxiv. 27). The Scriptures all testify of Jesus. The Song testifies of Him as the King and Bridegroom of His Church, stooping to win and wed poor fallen humanity for His Bride. By the Jews, the Song understood of their Divine King to be manifested in the Messiah, and the Israelitish nation as the Bride whom He was pleased to espouse to Himself.

III. *The* DESIGN *of the Book.* For the true Solomon.

1. *For his Glory.* The glory of Christ, and of God in Him, the end of all Scripture as of all creation (Col. i. 16). Especially true of this portion of it, so full of Himself, of His excellencies, His joys, and His love.

2. *For his Use.* All Old Testament intended for his use as the perfect man (Ps. i. 1—3; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16). Probably this portion of it especially, which speaks most about him. Reason to believe that the Psalms of David and the Song of Solomon formed the principal devotional books of our Lord (*Davidson*). As a child, Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature. In boths respects, doubtless, through ordinary means. The sincere milk of the Word his daily food. What was designed for the Head, designed also for the members. What was used by the man Christ Jesus as His spiritual aliment and refreshment, to be used also by ourselves for ours. The Rabbinical rule that this Book was only to be read by those who had reached their thirtieth year, a mere human invention,—like others, rejected by Christ and to be rejected by us. 2 Tim. iii. 15—16, and Rom. xv. 4 clean against any such limitation. This Book, like

the rest of Scripture, to be read with seriousness and expounded with discretion; but no argument against reading and preaching from it in the fact that evil men may abuse it. Ignorant men wrest also other Scriptures to their own destruction. "To the pure all things are pure." The holiest and most spiritually-minded have naturally delighted most in this Book, in which they find most of their Beloved and their Friend. Witness Bernard of Clairvoix, Samuel Rutherford, and Robert McCheyne. In Scotland's best times, the song of Solomon the chosen field of meditation at Sacramental seasons.

Two things needful for the profitable reading of this remarkable book:—(1) *A Christian experience.* The song a mirror of the believer's heart. Only taught by a Divine anointing, and only learned by a spiritual experience" (*Bernard*). Only to be properly understood by our becoming part of the Bride whose experience it portrays. (2) *A loving heart.* Like the forty-fifth Psalm, which it greatly resembles, the Song of Solomon a 'Song of loves' (Ps. xlv. *title*). The mystery of the song a mystery of love. Words of earthly love employed to elevate the sout to a heavenly one. A 'song of loves' requires a loving heart to understand, realize, and appreciate it. "Love's language a foreign tongue to one who does not love." Hence the song of Solomon pre-eminently a test for the state of the heart.

## PART FIRST.

# The Meeting of the Betrothed.

CHAPTER I. 2, TO CHAPTER II. 7.

SCENE FIRST. **Place:** *The Palace of Jerusalem.* **Speakers:** *Shulamite, or the Bride; and the Daughters of Jerusalem, or the Ladies of Solomon's Court.*—CHAP. i. 2—8.

SHULAMITE.

*Addressing the King in his Absence.*

### Bride's Longing after the Beloved.

Verses 2—4.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
For thy love is better than wine.
Because of the savour of thy good ointments,
(Thy name is as ointment poured forth),
Therefore do the virgins love thee.

Draw me:
We will run after thee.

The King hath brought me into his chambers:
We will be glad and rejoice in thee;
We will remember thy love more than wine:
The upright love thee.

Spiritually, the believer's longing for the sensible presence of Christ and the manifestation of His love. Probably the cry of the ancient Church for the coming of the Lord's Anointed. According to the Jews, Israel's longing for the Divine reconciliation after the sin of the Golden Calf.

### Bride's First Desire.

"*Let him kiss me with the kisses (or, with kisses) of his mouth*" (ver. 2). Shulamite speaks in soliloquy. Speaks of her Beloved as absent. Observe—

I. *The* PERSON *intended.* "Let *him;*" namely, the Beloved. No name mentioned. The language abrupt but natural, as spoken under strong emotion. Expressive of *reverence.* So the disciples of Pythagoras spoke of their master,—"He said." More especially, of *impassioned affection.* The Bride's thoughts full of her Beloved, as though there were but one object she cared for (Ps. lxxiii. 25). Christ to the believer the One Pearl of great price (Matt. xiii. 46). The language of a soul wearying of all but Christ. Bride speaks of her Beloved as if all must know whom she meant. So Mary to the supposed gardener: "If thou have borne Him hence" (John xx. 15).

Christ continually promised to the fathers through the prophets (Acts xxvi. 6; 1 Peter i. 11). The hope and expectation of Old Testament saints (Gen. xlix. 18; Isa. xxvi. 8; Matt. xiii. 17; John viii. 56; Acts xxvi. 7). Exemplified in Simeon, Anna, and others (Luke ii. 25, 26, 36—38;

iii. 15). Christ promised and expected as the Bridegroom of the Church (Hos. ii. 19; iii. 3; Isa. liv. 5; lxii. 5; John iii. 29).

II. *The* THING *desired.* Let him "kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Personal and sensible manifestation of Christ and His love to the soul. The love itself not doubted: the expression, proof, and enjoyment of it desired. Christ's kiss is Christ Himself sensibly giving Himself in tenderest affection to the soul, and assuring it of His cordial love. The subject of the Song not the *coming to* the Saviour, but *communion with* Him: not the coming of the soul to Christ, but the coming of Christ to the soul. The language of the soul in the Song not that of the Publican: 'God be merciful to me a sinner'; but that of the Psalmist: 'My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken thou me according to Thy word' (Ps. cxix. 25). The language of the text expressive of—

1. *Strong desire and eager longing.* 'Let him' (or, O that he would) 'kiss me.' Such longings a natural part of a healthy Christian experience. Feeble health little accustomed to fervent longings. A Christ loved will be a Christ longed for. Absence ill-brooked by ardent affection. Love yearns for the fellowship and enjoyed love of its object.

2. *Intimate acquaintance.* Familiar acquaintance with Christ begets not contempt, but reverence and love.

3. *Consciousness of union with and interest in the Beloved.* Kisses not for strangers, still less for enemies. Expected only by a friend, and most of all by a Bride or wife.

4. *Mutual affection.* Kisses desired only from one who loves us and whom we ourselves love. An aggravation of Judas's sin that he betrayed his Master with a kiss. A true kiss the 'kiss of charity' or love (1 Pet. v. 14).

5. *Absence and delay.* Sensible tokens of Divine love not always vouchsafed to believers. Christ's kisses not things of every day. At times wisely withheld. 'A time for embracing, and a time to refrain from embracing.' Patience required in respect to spiritual joys. The time coming when delay and withdrawal will be no more.

6. *Desire for manifested reconciliation.* So Israel longed after the Lord after the sin of the golden calf (Ex. xxxiii. 1—4, 7—11); and in the time of Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 2). A kiss the token of reconciliation given by David to his son Absalom, and by the forgiving father to the prodigal and penitent son (2 Sam. xiv. 33; Luke xv. 20).

The desire expressed by *each* believing soul *for itself*: 'Let him kiss *me*.' The living soul desires personal enjoyment of Christ's love and the personal application of it. Christ's kisses for His Church universal, and for each true member of it in particular. Each believing soul the Church in miniature. The features, experience, and glory of the Church those of each individual member.

The thing desired—(1) '*Kisses*.' Implies boldness of faith and affection. To receive even a *kind word* from Christ an unspeakable favour and happiness. Christ able and willing to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think (Eph. iii. 20). Grants not only the adoption of a son, but the espousals of a bride (*Theodoret*). The Bride appears to desire not only one kiss but many. Even *one* not to be purchased with a thousand worlds. How rich the believer in receiving many! Even one a thing never to be forgotten. One of Christ's kisses carries heaven in its bosom. Kisses of different kinds and for different occasions: the kiss of favour, of friendship, of affection, of reconciliation, of relationship, of nuptial contract, and of marriage. The marriage-covenant between Christ and His people permits and grants the renewal of its seals and pledges. (2) 'Kisses *of his mouth*.' These reserved more especially for his personal appearing. 'Let him kiss me, not by the mouth of the prophets, but with his own mouth' (*Rabbins*). The desire a prophetical intimation of His coming in the flesh. Realized when men wondered at "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Luke iv. 18—22). "Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee;" "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace"—some of these kisses. Such also every Gospel promise and gracious consolation uttered and applied by Jesus to the penitent believing soul. 'The lip of promise meeting the lip of prayer.' Christ's office to "Preach glad tidings to the meek; to bind up the broken hearted; to comfort them that mourn; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Isa. lxi. 1—3; Luke iv. 18, 19). His mouth most sweet (chap. v. 16). 'His mouth,' as marking the tenderest affection. Amazing condescension that the King of glory can stoop from His throne to kiss a beggar taken from the dunghill. Ample compensation for the loss of idols in the kisses of the King's mouth. The soul that gives up all for Him, sooner or later filled and overpowered with His love. The 'kisses of his *mouth*' not only the communications of His love but of *His spirit*. According to the Jews, a man's loving kiss is accompanied with an infusion of his spirit. So Jesus, after saying: Peace be unto you,—breathed on His disciples, and said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost (John xx. 21, 22). Christ's kisses given in the reading and hearing of His word; in secret and social prayer; and in the ordinance

of the Supper. The consolations of His Word personally applied by Himself to the heart through His Spirit. The kisses to be given by His own mouth. All Gospel duty summed up in our kissing the Son; all Gospel comfort summed up in the Son kissing us. Christ's kisses in the Gospel intended to heal the wounds of the Law. The kisses of His mouth in the highest sense still kept in reserve. Jerusalem above the place where the Lord mainly comforts His people (Isa. lxvi. 13). There they see His face. His hand wipes away their tears. He Himself feeds them and leads them to living fountains of waters. Hence His second appearing the desire of believers in the New Testament, as His first appearing was that of those in the Old (Tit. ii. 13; 1 Cor. i. 7; Phil. iii. 20; 2 Pet. iii. 12). The last promise of Christ in the Bible: Surely I come quickly. The last prayer of His Church: Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Rev. xxii. 20).

### Reason of Bride's First Desire.

"*For thy love* (Heb. *loves*) *is better than wine.*"—Verse 1.

With the next breath Shulamite turns to her Beloved and addresses himself, though still absent and invisible. A believer's communion with Christ on earth rather that with an invisible friend. Want of bodily sight no hindrance to spiritual fellowship. Christ, though invisible to the eye of flesh, yet visible to the eye of faith. Common, under strong feeling, to address a friend though distant and unseen. The living and loving soul not satisfied with speaking *of* Christ, but must speak *to* Him. 'He' to be exchanged for 'Thou.' The reason for the soul desiring the kisses of Christ's mouth is the excellence and sweetness of His love and the manifestations of it. An object desired in proportion to the sense of its worth. Observe in regard to the—

### Excellence of Christ's Love.

I. *The* LOVE *itself.* 'Thy love,' or as *margin*, 'thy loves'—not only the love itself, but the manifestations of it. Christ's love always one and the same; the expressions and manifestations of it many and various. His love well represented in the plural form, from its riches, abundance, and extent. Paul's prayer that believers might be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit, so as to comprehend with all saints what is its length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know it though really passing all knowledge (Eph. iii. 16—19. Observe—

1. The *character* of Christ's love. Like the love of the Father it is—(1) Everlasting (Jer. xxxi. 3). (2) Unchanging (John xiii. 1). (3) Spontaneous and free (Ezek. xvi. 5, 6, 8; 1 John iv. 10, 19). (4) Sovereign and distinguishing (John vi. 70; xiii. 18; xv. 16). (5) Costly and self-sacrificing (Eph. v. 25; Rev. i. 5). (6) Enriching in its effects (Eph. v. 26, 27; Rev. i. 5, 6).

2. The *manifestations* of it. These both in word and deed. Made in—(1) His engaging for us in the everlasting covenant (Ps. xl. 7; Eph. v. 25). (2) The revelation of His love in the first promise in Eden (Gen. iii. 15). (3) The successive communications of it through the prophets. (4) His gracious dealings with His people in the Old Testament. (5) The personal manifestations of Himself to the patriarchs and Old Testament saints. (6) His INCARNATION. (7). His acts, words, and teachings when on earth. (8). His sufferings and death. (9). The bestowment of His Spirit on and after Pentecost. (10) His promises to His Church made before and after His ascension into heaven. (11) The ordinances which He instituted, especially that of the Supper. (12) The ingathering of His Redeemed by the preaching of the Word. (13) The personal communications of His love to the souls of His people. (14) His gracious providential dealings with His Church, both as a whole and in its individual members.

II. *The* EXCELLENCE *of the love.* 'Thy love is better than wine.' Wine put for what is most grateful to the taste, refreshing to the body, and exhilarating to the spirits. Wine among the chief luxuries of life. The 'banquet of wine' (Esther v. 6) put for the most joyous of feasts. Yet Christ's love 'better than wine.' (1) From *the nature of love itself.* Love and the expression of it among the sweetest of human enjoyments. Hence the 'comfort of love' (Phil. ii. 1). (2) From *the person whose love it is.* A sinful and imperfect creature's love often the sweetest of earthly enjoyments. What the love of Him who is the 'Chief among ten thousand,' 'fairer than the children of men,' 'altogether lovely,' the sum, source, and centre of all loveliness and excellence! Christ's love better than wine, as—

1. *More sweet, gladdening, and refreshing* (Ps. iv. 7, 8). 'Sweet is the King's wine, but sweeter is his love' (*Delitzsch*). The sense of Christ's love the true cordial of the soul.

2. *More satisfying.* The old wine, after which none desires new. Takes from creature enjoyments much of their attraction. The world crucified to us by the cross of Christ,—the highest expression of this love.

3. *More beneficial.* Exhilarates the *soul*; and through that, influential on the whole man. Purifies while it gladdens. No danger of excess or of hurtful consequences. Wine a mocker. At last bites like a serpent and stings like an adder (Prov. xx. 1; xxiii. 32). Christ's love leaves no sting behind it. Betrays none into sin. Exhilarates without inebriating.

4. *More lasting in its effects.* Wine perishable, and soon ceases even to exhilarate and refresh. Christ's love eternal and unchanging in its effects as well as in itself. That only strictly true of Christ's love which is said of wine: 'Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more' (Prov. xxxi. 6).

The excellence of Christ's love not to be described (Ps. xxxvi. 7—10). To be *tasted* in order to be known (Ps. xxxiv. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 3). Able to fill the soul with joy in the absence of all earthly comforts, and the loss of all earthly possessions (Hab. iii. 17, 18). The Holy Spirit's office to reveal it and shed it abroad in the heart (Rom. v. 5). Hence the exhortation: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit' (Eph. v. 18). Joy in the experience of Christ's love the characteristic of the New Testament dispensation. Symbolized in His first miracle. The water of the Old Testament economy turned into the wine of the New. The consecration of wine as the symbol of His shed blood, and so of His dying love, among the last acts of the Saviour's love. Hence the Lord's Supper made the sweetest and most reviving of all Divine ordinances. Christ's love the joy of the Redeemed in heaven. The new wine of the kingdom. The song of the Beloved Disciple's old age, seventy years after tasting of it as he lay on Jesus's breast. The ever new song of the saints around the throne (Rev. i. 5; v. 9—12).

### The Bride Justifies her Desire.

'*Because of the savour of thy good ointments* (*thy name is as ointment poured forth*), *therefore do the virgins love thee*'—Verse 3.

Her desire justified on two grounds: (1) The excellence and sweetness in the Beloved himself; (2) The fact that on that account virgins loved him.

FIRST GROUND: '*Because of the savour of thy good ointments,—thy name is as ointment poured forth;*' or, '*ointment poured forth is thy name.*' The first clause the formal reason for the virgins' love to the King; the second, a parenthetical amplification and explanation of the former, his name being itself those good ointments (Eccles. vii. 1). 'The savour of thy good ointments' or perfumes, suggests—

### The Excellence and Sweetness of Christ

I. *Christ has 'ointments' or perfumes.* The king's ointments sweetly scented oils sprinkled on the garments, poured on the head, or carried about the person. Christ's ointments the graces of the soul and life, shed on Him and produced in Him by the Holy Spirit. The existence of such ointments indicated in His official name, 'Christ,' or 'the Christ.' This the Greek rendering of the Hebrew term Messiah; both meaning 'the Anointed One.' Christ, as God's appointed Saviour, anointed with the Holy Ghost, and that without measure (John iii. 34: Acts iv. 8; Luke iv. 18). This anointing that which fitted Him for His office (Isa. lxi. 1—3). Anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Heb. i. 9). All His mediatorial garments thus made to 'smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia,' by which He was made glad (Ps. xlv. 8). His human nature thus made full of all excellence and sweetness. Christ fully endowed with all the virtues that can either adorn the character, or that can render a man lovely and attractive in himself, and a benefactor and blessing to his fellow men (Isa. xi. 2—5). All the excellences and charms that can either beautify or exalt humanity found in Him in their combination and perfection. Graces and virtues apparently contradictory and exclusive of each other, found beautifully harmonized in His character. Symbolized by the 'holy anointing oil,' composed of various ingredients (Ex. xxx. 23—25, 34, 35). Loftiest wisdom combined in Jesus with child-like simplicity; awe-inspiring dignity with meekest humility; inflexible justice with tenderest compassion; spotless holiness with sweetest affability; abhorrence of sin with pity and love to the sinner. The Gospels an exhibition of the 'good ointments' of Christ. His life, as written by the four Evangelists, the best commentary on this verse.

II. *Christ's ointments are 'good.'* They are so—

1. *In themselves.* The graces and virtues of His character, of the purest and choicest kind, and existing in Him in the highest degree. All Divine, as the product of the Holy Ghost which filled Him. God well pleased for His righteousness' sake (Isa. xlii. 21). The testimony twice repeated from heaven: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Matt. iii. 17; Luke. ix. 35). The goodness or excellence of Christ's 'ointments' discovered—(1) In His *spirit and disposition.* 'Meek and lowly in heart.'

Gentle and compassionate, not breaking the bruised reed nor quenching the smoking flax. 'Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' (2) In His *words*. Gracious words proceeded out of His mouth. 'Never man spake like this man.' The Gospels a repertory of such golden sayings as never before had fallen from human lips. (3) In His *actions*. 'He went about doing good.' Even in His outward actions, acknowledged to have been the greatest benefactor the earth had ever seen before or has ever beheld since. His earthly ministry one continued display of self-denying beneficence to the poor, the suffering, and the distressed. (4) In His *sufferings and death*. In these, peculiarly distressing as they were, a picture displayed of the most perfect patience and submission. His dying breath a prayer on behalf of His persecutors and murderers, while His only complaint was that poured forth to His Father in the words of the Psalmist: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (Ps. xxii. 1; Matt. xxvii. 46).

2. *In their effects*. Ointments or perfumes valued for their refreshing fragrance. Hence poured on the head of guests at table. The graces and virtues of Christ's character all such as rendered Him a Benefactor and Saviour to mankind. Fitted by the Holy Spirit's anointing to preach glad tidings to the poor, bind up the broken hearted, &c. (Isa. lxi. 1, 2.) The poorest, lowest, and guiltiest attracted to Him by His gracious and loving spirit, as well as by His heavenly and healing words (Luke xv. 1). Even little children drawn to Him by the savour of His 'good ointments.' In the graces and virtues of His character, as well as the sacrificial surrender of His life, Christ a sweet-smelling savour to God. His words quickening, reviving, comforting and gladdening as well to sinners as to saints.

In the view of Shulamite, the King's *name*, including in it the report of his graces and excellencies (1 Kings x. 1, 6—9), constituted in itself a rich perfume. 'Thy name is as ointment poured forth;' or, 'ointment poured forth is Thy name' (Eccles. vii. 1). Sweetly true in regard to Solomon's Antitype. Observe, in reference to the

### Name of Christ—

I. *The* NAME *itself*. The name of a person often put simply for the person himself. All that is in Jesus, and that is known of Him, renders Him 'as ointment poured forth.' The chief among ten thousand. Precious to them that believe. In Him is all that sinners need and that is suited to their case and condition. His character and worth that which renders Him to believers the object of their warmest affection and their most entire confidence. The name or names by which He is known indicative of what He is in Himself, and what He is and becomes to us. His names all significant and suggestive of His character and work. Their meaning such as to commend Him to sinners, and to endear Him to saints. Each name an exhibition of Him in some special aspect of loveliness and preciousness. Examples:—

1. EMMANUEL. His name in prophecy (Isa. vii. 14). Its meaning, 'God with us' (Matt. i. 23). Full of sweetness. God for our salvation become one of us—a partaker of flesh and blood—in order to be our Redeemer. God manifest in the flesh. The Eternal Word made flesh and dwelling among us. The name a reviving revelation of boundless love, pity, and condescension on the part of our Maker. The Beloved of the Church one who is both God and Man. 'The man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts' (Zech. xiii. 7). One with the Father, and yet one with us. The bright reflection of the Divine glory, and yet bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Possessed of all the attributes of the God-head, and all the sympathies of humanity. Sustains the glory of Deity, and is touched with the feeling of all our infirmities. The Creator and Upholder of the universe, and yet tempted in all points like as we are (Heb. i. 2, 3; iv. 15). Hence (1) *His infinite power as a Saviour*. Able to save to the uttermost. Mighty to save. Able to raise both the dead soul and the dead body to life. (2) *The infinite efficacy belonging to His sacrificial undertaking*. His suffering and death that of 'God manifest in the flesh.' God purchased the Church with His own blood—a sufficient price for the ransom of countless worlds (Acts xx. 28). The blood of Jesus Christ, because the blood of God's Son, able to cleanse from all sin (1 John i. 7).

2. JESUS. Given, at the direction of an angel, as the equivalent of 'Emmanuel' (Matt. i. 21—23). A name full of exquisite sweetness. Denotes—'Jehovah the Saviour;' or, 'the Lord will save.' God Himself becomes our Salvation. 'Jesus,' a Divine Saviour; hence equivalent to 'Emmanuel.' A Saviour needed by man, and a great one Such found in Jesus. Hence His name. Saves, as was necessary, both from sin and sin's consequences; not only from its guilt and punishment, but from its power, pollution, and presence; saves from a blinded understanding, a depraved will, and a corrupt heart. Saves from sin and Satan, from death and hell, and from the power and influence of a present evil world

Saves at once, and saves for ever. Saves *now* by the invisible operation of His Spirit; saves hereafter by His visible and glorious appearing (Heb. ix. 14, 28). Able to save even the chief of sinners (1 Tim. i. 15). To save the lost the object of His coming into the world (Luke xix. 10; 1 Tim. i. 15).

3. CHRIST, *or* THE CHRIST. His official name. Both a name and a title. Like the Hebrew term 'Messiah,' denotes 'the Anointed.' A name also full of sweetness. Marks Him out as anointed by the Holy Ghost as the Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church. Anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows (Ps. xlv. 7). Anointed by the Spirit to preach glad tidings to the meek, &c. (Isa. lxi. 1). Jesus the *Christ*, as filled with the Holy Spirit, and so fitted for man's salvation.

His 'name' may include (1) His *Titles*: as; Son of God, Son of Man, King of Kings, Prince of Peace, Lamb of God, Prince of Life, Lord of Glory, Plant of Renown, the Word, the Word of God, our Hope, our Peace, our Life. (2) His *Offices*: as; Prophet, Priest, King, Mediator, Redeemer, Captain, Physician, Teacher, Witness-bearer, SAVIOUR. (3) His *Relations*: as; Husband, Brother, Father, Friend, Shepherd, Surety, Master. (4) His *Attributes*: as; Merciful, Faithful, True, Almighty, Everlasting, Unchanging, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. (5) His *Character*: as; meek, lowly, loving, holy, just, wise, and good.

No name mentioned in the text. The name deep in the heart. No name like His in a believer's ear. Remembered when every other name is forgotten. The name which is above every name. Known truly to none but Himself and those to whom He reveals it. Wherever known, accompanied with love and trust (Ps. xci. 14; ix. 10).

II. *The* COMPARISON. 'As ointment poured forth.'

1. As '*ointment*' or *perfume*. Indicates its sweet and reviving nature. To a believer the very mention of Jesus accompanied with joy and comfort. Every name of Jesus fragrant to the spiritual senses. The name of a loved one sweet because calling up the person himself. The name of Jesus makes the sad heart it enters leap with joy. Is honey to the mouth, music to the ear, and comfort to the soul. Everything insipid to a believer that carries not the savour of that name in it. "All spiritual food dry, if not pervaded with this oil; and tasteless, if not seasoned with this salt." What is written has no relish to a believer, if he reads not there the name of Jesus. Conversation has no pleasure if the name of Jesus is excluded. Nature with all its loveliness only pleases when associated with the name of Jesus. His name suggestive of all that is most beautiful, lovely, and excellent. "Contains in it all the excellence scattered throughout creation." The best, sweetest, purest, noblest things associated with it. Embraces whatever is noblest in truth, honour, faith, love, meekness, humility, self-denial, generosity. All tenderness, sweetness, benevolence, centred in the name of Jesus. Gentleness, moral courage, disinterested love, identified with it. In His name, more sweetness, beauty, love, than ever human heart conceived. To a renewed and spiritual mind, the most joyous and exhilarating name on earth. "Touches all the chords of gratitude, enthusiasm, and devotion." Under the Holy Spirit's revelation, fills every avenue of the soul with joy, wonder, and adoration. A day coming, when it will fill heaven and earth with its sweetness and fragrance.

2. As 'ointment *poured forth*.' Indicates—(1) *Abundance*, as well of the ointment itself as of its fragrance. The perfume abundantly diffused. An infinite fulness in Jesus, and an infinite sweetness in His name. 'It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.' 'God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.' His glory that of the only begotten of the Father, 'full of grace and truth' (John i. 14: iii. 34; Col. i. 19). Christ a full Saviour for empty sinners. A fountain ever full and ever flowing. His riches without a bottom. A mine never exhausted.

> Enough for each, enough for all,
> Enough for evermore.

(2) *Impartation*. A perfume poured forth yields up all its fragrance for enjoyment. Enclosed and sealed up in the vessel, it affords little sweetness. Mary broke her alabaster box, or its seal, and the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Christ's name not only ointment but ointment 'poured forth,' for the benefit and enjoyment of others. Christ to be manifested—

*Externally*. Christ and His name was a perfume in heaven while shut up 'in the bosom of the Father.' A perfume to God and angels before man was created. Shut up as to men till the day of the fall. The first promise of a Saviour made in Eden broke the seal (Gen. iii. 15). The seal more and more removed, and the fragrance made more and more to flow forth, as time rolled on. The promised Saviour more and more plainly and fully revealed through the prophets, till He Himself appeared. The ointment then poured forth—(1) *By*

*Christ Himself*: (*a*) in His life; (*b*) in His preaching; (*c*) in His miracles; (*d*) in His death. The seal of the casket containing the perfume that was to fill heaven and earth with its fragrance fully broken on Calvary when Jesus said: 'It is finished,' bowed His head, and died; (*e*) in His effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. (2) *By the Apostles and the Church after Pentecost.* Till then the 'name' shut up among the Jews: after that, to be carried by the Apostles to all nations. The ointment streaming forth more or less over the world during the last eighteen centuries The calling and commission of the Church at large, as well as of Apostles, ministers, and missionaries, to make manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place (2 Cor. ii. 14). 'Ye are My witnesses.' Every believer, by his lips and his life, to be a bearer of the fragrance of Christ's name in the neighbourhood where he dwells.

*Internally.* This ointment to be poured forth *in the soul* in order to the perception of its sweetness. Mere external diffusion not sufficient. A spiritual fragrance to be spiritually perceived. A spiritual power of perception needed; or, what is equivalent, an inward spiritual revelation of Christ by the Holy Ghost. 'It pleased God to reveal His Son in me.' 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.' 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes.' God 'hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. iv. 6; Gal. i. 16; Matt. xvi. 17; xi. 25). Without the inward diffusion of the fragrance by the Holy Ghost (John xvi. 14, 15), Christ 'a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness' (Isa. liii. 2). A man's greatest blessedness in having this precious ointment poured forth in his heart (Rom. v. 5). The perfume of Christ's name to be poured forth *externally* by the Church, through the lips and lives of its members, to the world at large; *internally* by the Holy Ghost to the individual soul. The Word and Sacraments the instituted means through which the Spirit pours forth the ointment, both externally and internally. Sinners saved and believers refreshed, revived, and sanctified only as Christ's name is thus revealed and the ointment poured forth. The Scriptures, a preached Gospel, the Bread and Wine in the Supper,—these the casket containing the perfume; the Holy Ghost the agent who breaks the seal and pours forth the fragrance.

Important questions for each: Have I known this precious name? Is the name of Jesus to *me* 'as ointment poured forth?' If so, what am I doing to diffuse its fragrance for the benefit of others? If not, why so? Have I given proper attention to that name? Have I seriously thought of Christ? 'The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick:' have I realized my spiritual sickness? Have I seriously considered and really known what it is to be a sinner, and so realized my need of a Saviour? If not, how can I expect the name of Jesus to be sweet and precious to *me*? Lord, let me not rest till I have done so. Give me *now*, by Thy Holy Spirit, to realize my need of Christ, and to see His preciousness.

### The Effect of Solomon's Excellencies.

"*Therefore do the virgins love thee.*"

The report of the king's excellencies and attractions had reached Shulamite, as it had done the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings x. 1). The effect of these excellencies was that the virgins loved him; among the rest Shulamite herself. So the excellencies of Christ render Him, as they may well do, the object of love to all sincere and rightly disposed persons who came to hear of them. In reference to—

### Love to Christ,

the text suggests—

I. *The* PERSONS *who love Him.* The 'virgins' representatives of—

1. *Believers,* or *renewed persons* in general. Virgin-souls—those whose hearts are given entirely to God and Jesus Christ. Those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth (Rev. xiv. 4). Believers to be presented to Christ as a chaste virgin (2 Cor. xi. 3). The true members of the Jewish Church so called (Jer. xxxi. 4, 21). Believers 'virgins'—(1) From their *pure and undivided affection* to Christ; (2) From their *chaste and faithful adherence* to Him and His cause; (3) From their *true and Scriptural views* of Him and His religion; (4) From the *purity of their worship and general conversation*; (5) From their *meekness, modesty, and tenderness* of conscience; (6) From their *moral beauty and comeliness* of spirit. Observe—(1) *Christ only loved by virgin-souls,* whose hearts are detached from the world. Men cannot serve God and mammon, or love Christ and the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father and of Christ is not in him. A divided heart cannot love Christ. Those only His true lovers who are willing to leave all and follow Him. Hence

—(2) *Only renewed and regenerate persons love Christ.* The carnal mind enmity against God, and so against Christ. The heart renewed and circumcised in order to love God and His Son (Deut. xxx. 6). The stony heart taken away and a heart of flesh given instead (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). (3) *All renewed souls love Christ.* Christ the magnet that attracts renewed hearts. A natural affinity between Christ and renewed souls. Such able both to see and appreciate His excellence, both in Himself and in relation to sinners. The language of renewed and enlightened souls: 'The love of Christ constraineth us' (2 Cor. v. 14). (4) *The glory and honour of Jesus, that He is loved only by pure and sincere souls, and by all such.*

2. *Young converts,* more particularly. First love of believers often warmest. The kindness of Israel's youth tenderly remembered by the Lord (Jer. ii. 2). The believer's young love often damped by the power of corruption within, and the influence of the world without. The main charge which the Lord Jesus brought against the Church of Ephesus, that it had left its 'first love' (Rev. ii. 4).

3. *Men in general,*—especially, men of single and sincere hearts. Christ the suitable object of human love, both as a perfect man and as a loving Saviour. Men of honest and sincere hearts the most likely to love Christ. Hence the attachment of a Nathanael and a Cornelius, of a Nicodemus and a Joseph of Arimathæa. Men who are 'Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile,' readily drawn to Christ. Christ the 'Desire of all nations,' fitted to be such, and actually to become such. Men only prevented from loving Christ by the blindness of their minds and the depravity of their hearts. *Love to Christ the test of a man's character.* Men worthy to be 'accursed' who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. xvi. 22).

4. *Angels, who have never sinned.* Christ the object of angelic love. His sufferings on earth and His glory in heaven lovingly contemplated by angels (1 Pet. i. 11, 12). Angels rejoiced to minister to Him, and still minister to His members for His sake. The first to announce His birth, and the companions of the redeemed in celebrating His praise.

II. *The* LOVE *itself.* Christ the object first of a sinner's faith, then of his love. True faith in Christ, a 'faith which worketh by love.' Men's love desired by Christ: 'My son, give Me thine heart.' The love of the woman of Sychar refreshes Him more than meat and drink. Nothing without men's love satisfied Christ. 'If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned' (chap. viii. 7). Christ infinitely worthy of men's love—(1) For what He is in Himself; (2) For what He has done for them. Observe—

1. The *character* of a believer's love to Christ. It is—(1) Natural and reasonable. (2) Ardent and sincere. (3) Paramount and supreme. (4) Undivided and admitting no rival. (5) Active and practical. (6) Self-denying. (7) Pure and holy. (8) Permanent and abiding. (9) Unconquerable and unquenchable. (10) Divine in its origin. (11) Self-evidencing.

2. The *evidence* of this love. Shews itself—(1) In obedience to His will. (2) In devotedness to His service. (3) In love to His fellowship. (4) In imitation of His spirit and conduct. (5) In affection to His people, His cause, and all that belongs to Him.

### Bride's Second Desire.

'*Draw me, we will run after thee.*'—Verse 4.

Shulamite's *first* desire for the bridegroom's kisses; her *second* desire for the bridegroom himself. Spiritual desire grows and enlarges itself. Christ better than even His kisses. The text contains—I. A Request: II. A Resolution.

I. *The* REQUEST. 'Draw me.' Christ the magnet of renewed souls. The desire of all such to be *drawn* to Him. The request the result—(1) Of acquaintance with Him; (2) Of love to Him; (3) Of desire to enjoy and follow Him. Implies—(1) *Perception of Him,* as the One Pearl of great price; the Treasure hid in the Field; the chief among ten thousand; the Altogether Lovely. (2) *Desire after Him.* Renewed and saved souls not content to be at a distance from Christ, or to sit still in such a condition. Their desire to be near Him, lean on His bosom, rest in His arms, sit at His feet, hear His voice, look on His pierced hands and side. (3) *Conscious inability.* The soul unable of itself to come to Christ, run after Him, or follow Him. The renewed soul conscious of that inability. Hence the prayer: 'Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name.' 'My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken me according to Thy word.' 'Turn me and I shall be turned.' The soul conscious of Divine help in following hard after God (Ps. lxiii. 8; cxix. 32). *Grace, teaches us both Christ's worth and our own weakness.* Christ the Author as well as the Object of our faith. The soul kept from Christ, and from following after Him, by a three-fold hindrance—(1) The flesh; (2) The world;

(3) The Devil. Christ first draws souls *to* Him, and then *after* Him. Observe in regard to—

### The Saviour's Drawing.

1. *The* MEANING AND IMPORT *of it.* A threefold drawing of the soul by Christ—(1) In conversion to Him; (2) In following after Him; (3) In communion with Him. The last here especially intended. The desire in verse 2, followed by that in verse 4 as a means towards it. To enjoy Christ's kisses we have to be drawn to Christ Himself. Christ draws—(1) Our *attention*, keeping it fixed on Himself; (2) Our *desire and longing*, as in the case of the woman of Sidon (Matt. xv. 21—28); (3) Our *affection*; (4) Our *resolution*; (5) Our *self-surrender*; (6) Our *confidence and faith.* Implies not only faith, but perseverance in it (1 Pet. i. 5).

2. *The* MEANS *by which He draws.* Christ draws by showing—(1) His own love, loveliness, and preciousness; (2) Our entire and absolute need of Him. The Holy Ghost the effectual agent employed. The instrumental means, the *Word*, however communicated, which reveals Him in what He is in Himself, and what He is to us and has done for us (John xii. 32). Christ draws—(1) By the *Doctrines* He teaches; (2) By the *Promises* He makes; (3) By the *Providences* He employs (Hos. ii. 14; xi. 4; Rom. ii. 4).

3. *The* MOTIVE AND GROUND *of the drawing.* His own free love. He draws with loving-kindness because He has loved with an everlasting love (Jer. xxxi. 3). The bands with which He draws, "the bands of love" (Hos. xi. 4). His love to and choice of us before ours to Him (John xv. 16; 1 John iv. 19).

The *personality* of the request to be noticed. 'Draw me.' Salvation and true religion,—the possession and enjoyment of Christ,—a *personal* thing. The believer's *first* desire is to be drawn himself. 'Remember *me*, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest to Thy people; visit *me* with Thy salvation' (Ps. cvi. 4). We can only be the means of drawing others to Christ when we have been drawn ourselves.

II. *The* RESOLUTION. 'We will run after thee.' The words may indicate—(1) The object of the request; (2) The argument used to enforce it: nothing sweeter to Christ, than a soul ardently following Him; (3) A purpose formed; (4) A hope entertained. Viewed as referring to the speaker, a purpose or resolution; as referring to others, a hope and expectation. Notice—

1. The *Action.* 'Run after thee.' Implies eagerness, earnestness, and haste; rapidity, perseverance, and strength (Isa. xl. 31; Dan. viii. 6). Opposed to former deadness and sluggishness, whether absolute or comparative. Believers, when it is well with them, not content with mere *walking* after Christ. Good to walk, better to run. The Psalmist's resolution (Ps. cxix. 32). The promise of the Father to Christ in regard to the nations (Isa. lv. 5). Not only walking but *running* promised as the result of waiting upon the Lord (Isa. xl. 31). Running, rather than mere walking, pleasing to Christ. Luke-warmness his great dislike (Rev. iii. 15). Christ worthy not only of being followed, but *run* after—followed and sought with the energy of the whole soul. A blind world run after the *creature*; enlightened believers run after *Christ.* Christ first run *to*, then run *after.* Run *to* as a *Saviour*; run *after* as a *Friend* and *Beloved.* We run *to* Him as sinners; *after* Him as *saints.* The believer's duty and privilege not to run *before*, but *after* Christ; not to make a way for himself but to tread in His steps (John x. 4, 5, 27). The *running* ours; the *power* to run, Christ's. Effectual grace consistent with personal diligence, and a strong encouragement to it (Phil. ii. 12, 13; Ps. cx. 3). The request to be drawn not made from indolence but from helplessness. Believers to be not slothful in business—least of all in the business of religion—but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Rom. xii. 11). Progress always to be made towards Christ and in the Divine life. The Christian life a *running* (1 Cor. ix. 24, 25; Gal. ii. 2; iv. 7; Heb. xii. 1, 2; Philip, iii. 13, 14). The believer's feet made like hind's feet. The Word of God made plain, that those that read may run (Hab. ii. 2). Christ to be run after—(1) As our *Chief Joy and Highest Good.* Christ the Desire of all nations, and worthy to be the Desire of all hearts. All in Him that is lovely and desirable; and all lovely and desirable that is in Him. Christ the Fountain of living waters. All else broken cisterns. The language of the soul running after Christ, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on the earth that I desire besides Thee.' 'There be many that say: who will shew us any good: Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us' (Ps. lxxiii. 25; iv. 6).

> "Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
> More than all in Thee I find."

(2) As our *Pattern and Example.* He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps. 'I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you'

(John xiii. 14, 15; 1 Pet. ii. 21). The same mind to be in us that was in Him. The believer to be as He was in the world (Phil. ii. 5; 1 John iv. 17; ii. 6; iii. 3). To run his race, looking unto Jesus (Heb. xii. 3). (3). Our *Leader and Commander*. Christ given for this purpose (Isa. lv. 4). The Captain of our salvation. Believers to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. The picture of Christ and His saints on the day of His appearing to have its special verification *now*,—Christ as King and General on His white horse, followed by the armies of His people also on white horses (Rev. xix. 12—14). Fulfilled in the calling of the Apostles (Matt. iv. 18—22; Luke v. 27, 28; John i. 43). And of every believer (Matt. xvi. 24). 'The sacramental host of God's elect.'

2. The *persons*. '*We* will run after Thee.' The singular changed for the plural. Draw *me: we* will run. We,—I and others with me. *Me*, the individual believer; *we*, he and others influenced by him. Or; *me*, the single believer; *we*, the Church of which he forms a part. Both individuality and plurality in the Bride. The Bride both an individual and a community. The Church one and many. The drawing of one member followed by the running of others; so the Primitive Church at and after Pentecost. The drawing of the woman of Sychar followed by the running of many of the inhabitants (John iv.). The language of a lively believer that of Moses to his father-in-law: 'We are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you; come thou with us and we will do thee good' (Num. x. 29). The believer not content to enjoy or follow Christ alone. Andrew finds his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus. Philip, after finding the Saviour himself, does the same with Nathaniel (John i. 40—45). None drawn to follow Christ alone. One drawn by means of another. The believer's duty and privilege to be instrumental in drawing others to Christ; and his great joy to see others running after Him along with himself. The lively Christian a missionary everywhere. The love and life of one believer the means of quickening and stirring up others. On the other hand, one dead Christian often the means of deadening others. One lively member of a Church a blessing to the whole.

### Bride's Recorded Experience.

'*The King hath brought me into His chambers.*'

Shulamite recalls and records her experience of the King's kindness and her own happiness. Good to remember and thankfully to record the manifestations of Christ's favour. The Lord's will concerning His people. He hath made His works to be remembered. The believer's duty,—Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits. A gain to ourselves as well as to others, to remember and 'mention the loving kindness of the Lord' (Is. lxiii. 7). The favour in the text recorded apparently as an answer to the prayer: 'Draw me.' Answers to prayer to be especially remembered and mentioned for the Lord's honour, and for the encouragement of others as well as ourselves. Earnest longings and entreaties for spiritual blessings never disregarded. 'The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, and will not tarry' (Hab. ii. 3).—Observe, in regard to the favour in the text,—introduction into

### The King's Chambers,

I. THE CHAMBERS *themselves*. The King's chambers his more private apartments. Admission only for favoured persons, those nearest and dearest to the King. The especial privilege of the King's Betrothed. Shulamite rejoices in being admitted to this high honour. Christ not only makes believers His Bride, but admits them to the privileges of such a relation. Admission into Christ's chambers implies—more than ordinary manifestations of Himself; personal nearness; intimate fellowship; sensible enjoyment; confidential communication. The fulfilment of the promise: 'I will manifest myself to him' (John xiv. 21). The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant (Ps. xxv. 14). The privilege of believers to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus (Heb. x. 19), and to sit with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. ii. 6). Special nearness to Christ and sense of His love at times realized by the believer. Such realisations not confined to time or place; but more usually enjoyed in secret prayer and public ordinances, more especially in the Lord's Supper. Such experiences the believer's high festival days, and foretastes of heaven. Ordinarily for but a short time together. At present, the believer's place in general only the antechamber. Permanent abiding in the King's chambers reserved for a higher and better state. Meantime, the happy privilege of believers to be at times admitted into the King's chambers. No place on earth so honourable and so blessed. No place so humble and unattractive to the eye of sense but grace can convert it into the King's chambers. Jacob's experience on the stony plain at Bethel not confined to local habitation: 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not: This is none other but the

house of God, and this is the gate of heaven' (Gen. xxviii. 16, 17). Such Divine manifestations enjoyed in the humblest dwelling, and even in the chamber of sickness. The field, the wood, the highway, the open sea, capable of being made the King's chambers. John's blessed experience in the lonely rocky isle of Patmos. Samuel Rutherford in exile dated his letters from 'the King's palace at Aberdeen.' John Bunyan wrote his "Pilgrim's Progress" in Bedford Jail. The moors and mosses, caves and mountain sides, often made to His persecuted followers the King's chambers. Admission into these chambers the special privilege of New Testament times. Moses spoke to the Church at the door of the tabernacle; the Apostles speak from the Holy of Holies. Those now waiting at Wisdom's gates admitted into Wisdom's chambers. The three great blessings enjoyed in those chambers,—Comfort, Enlightenment, and Security (Ps. xxv. 13, 14; xxvii. 4—6; Isa. xxvi. 20, 21). The King's chambers on earth so blessed, what the chambers in heaven!

II. ADMISSION *into the chambers.* 'The King hath brought me' (*Heb.*, 'made me come'). Admission into them both the King's favour and the King's doing. An enhancement of the happiness. Believers conscious of their own unworthiness and inability to enter the chambers of Divine communion, and of the Saviour's grace in introducing them. The King brings them—(1) By procuring access through His own merits (Rom. v. 2; Eph. ii. 13, 18; Heb. x. 19). (2) By giving the desire to enter them—'Why was I made to hear thy voice,' &c. (Eph. iv. 18). (3) By encouraging them with His gracious invitations and promises. (4) By imparting faith and inward light (Ps. xliii. 3). (5) By subduing and keeping down corruption,—like Abraham fraying away the fowls from the sacrifice (Gen. xv. 11). Obstacles and hindrances to be overcome in order to our entrance into the King's chambers. Some *outside* of us: Divine justice that forbids it to transgressors; Satan who resists it; the world with its influences against it. Others *within* us: conscious guilt; spiritual blindness; carnality; unbelief; sloth; natural disinclination. These to be overcome and removed by the Saviour's grace.—'The *King* hath brought me.' Marks the forth-putting of especial grace and power. Christ brings sinners into the enjoyment of Divine favour and fellowship *as a King.* The title indicative of His power and right. To introduce sinners into the enjoyment of the blessings He has purchased, one of His kingly acts. As King, He has the keys of His own chambers as well as those of death and hell. The impression of Christ's *kingliness* left on the heart of the believer admitted into His fellowship. A few hours' converse with Jesus in a humble dwelling left John and Andrew with the conviction they had been with Messiah the King (John i. 41). Communion with Christ gives lofty thoughts of Him. Only '*He*' before; now, 'the King.' Christ all the more kingly in a believer's eyes the nearer he gets to Him. So Isaiah: 'Mine eyes have seen the King' (Isa. vi. 5). Divine familiarity the opposite of breeding contempt. Reverence, humility, and obedience, the result of admission into the King's chambers. The experience in those chambers: 'I am a man of unclean lips' (Isa. vi. 5). Believers go forth from them more devoted to the service of the King: 'Here am I, send me' (Isa. vi. 8). Divine power and sovereignty manifest in everything connected with salvation. Christ a King, both in His own right as God, and by Divine appointment as Mediator (Ps. ii. 6). Saves not only as a Priest and a Prophet, but also as a King. Believers, when it is best with them, love most to acknowledge Christ's supremacy and right over all they are and have and do. Christ not only *a* King, but *the* King,—chief of all who ever bore the title; the only one with absolute right to it; 'the blessed and only Potentate, King of Kings and Lord of Lords' (1 Tim. vi. 15). —Observe the *personality* of the experience: 'Hath brought *me*.' Each believer to be able to say this for himself. The language—(1) *Of joy and thankfulness.* What was matter of prayer, now made matter of praise. (2) Of *wonder and surprise.* Shulamite dwells on the King's condescension. Like Mephibosheth when admitted to the King's table,—'such a dead dog as I.' 'Hath brought *me*,'—me so black and unworthy of such an honour and happiness! Amazing condescension and love on the part of the King to admit worms and rebels into His chambers. Every believer a beggar raised by the King from the dunghill, to be made His Bride and the partner of His throne. The believer never to lose sight of what he was, and still is, in himself. (3) Of *consciousness and certainty.* Shulamite certain the King has bestowed on her this privilege. Enjoyment of Christ's presence and fellowship a matter about which there should be no mistake or doubt. Christ's object to make it certain; Satan's, to tempt the believer to question its reality and think it a delusion.

**Bride's Joy in the King.**

'*We will be glad and rejoice in Thee.*'

Language expressive of Shulamite's happy

experience of the King's chambers, and her high esteem of the King himself. Implies both anticipation and resolution. Observe on the words thus viewed, in regard to the

**Believer's Joy in Christ,**

I. *The* JOY *itself.* Intense joy. The language emphatic: 'We will be glad and rejoice.' Two words employed for emphasis. Not mere joy, but exultation. Not a mere rejoicing, but a shouting for joy. An inward joy outwardly expressed. A believer's joy in Christ a joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. i. 8). Believers at times in heaviness through manifold temptations; but their experience anything but a gloomy one. The ransomed of the Lord enabled to return to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads (Isa. xxxv. 10). Have joy here, and the hope of more hereafter. 'They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' Cheerfulness and joy disposing to praise, both the privilege and duty of believers. Sadness in the presence of an Oriental monarch an offence to the sovereign and a peril to the subject (Neh. ii. 1, 2). God graciously meets those that rejoice while they remember Him in His ways (Isa. lxvi. 5).

II. *The* OBJECT *of the joy.* Christ himself. We will be glad and rejoice *in Thee.* Not in the creature and its attractions; not in the world and its pleasures; not in self and its doings or feelings. Christ and God in him the object of truest and highest joy. The duty and privilege of believers, both in the Old and New Testament, to rejoice in the Lord (Ps. xxxiii. 1; Phil. iii. 1). Enough in God to fill a universe of intelligent creatures, and enough in Christ to fill a world of believing sinners, with joy unspeakable. Christ opens up sources of joy outside of Himself; but the deep and living fountain is in Himself. The Psalmist's words especially true of Christ: 'All my springs are in Thee' (Ps. lxxxvii. 7). In Him are both 'the upper and the nether springs,'—the joy of the Church triumphant in heaven, and of the Church militant on earth. All the attractions and charms in the creature concentrated and summed up in Him, the Creator and Saviour. In Him all love and loveliness, all sweetness and excellence, in their perfection and without alloy. Believers able to rejoice in Christ not only as their Redeemer and Saviour, but as their Beloved and Bridegroom (Matt. ix. 15). To a renewed soul, everything in Jesus such as to afford matter of joy,—His person, names, titles, offices, relations, work; His birth, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, second coming; His miracles, discourses, doctrines, promises, precepts, warnings; His word, worship, day, table, people, cause; His salvation, grace, kingdom, fellowship, love; His blood that washes them, His righteousness that clothes them, His spirit that anoints and sanctifies them, and His ordinances that comfort and strengthen them. In His present salvation they rejoice; still more in that which is to be revealed at His coming. In His *salvation* they rejoice; still more in *Himself.* Good to have and enjoy the King's gifts; still better to have and enjoy the King himself. Thy gifts precious; but 'We will be glad and rejoice in *Thee.*' Joy in an *unseen* Christ unspeakable; what then in a *seen* one?

The text the language of *resolution.* 'We *will* be glad.' The duty of believers to rejoice in Christ, and to resolve by Divine grace to do so. Especially on any fresh enjoyment of His presence and love. Holy resolution the fruit of Divine grace, and to be freely made in dependance on it. Need of resolution. Much to oppose such rejoicing: remembered sin; inward corruption; buffetings of Satan; outward trials. These not to hinder rejoicing in the Lord. 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, &c., yet will I rejoice in the Lord,' &c. (Hab. iii. 17, 18). Joy in Christ often greatest when joy from the creature is least (Hos. ii. 14;' 2 Cor. i. 5).

The language of *faith and hope.* The same ground of rejoicing in the future as in the past. Christ a well that never runs dry. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. 'Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us' (2 Cor. i. 10). 'Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice' (Ps. lxiii. 7).

Observe the *party* who shall rejoice. '*We* will be glad and rejoice in Thee.' Another change from the singular to the plural. 'The King hath brought me, &c.; *we* will be glad, &c. The Bride herself, and others along with her. The believer speaks for himself and his fellow-believers. The joy of one to become the joy of many. The part of believers to rejoice with them that rejoice. The body of Christ one with many members. 'If one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it' (1 Cor. xii. 26). One believer rejoicing in the presence and love of Jesus, the means of influencing others to seek and obtain the same happiness. Man a social being. Inclined to act in numbers. One constantly influenced by another. Sympathy a powerful principle in man's nature. Its operation in revivals of religion. Employed by the Spirit in the great advancement

of Christ's Kingdom (Zech. viii. 20—23; Isa. ii. 3; Mic. iv. 1, 2).

### Bride's Gratitude to the King.

*'We will remember Thy love more than wine.'*

Shulamite resolves not only to rejoice in the King himself, but to cherish a grateful remembrance of his love. "We will remember (or record) thy love (or loves—loving words and actions) more than wine." Probably a double resolution—to remember inwardly for herself, and to record outwardly for others; both to the praise of her loving Bridegroom. One of the duties and delights of believers, the

### Remembrance of Christ's Love.

Observe in regard to it—

I. *The* LOVE *remembered. Heb.* 'Loves,'—for the greatness of it, or the variety of its kinds, and the multiplicity of its manifestations. Christ's love to His people that of a Saviour to the lost, a Redeemer to the captive, a Shepherd to his sheep, a Husband to his wife, a Brother to his brethren, a Father to his children, a Friend to his intimate acquaintances. Its various manifestations—

1. Offering Himself for our redemption in the everlasting covenant (Ps. xl. 7).

2. Revealing himself to the Old Testament Church in types and symbols, prophecies and promises.

3. Assuming our nature in the fulness of time.

4. His teachings and labours of love during His life on earth.

5. His sufferings and death as the atonement for our sins.

6. His return to heaven to carry forward the work of our salvation.

7. His subsequent bestowment of the Holy Spirit with all needful grace and blessing.

8. His gathering in lost sinners to Himself through His Word and Spirit.

9. His speaking peace and comfort to the awakened and troubled conscience.

10. His restoring the believer from his falls and backslidings.

11. His gladdening the soul with His manifested presence and love.

12. His gracious promises to come again and receive His people to Himself for ever.

Christ's love infinitely worthy to be remembered and celebrated through time and eternity; on account of—

1. Its *greatness.* 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John xv. 13). Christ's love greater than this; as—(1) He did more than lay down His life for us; (2) He did it not for friends, but enemies. Jonathan's love to David, 'wonderful, passing the love of women' (2 Sam. i. 26). Jonathan's love only a faint picture of Christ's.

2. Its *costliness.* 'Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it' (Eph. v. 25). The love of Ahasuerus to Esther his queen extended to the gift of half his kingdom (Est. v. 3). Christ's love to His people extended not only to the gift of His *whole* kingdom, but of *Himself* (Matt. xx. 28).

3. Its *fruits.* Deliverance from sin, death, and hell, with perfection in holiness and the enjoyment of Himself in glory everlasting. 'That He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water, by the word; that He might present it unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish' (Eph. v. 26).

II. *The* REMEMBRANCE *of it.* The remembrance of Christ's love on the part of believers: (1) A Duty; (2) A Delight; (3) A Necessity. Proceeds—(1) From a sense of duty; (2) From the impression of its sweetness. Christ's love remembered when all else is forgotten. Its remembrance brings—(1) Glory to Christ; (2) Benefit to our neighbour; (3) Comfort and quickening to ourselves. Its remembrance our sweetest cordial in the time of trouble (Psalm xlii. 6). Assures us afresh of our interest in Christ, and casts out slavish fear. Revives our love to Him, and stimulates to do and suffer for His sake. His love not remembered and recorded as a thing past and gone for ever; but one of unchanging continuance and ever fresh manifestation. An everlasting love. Helps to remembering it are—

1. Daily reading of the Word, with meditation and prayer; especially such portions of it as bear expressly upon Christ and His love. For example: the Gospels and Canticles; Isaiah liii.; Psalm xxii. &c.

2. Careful observance of the Sabbath, with suitable meditation on His death and resurrection, which it was designed to commemorate.

3. Frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper, designed for the express purpose of keeping Himself and His dying love in remembrance.

4. Fellowship with living and loving believers. 'As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the face of his friend.' 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.' 'Provoke one another to love and good works.'

III. *The* DEGREE *of Remembrance.* 'More than wine.' The love better than wine (verse 2), and therefore more remembered.

Wine mentioned as a natural means of gladness and refreshing (Jud. ix. 13; Ps. civ. 15). Associated with festivity—'banquet of wine.' Here put for all earth's choicest pleasures and sensuous enjoyments. To Shulamite, her bridegroom's love more worthy to be remembered than everything besides. 'Sweet is the King's wine, but sweeter his love.' All Christ's gifts sweet, and all His benefits to be remembered; but sweeter and more to be remembered than all is His love. Its sweetness sufficient to obliterate the remembrance of all other joy. Christ's love the absorbing subject as the believer approaches the confines of eternity. Earth's lawful enjoyments perhaps not forgotten in heaven; but the love of Christ the chosen and overshadowing subject of ever-new songs (Rev. i. 5; v. 9, 12, 13; xiv. 3).

The text the language of *resolution*. 'We *will* remember,' &c. Such resolution needed. The flesh adverse to such remembrance. Satan's object to efface or weaken it. The tendency of earthly things to prevent or deaden it. David's language in reference to Jerusalem applicable to Christ's love: "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not thee above my chiefest joy (Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6).

### Bride Commends her Beloved and Justifies her Love.

*'The upright love thee.'*

May be either read—'Upright people love thee;' or, 'Rightly do people love thee.' Mentioned by Shulamite as an enhancement of her Beloved's excellence, and a justification of her own love. Similar to verse 3. Indicates the character both of Christ himself and

### Christ's Lovers.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO LOVE CHRIST. 'The upright;'—sincere, true, just, pure in heart and life. Such as Simeon of Jerusalem; Joseph the carpenter; Joseph of Arimathæa; Nathaniel, 'an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.' Christ Himself, 'that Just One;' God's 'righteous servant;' 'Jesus Christ the Righteous,' who loves righteousness and hates iniquity; 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' Naturally loved by persons of a similar character, and only by such. A holy Christ capable of being loved only by holy persons, or such at least as, conscious of their sins, desire to be holy. Like naturally loves and draws to like. Hence Christ only loved by converted and renewed persons. Love to God's Christ a holy and spiritual thing. A plant not spontaneously growing among the noxious weeds of Nature's garden, but produced by the Holy Ghost in a renewed heart. Found only in those who have passed from death to life; who were afar off, but have been made nigh by the blood of Christ; who were lost, but are found; who as believing and pardoned sinners 'have tasted that the Lord is gracious' (1 Pet. ii. 3; 1 John iv. 19). The forgiven woman that had been a sinner, loved Jesus, who had forgiven her sins, which were many, and for which she now lovingly weeps at His feet. The proud, self-righteous, merely outwardly religious Pharisee, incapable of such love. 'He to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little' (Luke vii. 47). A sinner may love Christ, but not a Pharisee (Luke xv. 1, 2). Upright persons love Christ, because by His blood shed for them, and His spirit given to them, He has made them upright. When He forgives a sinner He makes him upright. The heart purified by faith. All upright who love Christ in sincerity. Others only pretenders. True love to Christ sufficient to prove a man upright. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' On the other hand, a man's love to Christ proved by his uprightness. 'If ye love me keep my commandments. If a man love Me, he will keep My words' (John xiv. 15, 23). Hence those worthy to be 'accursed' who do not love Christ. They are not upright, and they refuse Him who would make them so.

II. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST HIMSELF. The text a commendation of the Beloved. He must be excellent and upright who is loved by upright persons. A man's character indicated by the character of his friends. A high commendation of the character of Christ—(1) That He is loved by all the honest and best in creation—by all holy angels and holy men; (2) That He is loved only by the holy and upright

III. THE CHARACTER OF LOVE TO CHRIST. It is—(1) A *holy* thing; only upright persons possess it; (2) A *right* and *reasonable* thing. Upright persons only love uprightly—on just grounds and considerations. Just grounds for loving Christ—(1) In what He is; (2) In what He has done. Christ infinitely worthy of angelic, still more of human, love. Is infinitely excellent in Himself; has been infinitely kind to us. As God, possessed of all the infinite amiableness of the Divine perfections; and, as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, has an infinite right to our love. That right enhanced by the fact that, as God-man for our sakes, He has become also our Redeemer. Robbery committed

when Christ is not loved; idolatry, when others are loved in His place. 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha,'—accursed [when] the Lord cometh (1 Cor. xvi. 22).

The text a test of character. Do I love Christ? If not, then I am not upright. I do not love uprightness; for Christ is uprightness itself. I rob Him of what He has the most perfect right to, and of what He sets the highest value on—my love. Hence my need both of mercy and grace; of mercy to pardon, and of grace to renew me. Lord, grant both.

SHULAMITE,

TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, OR LADIES OF SOLOMON'S COURT.

*Gives an Account of herself in justification of her presence in the King's Chambers.*

VERSES 5, 6.

I am black,
But comely,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem;
As the tents of Kedar,
As the curtains of Solomon.

Look not upon me,
Because I am black,
Because the sun hath looked upon me.
My mother's children were angry with me;
They made me keeper of the vineyards;
But mine own vineyard have I not kept.

Shulamite, in the Allegory, originally a rustic damsel, employed by her brothers in watching the vineyards. Though thus tanned and discoloured by the sun, yet not uncomely in herself, and therefore not to be despised by the ladies of the court. The words indicate the believer's twofold character, and the reason of it.

## The Christian Paradox.

"*I am black, but comely.*"

Shulamite, black or tawny in complexion from the reason given; but comely in feature and proportion. Swarthy, as the coarse tents of Kedar or Arabia, made of dark coloured goats' or camels' hair, and farther blackened by exposure to the sun and rain (Isa. xxi. 13, 17; xlii. 11; Ez. xxvii. 21; Ps. cxx. 5, 6). Comely, as the beautiful embroidered hangings of Solomon's palace (Eccles. ii. 4—8; Esth. i. 5, 6).

Hence observe—

I. *DARK side of the Paradox.*—'I am black.' The believer black—

1. *With sin.* In common with others, the believer blackened—(1) With *original* sin; (2) With *actual* transgression. The character of sin to make men black. Sin black in itself, and blackens those who carry it in their nature and commit it in their life. Black, as contrary to the nature and will of God, who is Light. The least sin in a believer like a dark spot on the sun's disk. Sin pervading our whole nature renders us moral Ethiopians. Man, originally created 'upright,' made black by the Fall (Eccles. vii. 29; Rom. v. 12—19). Black with sin, both original and actual, now the character of the human race (Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21; 2 Chron. vi. 36; Prov. xx. 9; Ps. xiv. 1—3; Rom. iii. 9—19, 23; James ii. 10; iii. 2; 1 John i. 8). The experience and confession of David (Ps. li. 5). The teaching of Christ (John iii. 5—7). Observe—(1) *The believer black through inbred corruption and daily transgressions, even while in Christ and enjoying His love.* A law in his members warring against the law of his mind (Rom. vii. 23). Peter's fall immediately after the feast. The believer carries his blackness into the King's chambers. Good to remember and confess it in the midst of his spiritual enjoyments. 'Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged' (Isa. li., 1). (2) *The believer not only black, but conscious of it.* The great distinction between him and others. Others as black as he; but he alone sees and feels his blackness. (3) *The believer not afraid to acknowledge that he is black.* His safety and comfort not in his not being black, or less black than others; but in his being comely in Christ, and washed in His blood. His sense of blackness, therefore, no hindrance to his rejoicing in Christ, but rather a help to it. Confession of blackness part of our rejoicing in Christ's comeliness. The blacker we are in our own eyes, the more precious is Christ (2 Cor. xii. 8—10). (4) *The confession, 'I am black,' often the turning point in a soul's history.* Paul's experience at Damascus (Acts ix. 1—18; Rom. vii. 9). That of Isaiah in the temple (Isa. vi. 5—8). Never comely till we realize we are 'black.' (5) *Our whole nature black.* I,—not a part of me; the whole natural man; the 'me' and 'I' of the Apostle. 'In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. I am carnal, and sold under sin' (Rom. vii. 14, 17). (6) *Believers always black with sin while in this world.* Times when the believer may be without suffering; no time when he is without sin.

2. *With suffering.* Suffering and grief blacken us as well as sin (Jer. viii. 21; Lam.

iv. 8; Ps. cxix. 83). Like others, the believer, while in this world, black with suffering as well as with sin. Sin draws suffering with it as its dark shadow. Believers no exception to this law. That believers have suffering, no more to be concealed than that they have sin. The difference between them and other men, not that they have less suffering, but that they have more comfort and better hope. The testimony of Scripture and the experience of believers, that 'many are the afflictions of the righteous,' and that 'through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom.' Believers, though having the first-fruits of the Spirit, yet groan within themselves (Rom. viii. 23). Groan, being burdened (2 Cor. v. 2). Believers not only not exempt from grief and suffering in this life, but have naturally a large share of it. Their sufferings partly such as are common to men; partly, peculiar to themselves as believers. Various causes of their suffering. (1) *The love of their Father*, who chastens them for their profit, to make them partakers of His own holiness (Heb. xii. 6—11). (2) *The hatred of the world*, which persecutes the members as it did the Head (John xv. 18—21; xvii, 14; 2 Tim. iii. 12). (3) *The temptations of Satan*, acting both directly on the mind himself, and indirectly through the agency of others (2 Cor. xii. 7; 1 Pet. v. 9; Rev. ii. 10). (4) *Indwelling sin*, or the body of sin and death which we carry with us, occasioning a constant warfare within, and often extorting the cry, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom. vii. 23, 24; Gal. v. 17; James iv. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 11). (5) *The sins and sufferings of others*, as well of their own brethren as of the unconverted; these often awakening the cry of the prophet: 'O that my head were waters,' &c. (Jer. ix. 1; viii. 21; 1 Cor. xii. 26; 2 Cor. xi. 29; Rom. xii. 15). (6) *Faithful and self-denying efforts for the spiritual and eternal benefit of others;* thus filling up in their flesh that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, the Church (Col. i. 24; 2 Cor. xi. 23—28). Believers, having the Spirit of Christ, suffer in seeking to save others, and grieve to see so many remain unsaved.

II. BRIGHT *side of the Paradox.* 'But comely.' The Bride, notwithstanding external blackness, 'all glorious within' (Ps. xlv. 14). Shulamite's comeliness rather that of the soul, which lighted up and gave a charming expression to her swarthy features. Believers' comeliness that 'in the hidden man of the heart,' and diffusing a spiritual beauty over the life. Believers comely—

1. Through *imputed righteousness.* Comely through the comeliness of their Head and Saviour put upon them (Ezek. xvi. 14). Believers made the Righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. v. 21). Made accepted in the Beloved (Eph. i. 6). Christ made righteousness to those who are in Him (1 Cor. i. 30). The language of faith: 'In the Lord have I righteousness' (Is. xlv. 24). The name by which the promised Saviour was to be called: The Lord our Righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6). The guests at the King's marriage-supper accepted not in their own garments, but in those provided for and given to them by the King Himself (Matt. xxii. 11, 12). Paul's desire to be found not in his own righteousness which was by the law, but that which was 'through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (Phil. iii. 9). Believers, like Jacob, blessed in the garments of their Elder Brother (Gen. xxvii. 15, 27). Men made sinners by one man's disobedience; made righteous by the obedience of another (Rom. v. 19).

2. Through *imparted holiness.* Believers saved and made comely as well by *impartation* as by *imputation;* made *personally holy* by the one, as they are made *legally righteous* by the other. Made righteous in our Representative, we are made holy in our own persons. Christ made to us 'sanctification,' as well as 'righteousness' (1 Cor. i. 30). Faith says: 'In the Lord I have righteousness and *strength*,'—the latter for personal holiness, as the former for acceptance with God (Is. xlv. 24). Believers clothed with 'the beauty of holiness,' as well as with the 'robe of righteousness.' Made to put on Christ in His spirit and character, as well as in His Surety righteousness. Renewed in the image of God, and conformed to the likeness of His Son. Made one with Christ, they possess His Spirit, and live because He lives in them (Gal. ii. 20). Sanctified as well as justified in Him (1 Cor. i. 2). Christ our Life, as well as our Peace and Hope. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His' (Rom. viii. 9). Believers chosen and blessed by the Father in Christ, in order to be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. i. 4). Predestinated by Him to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. viii. 29). Redeemed by Christ to be sanctified and cleansed, and so presented to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish (Eph. v. 25—27). Believers accepted in Christ without any holiness; but accepted in order to their being made holy.

III. *The* COMBINATION *of the two.* The believer, like Shulamite, at once black and comely. The paradox: Black and yet comely. Comely while yet black. The explanation: Believers black in themselves,

comely in Christ; black by nature, comely by grace; black in the flesh or old man in them; comely in the spirit or new man. Believers carry in them two natures at once,—the flesh and the spirit, the old man and the new. Like Rebekah, with two nations in her womb. The elder, or old carnal nature, to serve the younger, or the new and spiritual one. In the believer, with his twofold nature of flesh and spirit lusting and warring against each other, is seen 'the company of two armies.' Hence both inward conflict and outward incongruities. The believer both a saint and a sinner. Has in him the roots of all sin, and the principles of all holiness. Hence the believer's frequent doubts and disquietude about his spiritual condition. The question natural to the inexperienced Christian: If I am a child of God, why am I thus? A part of spiritual wisdom to know that we can be, and that, if believers, we actually are, both black and comely at the same time. Not less black in ourselves because comely in Christ; and not less comely in Christ because black in ourselves. Believers often black outwardly in respect to condition and circumstances, when comely inwardly in respect to character and affections. Black like their Master, in the eyes of the world; comely in the eyes of God. Black in suffering; comely in the patience and meekness with which they endure it.—Observe—

1. *Believers to be as conscious of their comeliness in Christ, as of their blackness in themselves.* Our duty to know ourselves, that Christ is in us; and that while black in ourselves, we are comely in Him. Hence both the believer's humility and joy.

2. *Our duty and privilege to confess both our blackness and our comeliness.* Grace not to be denied while blackness is acknowledged. To see and confess ourselves at once black and comely—black in ourselves and comely in Christ—the mark of a believer. Pride forbids both.

3. *Our comeliness to attract and convince the world, more than our blackness might offend and deter them.* The excellence of Christ and His Gospel seen in the comeliness of believers, notwithstanding their blackness. Believers to seek that others may think highly of Christ on their account, and rejoice in Him along with them. The world and weak professors apt to stumble at the blackness in believers, as seen in their sufferings, and especially in their sins. More power in their comeliness to attract, than in their blackness to repel. Believers more to be envied for their comeliness than despised for their blackness.

4. *Much in the believer and the spiritual life mysterious and incomprehensible to the world.* Apparent contradictions: black, yet comely; 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich.' Strange in the eyes of natural reason that the children of God should be black at all; still more, that they should be comely at the same time. Yet natural—(1) That the Bride of the Man of Sorrows should be also for a short time a sufferer, and that the Wife of the Persecuted One should herself be persecuted; (2) That the blackness of her own fallen nature should not be all at once removed, but allowed for wise and important purposes in part to remain till the Bridegroom comes and takes her to Himself. The blackness daily passing away; the comeliness ever increasing. The blackness carried only till death; the comeliness perfected in the New Jerusalem.

5. *The glory of the work of Christ and of the grace of God, that those who are 'black' are thereby rendered 'comely.'* Our blackness in respect to suffering assumed by the Surety, that we might have His comeliness put upon us. That comeliness imparted in regeneration and conversion. 'Even when we were dead in sins, hath He quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' 'Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God: and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God' (Eph. ii. 5, 6; 1 Cor. vi. 9—11; read also Titus iii. 3—7).

Notice the PARTY ADDRESSED.

*'O ye daughters of Jerusalem.'*

These, in the Allegory probably the ladies of Solomon's court, now present with Shulamite in the King's chambers. Now addressed by the rustic Stranger who has just been introduced among them. The probable representatives—(1) Of the professing Church; (2) Of persons only partially or carnally acquainted with Christ. Charged not to disturb the Beloved One's rest (chap. ii. 7). Connected in some way with the marriage of the King and Shulamite (chap. iii. 10). Supposed to have some knowledge of the Bridegroom, though not possessing Him as their own (chap. v. 8). Made desirous to learn more about Him, and to seek Him with the Bride (chap. vi. 1). Becomes interested in the Bride, and admires her beauty (chap. vi. 13). The women of Jerusalem who followed Jesus to Calvary,

called by this name; with a probable reference to the term in the text, and indicating the connection of the Song with the Gospel history, and the identity of the Bridegroom with Christ. Observe, in reference to—

### The Visible Church.

1. Possible to be near Christ and yet not to belong to Him; to have a knowledge of the Saviour, but not a saving one; to have a place in Christ's House, and yet not to be Christ's Bride.

2. The duty of believers to have regard to the spiritual welfare of the unconverted in the visible Church, and to seek their salvation.

3. Believers to be careful to remove all stumbling-blocks out of the way of the Church's unsaved members, especially such as are in themselves.

4. Young believers to regard the members of the visible Church with charity, and to treat them with deference and respect.

5. Believers to be able and willing, humbly and for edification, to declare, especially to the members of the Church, their spiritual standing and condition in Christ.

APPEAL AND EXPLANATION.

"*Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked* (or glanced) *upon me* (to scorch me); *my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards: but mine own vineyard have I not kept*" (Verse 6).

Shulamite begs the ladies of the court not to gaze upon her with such prying eyes, nor yet to regard her with disdain, or be offended on account of her swarthy complexion; a dusky hue being a mark of inferior condition among Eastern females. She intimates the cause of her blackness—exposure to the sun whilst fulfilling a rural task imposed on her by hostile relatives under whose control she had been,—unmarried females in the East being under the guardianship of older male relations; and whilst watching the vineyards during the summer while the fruit was ripening,—a work which could easily be done by a young female, though both menial in itself and injurious to her complexion. This last circumstance perhaps figurately alluded to in the concluding clause of the verse: 'Mine own vineyard'—my own interest, or what concerned my own person, namely, my complexion—'I have not kept,' or attended to. Or perhaps emphasizing the circumstance that it was in attending to the vineyards of others,—and not to her own,—and therefore unwillingly and by constraint,—that her otherwise fair countenance had become thus discoloured. Observe—

1. The condition of believers on earth, whether as one of sin or suffering, no just cause of offence to others; their sin being the result of a corrupt nature inherited from their first parents, and their suffering being partly the necessary consequence of that sin, and partly from the hostility of their unrenewed brethren (Rom. v. 12, 19; vii. 15, 19; John xv. 18, 20; xvi. 2; 1 Pet. i. 6).

2. Men of the world and unrenewed Church members apt to look more on believers' blemishes than on their beauty.

3. Believers, like Christ Himself, often, through men's sin, a stumbling-stone and rock of offence to others; partly from their unavoidable imperfections, and partly from their constrained sufferings. Chosen out of the world, and therefore made an offence to it. Sharers of Christ's cross, and, therefore, of its offence (Gal. iv. 11; Heb. xiii. 12, 13).

4. The duty and desire of believers to remove as far as possible all occasions of stumbling from the way of others; and to guard them against stumbling at what must necessarily exist. Paul's exhortation to believers: 'Give none offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God' (1 Cor. x. 32; viii. 9; Rom. xiv. 13). His own resolution: 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend' (1 Cor. viii. 13). His anxiety in respect to his sufferings: 'I desire that ye faint not at my tribulation for you.' 'That no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto (Eph. iii. 13; 1 Thess. iii. 3).

5. Connection with Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, sure to blacken us; as—(1) Discovering to us our own corruption; (2) Exposing us to persecution and tribulation from the world (John xvi. 2, 33).

6. Our "mother's children," whether naturally or ecclesiastically, not always the children of our heavenly Father, or the Bride of His Son (Rom. ix, 6—8; Gal. iv. 22—31; John vii. 5).

7. No uncommon thing for believers to experience the anger and persecution of their 'mother's children' (Is. lxvi. 5; Matt. x. 21, 35, 36).

8. A sinning and suffering condition in this world, a necessity laid upon believers in common with others in consequence of the Fall. All men, believers included, children of wrath by nature, as well as children of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2, 3). The creature made subject to vanity not willingly (Rom viii. 20).

9. The duty of each to be careful in looking to the interests of his own soul. Each man's soul his own vineyard given him by his Creator to keep (Prov. iv. 23). Loss of spiritual beauty the result of negligence and unwatchfulness (Prov. xxiv. 30—34). Ministers, while keeping the vineyard of others, to be especially careful to keep their own (1 Cor. ix. 27).

10. The part of a believer to look to the interests of others as well as, and to a certain extent, beyond his own. 'I seek not mine profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.' 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth' (or welfare). 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others: let this mind be in you which was also in Christ, (1 Cor. x. 2, 33; Phil. ii. 4, 5). True ministers the servants of others for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. iv. 5). Self-forgetting love one mark of the the Bride of Jesus Christ.

### Bride's Third Request of her Beloved.

*Shulamite again addresses herself to the King, though still out of sight.*

VERSE 7.

Tell me,
O thou whom my soul loveth,
Where thou feedest,
Where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.
For why should I be as one that turneth aside
By the flocks of thy companions.

The *third* petition which Shulamite has already addressed to her absent Bridegroom. A believer's life a life of prayer. A living soul *must* pray. He has wants, and *feels* them. Has longings, and one to tell them to. An earnest, loving Christian has *many* petitions, and has boldness in presenting them. The King's golden sceptre held out with—'What is thy petition, and what is thy request? and it shall be done unto thee' (Esther v. 2, 3).

Shulamite still longs for the Beloved's presence and fellowship. The chambers of the King not sufficient without the King himself. The Bride anxious to know where her Bridegroom is, in order to be with him. Addresses him as if he were present. Ardent love communes with its object though absent and unseen. The interview between a longing soul and a loving Saviour maintained through a thin veil. Bodily bsence no hindrance to communion with Christ. The loving soul must unbosom its feelings to the Beloved, whether present or absent. Good to turn from even professing Christians to Christ Himself. The daughters of Jerusalem unable to take the place of Jerusalem's King. Ordinances good, and Christian fellowship good; but neither of them anything without Christ himself.

The ground of Shulamite's longing given in the title with which she addresses her absent Beloved:

'*O thou whom my soul loveth.*'

Love unable to rest without the presence of its object. The language expressive both of the *sincerity* and the *ardour* of her affection. The believer's love to Christ a love of the '*soul*,'—deep down in the heart, and engaging all its affections. Christ to be loved *with* all and *above* all (Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 20). Jesus locked in the believer's heart as its most precious treasure. Infinitely worthy of such affection—(1) From His own loveliness; (2) From His love. In regard to believers, Christ's love that of a *Bridegroom*, who has—(1) Loved them; (2) Given His own life for them; (3) Wooed and won them; (4) Lavished the expressions of His love upon them (Eph. v. 24—30). The believer's love to Christ therefore that of a *Bride*. Christ in His loveliness and love, more than sufficient to attract and engage all our affection, if we possessed a thousand hearts instead of one. The believer's

**Love to Christ**

is—(1) *Divine in its origin;* produced by the Holy Spirit in a renewed heart. (2) *Unquenchable in its character:* survives all trials, sufferings, and discouragements. (3) *Discoverable in its effects:* leading to—(i.) Obedience; (ii.) Self-dedication; (iii.) Desire of fellowship; (iv.) Love and esteem for all that is His. True and hearty love to Jesus the distinguishing mark of a genuine Christian. The contrast of this in 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Believers conscious, or ought to be, that they love Christ. Shulamite's language that of unquestioning certainty. So Peter, even after his fall: 'Yea, Lord; Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee' (John xxi.). The Church's language in the lips of the prophet: 'The desire of our soul is to Thy name and to the remembrance of Thee' (Isa. xxvi. 8). True of all believers: 'Whom, having not seen, ye love' (1 Pet. i. 8). Observe—

1. *Our comfort in darkness and æsertion, to know that we love Jesus.*

2. *Consciousness and confession of blackness, in perfect harmony with love to Christ.* Peter's thrice repeated declaration of love to his Master consistent with his thrice repeated,

but afterwards deeply repented of, denial of Him. Love greatest where most is forgiven.

3. *Love to Christ a plea for the enjoyment of His presence.* Acknowledged by Christ Himself: 'He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him' (John xiv. 21).

In regard to the request in the text, observe—

I. *The* PETITION *itself.* 'Tell me where thou feedest,' &c. A desire for *information.* Implies *ignorance.* Believers while in this world, ignorant of many things pertaining to Christ's ways and their own comfort. 'Now we know in part.' Our happiness to be able to go to Christ for light and instruction. Christ made 'wisdom' to us, as well as righteousness and sanctification. Believers not only weak, and needing to be *drawn,* but erring, and needing to be *directed.* Wells of refreshment in the Word not seen till Jesus reveals them. Christ found in the Word and ordinances only as He is pleased to discover Himself. Himself our best Guide and Teacher.

Shulamite desires to know where her Beloved 'feeds and rests his flocks at noon.' Scripture often represents

### Christ as a Shepherd.

He is: (1) Jehovah's Shepherd; chosen by the Father to feed and save his people. 'My shepherd' (Zech. xiii. 7). 'I will set up one shepherd over them' (Ezek. xxxiv. 23). (2) *The Good Shepherd:* good especially in 'giving his life for the sheep' (John x. 11). (3) *The Great Shepherd:* being the Almighty, 'and able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him' (Heb. xiii. 20). (4) *The Chief Shepherd:* in distinction from all other shepherds, who, as teachers and rulers of the Church, are employed under Him in promoting the welfare of the sheep (1 Peter v. 4). (5) *The One Shepherd:* the sheep being only His, and no under-shepherd being to be compared with him (Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Eccles. xii. 11).

As a Shepherd Christ has—

### His Flock.

These are—(1) Given Him by the Father (John x. 29; xvii. 2, 6); (2) Redeemed by His own blood; (3) Sought and found by Himself while straying in the wilderness; (4) Called by His grace; (5) Quickened by His Spirit; (6) Kept and preserved by His power; (7) Cared for and tended by His love. Hitherto, as compared with the world, a 'little flock' (Luke xii. 32). Always a 'beautiful flock' (Jer. xiii. 20). Frequently a 'flock of slaughter' (Zech. xi. 4, 7; Ps. xliv. 22; Rom. viii. 36). Known from their —(1) Hearing His voice and obeying His call; (2) Following Him through bad and good report even to the end; (3) Avoiding and refusing to follow a stranger. Enjoy the privilege of being—(1) Led by Christ as their Shepherd; (2) Guarded by Him from all real evil and from every hurtful foe; (3) Helped, supported, and even carried by Him; (Is. xl. 11; xlvi. 4; lxiii. 9; Luke xv. 5; (4) Fed, sustained, and comforted by Him till they reach their home in heaven (Ps. xxiii. 1—6).

Two actions here ascribed to Christ as the Shepherd:—

1. He *feeds* His flock. Believers require spiritual food. Living souls must be fed. Such *feel* their need of nourishment. Hunger and thirst for it. Desire what may inwardly satisfy them and enable them to grow in knowledge, faith, love, and every grace. Must be fed by Christ Himself. Willing to go anywhere where He feeds His flock, however plain the place, and poor the people, and painful the effort to reach them. Christ feeds them—(1) With *His Word,* which is made 'the joy and rejoicing of their heart;' (2) With *His ordinances,* in which he makes them to lie down as 'in green pastures;' (3) With *Himself,* the Hidden Manna and Bread of Life, whose 'flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed.'

2. *He makes them to rest at noon.* Noon the time of oppressive heat,—'the burden and heat of the day.' Expressive of the time of —(1) Temptation (2) Trouble; (3) Persecution (Matt. xiii. 5, 6, 20, 21; 1 Pet. iv. 12). Believers often in such circumstances (1 Pet i. 6; 2 Tim. iii. 12; John xvi. 33). Therefore require rest and comfort, as well as food. Christ therefore *rests* His flock as well as *feeds* it. Able to make them 'rejoice in tribulation.' Speaks comfortably (or 'to their heart') in the wilderness (Hos. ii. 14). Gives them rest and comfort—(1) By the promises of His Word; (2) By the doctrines of His grace; (3) By the ordinances of His house; (4) By the dealings of His Providence; (5) By the consolations of His Spirit; (6) By the fellowship of His people; (7) By the manifestation of Himself. Christ the Rest of His people as well as their Food. 'The shadow of a great rock in a weary land' (Is. xxxii. 2). Exemplified in the case of Churches in Acts ix. 31. Typified in the rest given at times to Israel (Jud. v. 31; 1 Kings iv. 24, 25). The Bride's desire to be *rested* as well as *fed* by Christ along with his flock. Believers desire to be rested—(1) *By Christ Himself.* The world seek rest and comfort in the creature. Believers choose rather to

suffer with Christ than to reign with the world. (2) *Among His people.* 'Where Thou makest Thy flock to rest.' Christ found where His flock is, and where He is feeding and resting them (Mat. xviii. 20).

Shulamite, while desiring to be rested by the shepherd along with His flock, probably speaks in the character of a shepherdess, wishing to feed her kids where her Beloved is feeding his sheep. Even the under-shepherds need to be fed and rested by Christ Himself. The labourer for Christ to keep near to Christ even in his labour. Best to feed our kids where Christ is feeding His flock. Whether toiling or resting, the believer's place is to be near the Master.

II. *The* REASON *for the Petition.* 'For, why should I be as one that turneth aside (or, is veiled, either as a mourner or an immodest woman) by the flocks of thy companions.' Observe—

1. *Unlike the Bride of Christ to be living without His presence and society.* Natural to believers to have the presence of Christ and to be happy in it. Not to Christ's honour that His bride should go mourning without Him, or turning aside to others for comfort.

2. *The Bride of Christ in danger of turning aside, if without Christ's presence.* Believers justly afraid of turning aside from Christ to the flocks of His under shepherds, or even of wandering from those flocks themselves. Most happy in being by those flocks, but not to substitute them for Christ Himself. Not to be satisfied with being by Christ's flocks, or being fed by His companions instead of Christ Himself. Safer to find no rest than to find it by turning aside.

3. *The fear of turning aside, or of bringing reproach on His name, a powerful plea in pleading with Christ for His presence.* Right to *plead* as well as pray.

4. *Believers liable to be mistaken for hypocrites and mere professors.* Christ Himself thus mistaken. 'We esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted' (Is. liii. 4).

5. *Believers often unable to understand the reason of the Lord's dealings with them.* Rebekah's question not uncommon with believers: 'Why am I thus?' (Gen. xxv. 22). Three *Why's:* Why have I darkness and trouble while others have light and comfort? Why am I without quickening means of grace while others enjoy them? Why have I not the enjoyment of the Lord's presence which others have?

## Answer to Shulamite's Request.

*The request, though addressed to the absent Bridegroom, apparently answered by the Daughters of Jerusalem or Ladies of the Court who were present* (VERSE 8).

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

Shulamite receives a speedy answer to her request, though perhaps not a very direct one; nor yet from the Beloved himself, to whom it was addressed, but from his friends and the inmates of his house. Observe—(1) The earnest enquirer after Christ not long in receiving direction: 'Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart' (Jer. xxix. 13). (2) Various ways by which Christ may direct the enquiring soul. The Head of the Church at no loss for instruments. (3) Enquirers often directed by the ministers of the Word, or by those already acquainted more or less with the Saviour. (4) Those having any knowledge of Christ to do their best in guiding others to Him. (5) The great end of the Christian ministry and of the Christian Church, to direct men to Christ. All Christians to be able to give such direction. From the language of the answer in the text, observe—

I. *The* ADDRESS. 'O thou fairest among women.' A superior beauty belonging to believers. That beauty a moral and spiritual one, the beauty of holiness. 'The King's daughter all glorious within' (Ps. xlv. 11, 13; cx. 3). Observe—

1. *Believers to commend themselves to others by their spiritual beauty.* Something in a spiritually-minded, loving, and consistent believer that attracts the notice and admiration of others.

2. *Believers are, as they* OUGHT *to be, more excellent and lovely than their neighbours* (Prov. xii. 26). Possessed of a Divine nature. Born of God. Made new creatures in Christ. Created in Him unto good works. The Spirit of Christ, and so the *fruits* of the Spirit, in them (Rom. viii. 9; Gal. v. 22). Not to be satisfied to be like others (Matt. v. 46—48).

3. *Believers not merely to be, but to be seen to be, more lovely and excellent than other men* (Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 12). Ought to appear in the eyes of men as the Bride of Christ. Their calling to reflect His beauty, and be His witnesses and representatives in the world. Men to see in believers what Christ was and is. Christ Himself infinitely

lovely, His Spouse, possessing His Spirit, expected to be lovely also. His comeliness put upon them (Ezek. xvi. 10, 14).

4. *Individuals never more lovely than when earnestly seeking Christ.*

5. *Others often stirred up by the earnestness of one soul seeking the Saviour.*

II. *The* SUPPOSITION. 'If thou know not.' Observe—

1. *Believers expected to know where Christ is to be found.* Ought to know. Not according to their character to be ignorant.

2. *Knowledge sometimes possessed when not exercised.* Apparently the case here.

3. *Young believers often deficient in spiritual knowledge* (John xiv. 8, 9).

4. *Patience to be exercised in dealing with inquirers and young believers.* Christ Himself a High Priest who has compassion on the ignorant. Believers to resemble Him.

III. THE DIRECTION. Twofold—

1. '*Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.*' Three ideas in this part of the direction. (1) '*Go thy way.*' To find Christ, we must use means, and use them *earnestly*. The direction opposed to indolence and sitting still. (2) 'Go thy way *forth.*' To find Christ, we must not only go our way, but go *forth.* 'Let us go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach' (Heb. xiii. 13). Forth from—(i.) *Ourselves:* no longer trusting in anything we are or do; (ii.) The *world:* its pleasures and practices, its favour and fellowship. (iii.) *Sin:* so as no longer to love it or willingly to commit it. (3) '*By the footsteps of the flock.*' Observe in regard to the—

### Footsteps of the Flock.

(i.) *Christ's flock has footsteps in common.* One spirit in them; one faith and one baptism. The 'common faith,' the 'faith of God's elect;' 'like precious faith with us' (Eph. iv. 4, 5; Tit. i. 4; 2 Pet. i. 1). (ii.) *The footsteps and daily life of believers to be such as conduct to Christ.* (iii.) *To find Christ, we need to be in the footsteps of the flock,* not in the wanderings of the world. These footsteps are—(*a*) *Obedience:* 'why call ye Me Lord, and do not the things which I say.' (*b*) *Faith:* 'whose faith follow;' 'the steps of the faith of our father Abraham' (Heb. xiii. 7; Rom. iv. 12). (*c*) *Self-denial;* 'If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself.' (*d*) *Meekness and humility:* 'Learn of me, for I am meek and holy in heart' (Matt. xi. 28). (*e*) *Love:* 'walk in love;' ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another (Eph. v. 2; John xiii. 35). The footsteps of the flock exhibited in the Word of God for our guidance. The cloud of witnesses. The faith and obedience of Abel, Abraham, &c., recorded as footprints to guide those who should come after. Hence, also, the value of faithful Christian biography. (iv) *Inquirers to be the careful followers of Christ's faithful people.* 'Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' 'Be followers together of me, and mark them that walk so as ye have us for an example.) 'Followers of me even as I also follow Christ' (Heb. vi. 11, 12; xiii. 7; Phil. iii. 17). Believers to 'enquire for the old paths, and walk therein' (Jer. vi. 16). To go back to the inspired words of prophets and apostles. 'To the law and to the testimony;' not to the decrees of Councils, or the dicta of Doctors, or the lives of so-called Saints. The Church early corrupted with heresy in doctrine, and error in practice. Even early Christian writers often heated with controversy. Not only contradicted one another, but often contradicted themselves. In many cases, impossible to obtain a clear and definite opinion from them. Their writings often mutilated and interpolated. Their views often manifestly and avowedly incorrect. The example even of the holiest of men to be only followed in so far as it accords with the written Word. (v.) *Inquirers to be content with old and ordinary directions as to finding Christ.* No new or extraordinary direction given to the Bride in her difficulty. (vi.) *Directions not the less useful because not immediately bringing us to the object of our search.* 'Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?' 'Go to Damascus, and it shall be told thee what thou must do' (Acts ix. 6).

2. '*Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*' Shulamite addressed as a shepherdess. Believers made partakers of the calling and work of their Master. Christ the chief Shepherd; they, in their various spheres, and according to their various gifts, under-shepherds. 'Feed my lambs; feed my sheep,'—the evidence of their love to the Great Shepherd (Rom. xxi. 15, 16). Shulamite, as a female, had her kids to feed. If unable to feed the sheep, we may be able to attend to the lambs. The gifts of some qualify them to minister to the adult and the mature Christian; those of others to the young and the weak. Two particulars in this part of the directions. (1) '*Feed thy kids.*' Observe—(i) *Believers and inquirers have their kids to feed:* (*a*) Their spiritual desires and longings to be satisfied; (*b*)

Their new man, or young spiritual renewed nature, to be nourished and strengthened; (*c*) The souls of others, in one way or other committed to their charge, to be cared for and looked after. A Christian parent has his children's souls as well as their bodies to feed and care for. A Sabbath-school teacher has his class; a minister has his flock, including both old and young. A District Visitor has the families of his or her district. Elders, deacons, and other Church office-bearers, have their respective charges. Each believer has the souls in his immediate neighbourhood, in the circle of his relations, within the sphere of his influence, or under his employment. The language only of a Cain,—'Am I my brother's keeper?' The injunction laid on believers in general,—'On some have compassion, making a difference; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire' (Jude 22, 23). The resolution of David to be that of every saved soul: 'Then (when thou hast restored to me the joy of thy salvation) will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee' (Ps. li. 12, 13). Every believer, in his measure, charged with the care of his fellow-believers. Their duty to comfort, edify, and exhort one another (1 Thess. iv. 18; v. 11; Heb. iii. 13). (ii.) *Believers and inquirers to be diligent in feeding their kids.* Christ most likely to be found by us when diligently attending to the charge committed to us. To be found in active duty as well as in private devotion. (2) '*Beside the shepherds' tents.*'

**The Shepherds' Tents,**

representative of Christian assemblies gathered together in Christ's name, or rather of the places where they are so gathered. A body of people, and the place of their ordinary meeting, naturally associated in thought. Hence the term 'Church' originally applied only to the former, also used to designate the latter. Churches and congregations of believers placed by Christ, the chief Shepherd, under the charge and care of under-shepherds. These ordinarily in the New Testament designated Elders or Presbyters, Bishops or Overseers, and Pastors or Shepherds. These titles acknowledged to have been originally applied promiscuously to the same persons (Acts xiv. 23; xx. 17, 28; Eph. iv. 11; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1—5; iv. 14; Titus i. 5—7; 1 Pet. v, 1—4). Shepherds or Pastors Christ's gifts to His Church after His ascension into heaven (Eph. iv. 10—12; Jer. iii. 15). The Shepherds' tents the places where the Shepherds are found ministering to the flock (1 Pet. v. 1, 2). Observe—(i) *Christ found beside the shepherds' tents'* (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). Himself always engaged in tending His sheep. Not far off when we are beside the 'Shepherds' tents.' Inquiring and believing souls directed to the place where Christ is feeding His flock through His under-shepherds. (ii.) *True Pastors and Gospel ordinances to be highly valued and diligently made use of* (Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Thess. v. 12). None allowed to be above ordinances in the Church militant. (iii.) *Believers to feed their charge and attend to their own souls, where Christ, His people, and His under-shepherds are.* 'They who separate themselves,' given as a mark of those who have not the Spirit (Jude 19). 'Forsaking the assembling of themselves together' not the manner of Christ's flock (Heb. x. 25). Isolation from Christ's ordinances not the way to find Christ. (iv.) *The kids also to be fed beside the shepherds' tents.* Safest and best to accustom children to attend the ordinances of Christ's house. 'Train up a child in the way he should go.' Christ's will concerning children: 'Suffer the children to come unto Me;' but Christ is where two or three are gathered together in His name. The shepherds in their ministrations to have a portion for the young as well as the old. The children an important portion of the flock, and to be carefully attended to. 'How is it that your sheep look better than other people's?' was asked of a farmer. 'I look well to the lambs,' was the reply. (v.) *The importance, necessity, and permanence of the pastoral office indicated.* Pastors and teachers, &c., given 'for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man—unto the measure of the statue of the fulness of Christ' (Eph. iv. 11—13). The charge difficult, and sometimes painful and hazardous; but honourable, often pleasant, and when faithfully executed, blessedly rewarded (1 Pet. v. 1—4). People without a faithful pastor like sheep without a shepherd. As such, the object of Christ's special compassion, and should be that of His people (Matt. ix 36—38).

# The Royal Bridegroom's Greeting.

SECOND SCENE. **Place:** *The open grounds adjacent to the Palace.* **Speakers:** *The King and Shulamite; the daughters of Jerusalem or ladies of the Court, at a distance.*

VERSES 9—11.

I have compared thee, O my love,
To a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.
Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels;
Thy neck with chains of gold.
We will make thee borders of gold
With studs of silver.

Shulamite, having gone forth according to the direction of the ladies of the court, the King meets her with his loving greeting. Observe:—(1) *The earnest seeker of Christ and His fellowship, certain sooner or later to find Him.* Historically exemplified in the case of the Wise Men of the East, who came to Jerusalem seeking the infant King; and of those devout and praying men and women who were found at the birth of Jesus waiting for the consolation of Israel. Possibly, according to the view of the Jews, a retrospective reference to the Lord's gracious appearance and promise to Moses and Israel when mourning after the sin of the Golden Calf (Exod. xxxiii. 10—14; xxxiv. 4—10). (2) *Christ's own time for the manifestation of Himself to the seeking soul the best.* That time, as apparently here, often sooner than expected. (3) *The joy in finding, such as abundantly to compensate for all the grief in seeking.* Such indicated by the character of the bridegroom's greeting. Observe in regard to it:—

I. *The* APPELLATION. 'O my love.' *Hebrew*, 'My companion.' Given here for the comfort and joy of the seeker. Observe: (1) Earnest pursuit after Christ rewarded by sweet assurance of His love to us and our interest in him. (2) Christ's spouse manifested by her earnestness in following after and resolution not to rest without Him. (3) Sweet assurance of Christ's love often follows deep sense of our own unworthiness. 'I am black'—soon followed by—'O my Love.' (4) When blackest in our own eyes, often fairest in Christ's. The Appellation exhibits believers as—

### The Bride of Christ.

1. *The high distinction of believers that they are Christ's Bride.* Eve, in relation to Adam, a type of the great body of believers, and of each believer in particular, in relation to Christ the second Adam. This relation between the Saviour and the Saved, the Church and her Head, recognised and taught throughout the Word. Christ, or God in Christ, everywhere in the Bible the Bridegroom and Husband of believing souls. (See Introduction.) This relation the foundation of the Song. Typified in that of ancient Israel as God's covenant people.

2. *This relation acknowledged and rejoiced in by Christ Himself.* Believers acknowledged and delighted in by Christ as His Father's gift, as Eve by Adam when God brought her to him and gave her to him to be his wife (Gen. ii. 22; iii. 12; John xvii. 6). Repenting and believing sinners acknowledged by Jesus when on earth as his Bride (Luke v. 29—35). That relation the ground of His redemption work (Eph. v. 25—27).

3. *The great happiness of believers that they are Christ's Bride.* A blessedness beyond conception involved in so intimate, tender, and enduring a relation to the King of Kings and Lord of Glory, in whom is summed up all created and uncreated loveliness and excellence, and who is Love itself. The joy attending the realization of such a relationship justly described as 'unspeakable and full of glory' (1 Peter i. 8). No light thing in David's eye to be son-in-law to a poor earthly king like Saul. Archangels fail to tell the blessedness of being Bride to the King of Glory, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

4. *An enhancement of this blessedness to receive the testimony of the relationship from Christ Himself.* This testimony often spiritually and sweetly conveyed to earnestly seeking believers even on earth. A personal testimony from His own lips, given face to face, awaiting every child of God hereafter. The blessed hope of believers.

5. *Believers reminded of the duty and responsibility connected with such a relationship.* Cæsar's wife to be above suspicion. What, then, the Bride of Christ? The proper character of such a Bride to be without spot. Christ's honour in her keeping. His joy in her purity and undivided love. Natural for believers to tremble at the first rising of sin, as a dove at the sight of a hawk's feather. Sin in a believer a double crucifixion of Christ. The most painful wounds those which a man receives in the house of his friends. Believers, as Christ's

Bride, justly expected—(1) Carefully to avoid every sin; (2) Jealously to watch against every rival in their affection; (3) Constantly to beware of any coolness or distance between them and Christ; (4) Faithfully to seek to obey His commands, promote His interests, and advance His glory.

II. *The* COMPARISON. 'I have compared thee,' &c. Notice—

1. *The party making it.* The Bridegroom himself. Observe:—(1) *The main thing to have the good opinion of Christ.* Of comparatively small importance what men think of us. Christ best acquainted with us. Best knows what is real worth and true beauty. Can be surety for His own assertion. (2) *Christ observant of his people's graces and the exercise of them.* The comparison in the text the result of His close observation of the Bride's spirit and conduct. (3) *Nothing more pleasing in Christ's eyes than a soul earnestly and lovingly seeking Him and His fellowship as its chief joy.* This the case even when He gives no intimation of it, or appears to take no notice. His own time for giving such intimation the best. (4) *What excellence Christ ascribes to His people is what He Himself has given.* Not only makes the comparison, but provides it. His comparison not merely one of word, but of previous act. He makes His bride what He loves, then compares and commends her.

2. *The comparison itself.* 'To a company of horses (or, to my mare) in Pharaoh's chariots.' The best and most beautiful horses those from Egypt; and naturally the best of all those employed in drawing the royal chariot. Such horses obtained by Solomon from Egypt (1 Kings iv. 26; x. 26, 28, 29). The comparison in the text either to a single mare, to a team drawing together, or to the whole stud in the royal stables. The comparison of a beautiful woman to a Thessalian mare found in an ancient Greek poet. Horses celebrated in Oriental poetry for their beauty. Arabs passionately attached to their mares. The points of comparison: (1) *Beauty.* So—'his goodly horse' (Zech. x. 3). (2) *Liveliness and ardour.* See the description of the horse in Job xxxix. 19—25. (3) *Courage and endurance.* Hence especially employed in ancient warfare. 'His goodly horse in the battle' (Zech. x. 3). See again the description in Job. (4) *Obedience and subjection.* Horses naturally wild and wilful. Brought into subjection and broken in by man's effort and skill. 'Tamer of steeds,' a Homeric epithet for a hero. The horse, when broken in and trained, obedient to the slightest intimation of the rider or driver's will. (5) In the case of a team,—*harmony and united action.* Draw with one mind, will, step. (6) *Discipline and order.* Horses employed in drawing chariots, not only broken in, but well trained, so as to run in the traces with the greatest regularity and order. (7) As horses in Pharaoh's chariots,—*excellence in their kind, the best training, the most costly and beautiful ornaments, and employment in the King's service.* The

**Proper Character of Believers,**

especially when it is well with them. (1) Beautiful in holiness, and comely with the Divine comeliness put upon them (Ps. cx. 3; Ezek. xvi. 14). (2) Lively and ardent, instead of being slothful and lukewarm. (3) Strong and courageous in fighting the good faith, and enduring to the end. (4) Obedient to their Divine Master, and subject in all things to His will. (5) A unity in plurality; one and yet many; many in number, yet with one spirit; many individual believers, yet but one Bride and one Body. (6) United in action; striving together for the faith of the Gospel; engaging with one heart in the service of Christ and the advancement of His kingdom (1 Cor. i. 10; Eph. iv. 4; Phil. i. 27; ii. 2). (7) Subdued and well-disciplined under the Holy Ghost; no longer, as at first, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; made willing in the day of Christ's power; walking orderly, and subject to one another according to the rule of the Gospel (Ps. cx. 3; Col. ii. 5; 1 Cor. xiv. 40). (8) The most excellent of their species, not naturally or by their own merit, but by God's grace; the excellent of the earth; God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Ps. xvi. 3; Eph. ii. 10). (9) Arrayed in the garments of salvation, clothed with humility, and adorned with a meek and quiet spirit. (10) Employed by the King of Zion in His service as His fellow-workers; drawing in the chariot of the Gospel, and commissioned to carry it to the ends of the earth,—Christ Himself going forth in it, conquering and to conquer. Hence in regard to believers—(i.) Their *honour and blessedness;* (ii.) Their *duty and responsibility;* (iii.) Their *indebtedness to Divine grace.* Formerly Satan's willing slaves, and his depraved instruments in furthering his cruel and abominable purposes. Now the willing and happy subjects of Jesus, employed in his honourable, holy, and blessed service in promoting the salvation and happiness of a world.

III. *The* COMMENDATION. 'Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels,' &c. Cheeks mentioned as now uncovered. Perhaps in allusion to the comparison already made in

verse 10. Ornaments of gold, silver, and jewellery about the face and neck, greatly esteemed in Oriental countries, So Arabs adorned both their horses and camels, as well as their own persons (Jud. viii. 26). Such ornaments thought to set off and add to female beauty. Observe—

1. *Believers highly beautiful and commendable in the eyes of Christ.* Often like Himself, without form or comeliness in the eyes of the world, but beautiful and comely in His.

2. *Wonderful change in a believer's character.* Cheeks comely with grace and love, instead of a whore's forehead and a brow of brass. Their neck no longer stiff with an iron sinew, and burdened with the yoke of Satan; but adorned with the golden chains of heavenly wisdom (Prov. i. 9; xxv. 12; Matt. xi. 29, 30; Gal. v. 1).

3. *The spiritual beauty of believers not natural to them, or properly their own, but imparted to them and put upon them by Divine grace.* The 'rows of jewels' and 'chains of gold' something put upon the Bride. Believers made comely with the 'comeliness put upon them' (Ezek. xvi. 14). Their ornament Christ Himself, whom they put on as well for wisdom and sanctification as for justification or righteousness (Rom. xiii. 14; 1 Cor. i. 30). 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me' (Gal. ii. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 10). All the graces of a believer the fruits of the Spirit who has been given to him (Gal. v. 22). 'Who maketh them to differ? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?' (1 Cor. iv. 7).

4. *The duty of believers to aim at being as they are here represented.* The graces of the Spirit given them in Christ, to be put on and worn by them as their own. Their duty to be putting on Christ from day to day, 'as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.' As the elect of God, holy and beloved, believers to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, &c. (Col. iii. 12).

5. *Believers' spiritual beauty the Bridegroom's joy.* The language of the text that of admiration, satisfaction, and delight. 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him.' His joy fulfilled in His faithful, obedient, and loving people. The name He gives to His Church—Hephzibah, or, 'My delight is in Her.' His believing people a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty in His hand. 'Hearken, O daughter and consider, &c.; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty' (Psalm xlv. 10, 11)

6. *The graces of Christ's people to be open and conspicuous to the world.* The Bride's cheeks and neck here commended. Men to be able to see the believer's good works, that they may glorify God who makes him what he is. To take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. The Church to be able to magnify the grace of God in us. The world to know and believe from what they see in believers that God h as sent His Son. Believers to be living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men (2 Cor. iii. 2).

IV. *The* PROMISE. 'We will make thee borders (circlets or diadems), of gold,' &c. The speaker changed from the singular to the plural. Still, however, the king. Speaks in the plural either in the style of majesty, or as having others associated with him in the fulfilment of the promise. Christ, in His purpose of adorning His Church with the beauties of holiness and the insignia of royalty, has associated with Him the Holy Spirit given Him by the Father for that object. The Spirit the great agent both in the believer's sanctification and glorification. A similar style to that in the text used in connection with the creation of man (Gen. i. 26). The same Divine Trinity engaged both in the first and second creation—in creating man at first, and in renewing him when fallen (Isaiah vi. 8; Matt. xxviii. 19; 2 Cor. xiii. 14). Observe, in relation to the promise—

1. *The purpose of Christ to perfect believers both in holiness and glory.* The will of God their sanctification and perfection. The object for which Christ gave Himself for the Church, that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. v. 24—26). Believers chosen in Christ by the Father before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blame before Him in love. Blessed by Him for this object with all spiritual blessings, as the result of that election (Eph. i. 3, 4). Predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. viii. 29). Believers to be adorned in a way worthy of the Bride of the Son of God. Changed from glory unto glory. Their path like that of the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. iv. 18; 2 Cor. iii. 18).

2. *Adequate agency employed for the accomplishment of such a purpose.* '*We* will make thee,' &c. The Triune Jehovah the Almighty Agent. Believers God's workmanship. The branch of His planting, and the work of His hands, that He may be glorified (Isa. lx. 21; Eph. ii. 10). Their sanctification and salvation the work of their Divine Creator. That Agent able to make them perfect in every good word and work. Able to do exceeding abundantly above all

we ask or think. To sanctify wholly, throughout body, and soul, and spirit. Nothing too hard for the Lord. Able to subdue all things to Himself. Believers saved and glorified according to the working of His mighty power put forth in raising the Lord Jesus from the dead. More not to be desired; less unable to suffice.

3. *The destiny of the Church and of each individual believer unspeakably glorious.* 'Borders (headbands or diadems) of gold, with studs (points or spanglets) of silver.' Believers to be made a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty in the hand of the Lord (Isa. lxii. 3). To be made as glorious as the Bride of the King of glory ought to be;—as glorious as a loving and Almighty Husband can make them. To be made entirely like Christ, and to share His glory. To sit with Him on His throne; and as kings and priests, to reign with Him for ever and ever. Their glorious destiny yet to be revealed. It doth not yet appear what we shall be (1 John iii. 2). Certain, however, in its accomplishment, as being—(1) The object of a Divine purpose; (2) The subject of a Divine promise; (3) The work of a Divine Agent.

4. *The Church's experience and character a progressive one.* True in relation both to the Church as a whole and to each individual member. The glory of the former Legal Dispensation eclipsed by the superior glory of the new Dispensation of the Gospel. The latter, the Dispensation of the Spirit; the former, that of the letter. The former characterized by a spirit of bondage and fear; the latter by a spirit of liberty and adoption,—of 'love, power, and a sound mind.' Under the Gospel all classes to receive largely of the Spirit, and as the result of it to prophesy (Acts ii. 17, 18; Joel ii. 28, 29). Some better thing reserved for the Church in the Dispensation of the Gospel. The light of the moon to be as the light of the sun. The millennial age that shall follow still more glorious. The light of the sun as the light of seven days (Isa. xxx. 26). Believer's glory an ever-advancing one. Fair as the moon; clear as the sun; terrible as an army with banners (Song vi. 10).

5. *The promise of growth in grace and of future glory given for the consolation of earnest believers.*

6. *Grace exercised and improved, followed and rewarded with grace increased* (Matt. xiii. 12; Luke xix. 26).

BRIDE'S REPLY TO THE KING'S GREETING.

*Shulamite expresses her Delight in her Beloved.*

VERSES 12—14.

While the King sitteth at his table,
My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.
A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me;
He shall lie all night (or, which remains) betwixt my breasts.
My Beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphor
In the vineyards of Engedi.

The King's commendation and assurance of love reciprocated by the Bride. The language of the 12th verse—'*while the King sitteth*,' &c., either the declaration of a fact, expressive of her delight in the King, and the joy his presence afforded her; or a *resolution* as to what she would do for his honour. Regarded as the latter, it corresponds with the King's last words. Solomon promises ornaments of gold and silver. Shulamite can only bring her spikenard; which, however, shall not be wanting in order to do him honour and express her love. Historically and literally realized in the life of Jesus, when the woman that was a sinner brought her alabaster box of ointment to anoint His feet in the Pharisee's house; and when Mary, the sister of Lazarus, performed a similar service with her costly spikenard in the house of Simon the leper (Luke vii. 37, 38; John xii. 3; Matt. xxvi. 6, 7).

In regard to the RESOLUTION, notice—

I. *The* OCCASION *to which it refers.* 'While the King sitteth at his table' (or, 'in his circle [of guests]'). Observe, in reference to—

**The King at His Table.**

1. The *person* referred to. 'The King.' So Shulamite speaks of her Beloved, and the believer of his Lord. Christ a King. Imports his dignity as God and his office as Redeemer. Christ a King both by Divine right and Divine appointment. A King in virtue of his Divine nature as Son of God; and in virtue of His mediatorial undertaking as Son of Man. In His twofold nature as God-man, and in His mediatorial character as Redeemer, Christ is God's King; King of Zion; King of Saints; Head over all things to His Church. Sits at the Father's right hand upon His Father's throne, 'angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.' The King and Lord of glory. Rules and reigns over both the Church and the world as King of Kings and Lord of Lords,—'Prince of the Kings of the earth.' In a lower, literal, and subordinate, though

important sense, the 'King of the Jews,' heir to the throne of his father David. The language of the text emphatic. Christ not only a King, but '*the* King.' The Church's own and only King. 'The great and only Potentate.' In Christ, 'love brings the majesty of the Creator down to the misery of the creature.' Observe—*The Church recognizes and acknowledges Christ as King, and as the King.* Even in the closest and most endearing fellowship, His dignity and the reverence due to him as King not forgotten. True enjoyment of His fellowship accompanied with an impression on the heart as to His royal character and dignity. Such fellowship thus distinguished from what is spurious, imaginary, and fanatical. Nearness to Christ fitted to exalt our views of Him and increase our reverenee towards Him. The seraphim in His presence veil their faces and their feet with their wings. The Prophet, beholding His glory in the temple, exclaims: Woe is me; for I am undone, &c.; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts (Isa. vi. 1—5; John xii. 45). John, the beloved disciple, in similar circumstances 'fell at His feet as dead' (Rev. i. 17). Nathanael's adoring testimony at the beginning of the Gospel history—'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.' Thomas's, at its close,—'My Lord and My God.' The sentiment of the Church well expressed in Ambrose's celebrated hymn,—'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ.' The title in the text indicative of—(1) *The condescension of Christ in admitting sinful men to his fellowship.* Subjects seldom admitted to the table of their sovereign. Mephibosheth amazed at David's condescension in giving 'a dead dog' like him a place at his table. Christ not only admits to His intimate fellowship His own creatures, but creatures who have debased and polluted themselves with sin, and have been in active and open rebellion against Him. (2) *The honour and blessedness of believers.* Each believer not only admitted into the King's presence, but admitted there as the King's Bride and Beloved. Compared with this, the highest earthly honour and position as worthless as the fallen leaf of autumn. This privilege the believer's guarantee of all he needs for time and eternity. (3) *The believer's duty and responsibility.* If Christ be our King, we are to confess, follow, obey, serve, honour, and trust in Him as such. The believer to aim at shewing himself at all times and in all places, both by word and deed, the faithful subject of Christ his King.

2. The King's *place.* 'Sitteth at his table.' Observe—(1) *Christ has a table.* Has a table *in heaven.* A celestial banquet prepared by Him for all the saved. Abraham seen afar off by the rich man in hell, sitting at that table with Lazarus reclining on His bosom. Hereafter follows the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when His 'Bride hath made herself ready' (Rev. xix. 9). Has also a table *on earth.* This that referred to in the text. The earthly rather than the heavenly experience of believers described in the Song. So the New Testament speaks of the Lord's, *i.e.*, Christ's table, and 'the Lord's Supper' (1 Cor. x, 21; xi. 20). One of the many connecting links between the Song of Solomon and the New Testament. The King's 'Table' on earth the *ordinances of the Gospel,* and especially their central part—

### The Lord's Supper.

This ordinance expressed in the Scripture as a *Table,* not an *altar.* The Lord's Supper a *Feast,* after and upon a sacrifice offered up more than eighteen centuries ago, not the sacrifice itself. The Table in the Lord's Supper the *King's Table.* The King (i.) *appointed* it; (ii.) *provides* it; (iii.) *presides* at it. The Table not man's but the Lord's; hence for all who love and belong to the Lord, and only such. Hence, also, His Table to be only what He Himself directs and prescribes. Man's grievous sin in converting His Table into what Christ could no longer recognize as such. The Table appointed by the King for the refreshment, comfort, and strengthening of His Church in the wilderness. The provisions the *King's own;* while the outward, visible, and symbolical materials are, according to His appointment, provided by the Church. The provisions nothing less than *Himself.* Christ as crucified for us, fed upon by faith in the Supper, as exhibited under the symbols of bread and wine. His flesh, or Himself as the incarnate and crucified Redeemer, the true meat; and His blood as shed for the remission of our sins, the true drink of the soul. Christ the bread of life, to be constantly, as well as in the Supper, fed upon by faith. He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you (John vi. 35—58; 1 Cor. x. 16; xi. 23—29). Christ spiritually fed on by believers, as the Lamb Slain, as the typical lamb was carnally eaten by Israel in the Feast of the Passover. The King's Table thus richly furnished. Man eats more than angels' food. The Table on earth preparatory to the Table in heaven, the marriage supper of the Lamb. (2) *Christ sits at His Table.* The King's Table not only appointed and provided, but *presided* at by the King. When the dis-

ciples prepared the last Passover and first Lord's Supper, Jesus 'sat down with the twelve.' Jesus sits at His own Table (Matt. xviii. 20). Is there for *His own sake*, delighting in the fellowship of His loving and believing people. 'I will come in to him and sup with him.' More especially, however, *for their sake*. Affords them quiet fellowship and intimate communion with Himself. Hence, the preciousness of the Lord's Table to believers. He is there Himself, not as changed into, or necessarily connected with, the bread and wine; but as revealing Himself graciously and spiritually to the souls of His people. Is there, not only as the *provisions*, but as the *presiding Head;* not merely as their crucified Redeemer, but as their living and loving Bridegroom. The King's Table precious, but more precious the presence of the King Himself. Feeding on Him, as exhibited in the bread and wine, believers have *life;* realizing his living and loving presence, they have life *more abundantly* Believers at the Lord's Table not only *feed on* Christ, but *have fellowship with* Christ. *He* speaks peace and comfort to their heart. *They* speak their petitions and desires into His ear. The King sits at His Table—(i.) To see that the guests want nothing; (ii.) To give them a loving welcome; (iii.) To gladden them with His presence and smile; (iv.) To receive their petitions; (v.) To bless the provision to their souls.

3. The *time* the King is at His Table. 'While the King sitteth,' &c. The King not always sitting at His Table. Only now and then, and that for but a limited period. That period often short. Christ at His Table in the upper room at Jerusalem at most for two or three hours. Seasons of special communion in general neither very frequent nor long continued. When the risen Saviour manifested Himself as such to the two disciples at Emmaus, he immediately 'vanished out of their sight.' Such the conditions under which the Lord's Table is spread on earth. Too often the causes of abridged communion in ourselves. Hence (1) earnest prayer to be made, that while the Table is spread the King Himself may be present at it, and present all the time that it is so. (2) Special care to be taken that there be nothing in us or by us to cause the time of His presence to be abridged. (3) Diligent improvement to be made of His presence while it continues. The King's golden sceptre being held out, believers to be ready with their petitions (Esther v. 2, 3).

II. *The* RESOLUTION *itself.* 'My spikenard sendeth (or hath sent) forth the smell thereof.' Spikenard, a fragrant liquid produced from a lowly shrub of that name. Wont to be poured on the head of guests at table (Luke vii. 46; Mark xiv. 3). This, and other perfumes, often carried about by Oriental ladies on their person. Shulamite had her's in order to shew her devotion to her beloved—to do him honour, and to minister to his pleasure and refreshment. Her spikenard to give forth its fragrance only while the King reclined at his table or in the circle of his friends, when she should lovingly pour it on his head or even on his feet. Perhaps her language figuratively expressive of the effect the King's presence had on her affections, in calling them into lively and ardent exercise. *Her own love the sweetest spikenard to the King.* Observe in regard to

### The Believer's Spikenard.

1. The believer *has* spikenard. A spiritual as well as a material spikenard. The soul or spirit capable of being pleased and regaled as well as the senses. Spiritual spikenard, that in an individual or in the Church at large, which is most pleasing and delighful to God, to Christ, and to holy souls. Such the fruits and graces of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c. (Gal. v. 22). Holy and spiritual affections exhibited in corresponding actions God's delight (Ps. xxxvii. 23). The Philippians' gifts to Paul, 'an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God' (Phil. iv. 18). Believers' prayers as incense (Ps. cxli. 2). These graces and virtues present more or less in every regenerate soul. The spikenard for the Lord's table more especially—(1) *Faith* in Jesus, as the Lamb slain; (2) *Love* to Jesus, kindled by the display of His dying love to us; (3) *Joy* in Him as our God and Saviour, our husband and friend; (4) *Repentance* and godly sorrow for the sins that caused Him to suffer; (5) *Self-dedication*—'O Lord, I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant and the son of Thine handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds' (Ps. cxvi. 16). (6) *Holy resolution*, to live by His grace a life of obedience and devotedness to His service. These graces and their lively exercise agreeable to Christ as most fragrant perfume. Costly and precious as the work of the Spirit and the result of the Saviour's own suffering and death. Symbolized in the frankincense and myrrh presented by the wise men to the new-born King, as well as in the spikenard poured on His head and feet by the hands of those whom He had saved.

2. *The believer's desire that his spikenard give forth its fragrance.* Not sufficient that the spikenard is present. Of little use while still only kept close in the vessel. When

Mary broke the box, the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. The graces of the Spirit to be not only in our souls, but in lively exercise. Hence the need of the prayer: 'Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden (the garden of Christ in my soul), that the spices thereof may flow out' (chap. iv. 16).

(3) *His desire in order that Christ may receive both honour and delight.* The object of the women who poured their spikenard on His head and feet. The desire of the loving believer that all he is and has, feels and does, be for the honour and gratification of his Saviour. The very spikenard all the King's own, and ours only by his kind and kingly favour; therefore to be for the King's own enjoyment. We have given Him the vinegar and gall to drink for our sakes; meet, therefore, we should give Him the fragrant spikenard of His own grace. Not only the spikenard itself His; but the emission of its fragrance due to His own presence. His manifested gracious presence like the gentle breeze that passes over the beds of spices, and causes them to exhale their sweets. Raises a cloud of sweet incense from the believer's renewed heart. Sitting with Christ, we obtain something of Christ in our spirit and walk. The bride breathes no fragrance but what she imbibes from her beloved. The clay vessel scented by the perfume that fills it. Christ the sun that dissolves the spikenard and extracts its odour. His presence at the table, that which brought forth the fragrance of the women's ointment. The believer's graces at the King's table do not so much impart sweetness to the King, as His presence there imparts sweetness to those graces. Hence, in relation to the Lord's Table, the duty of believers—(1) To have lofty views of Christ as 'the King'; (2) To think much of the King's condescension and love, and of their high privilege in being permitted to occupy a place at His table; (3) To pray earnestly that He may be pleased to be graciously present and to manifest Himself there to their souls; (4) To see that there is nothing in themselves to hinder this; (5) To be concerned that there be the Spirit's graces to please and entertain Him; (6) To seek that those graces be in full and lively exercise.

Verses 11 and 12, the Bride's commendation of her beloved, and her declaration of her love; 'A bundle (or bag) of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night' (or, 'which remaineth') &c. Observe how the Bride speaks of the King, 'my well-beloved.' So believers of Christ Jesus, the beloved of every believing soul. 'Whom having not seen ye love.' Christ's gifts precious to the believers; but more precious Himself. Love the first and the last thing required by Christ of His people. The object of His greatest desire, and that for which He gave Himself. When well with the believer, no question with himself as to his love to Christ. 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.' Ardent love its own certificate.—Christ commended in the text under a two-fold comparison:—

I. *A 'Bundle of Myrrh.'* Myrrh a fragrant gum exuding from a tree growing in Eastern countries, employed for imparting fragrance to the person, and often for that purpose carried by Eastern females in the bosom (chap. iii. 6; Est. ii. 12; Ps. xlv. 8). One of the chief spices in the East, and used in the composition of the Holy Anointing Oil (Ex. xxx. 23, 34). Christ a

**Bundle of Myrrh.**

1. *In Himself.* Includes in Himself all sweetness and fragrance. In Him a combination of all charms and excellencies. The totality of all graces and virtues resident in His person. Himself the concentration of all loveliness and sweetness. In Him a fragrance that fills heaven with delight. His person, names, titles, attributes, words and works, such as ought to diffuse joy in every sinner's heart, and actually do so wherever they are known. Not half the sweetness that is in Jesus enjoyed even by those best acquainted with Him on earth. Yet in that which is enjoyed, a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

2. *To the Believer.* 'Unto me.' The language—(1) Of *knowledge and apprehension.* The believer's happiness to be made to apprehend the excellence and sweetness that is in Jesus. Christ revealed to him and in him by the Father. His eyes opened and anointed by the Spirit to 'see that Just One.' Made by faith to behold the King in His beauty. Enabled to testify from experience—'Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips.' 'We beheld His glory.' Whatever He is to others, to them He is a bundle of myrrh. To them that believe, He is precious. (2) Of *choice* and *appropriation.* Christ chosen and appropriated by the believer as his 'bundle of myrrh'—*his* joy and treasure. Others choose the finite and fading creature for *their* 'bundle of myrrh,' which perishes in the using. Believers, with Mary, choose Christ. First chosen by Him, they next choose *Him.* Their choice and appropriation of Him vindicated in the words of the Bride—'He shall lie all night (or simply—'which remains) betwixt my breasts.' The reference rather to the bundle of myrrh than to the beloved

himself, though indicating the bride's feelings and purpose regarding him. Like the bag of myrrh that remained constantly in the bosom, he should have the most intimate place in the affections of her heart. The believer's earnest desire and resolution to have Christ ever near him and ever with him—to enjoy His uninterrupted communion, to satisfy the longings of his soul with His presence and love, and never to part with Him. His desire expressed in the hymn:

"Abide with me from morn till eve;
For without Thee I cannot live."

Christ appropriated not as a dress to be put on and off again, but as a perfume to be carried in the bosom day and night. The present world a night to believers (Rom. xiii. 12). His personal coming brings the day. Himself the Bright and Morning Star. His spiritual manifested presence gives songs in the night. His presence and smile our bundle of myrrh. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace (John xvi. 33). Christians to be Christ-bearers. Not merely to wear His name but Himself. Not to carry a crucifix, or picture of Him on our person, but His living presence in our heart. That presence the secret of the believer's fragrance. The bag of myrrh in the bosom perfumed the whole person. The Spirit and life sweet and savoury, only as far as we have Christ in us and with us.

II. *A 'cluster of camphor.'* Camphor, or more properly cypress, or henna, an Oriental plant whose fragrant flowers grow in clusters. The spikes or sprigs of it carried about by Eastern females for the fragrance. Engedi, with its vineyards, near the western shores of the Dead Sea, and famous for its aromatic herbs, the place where the best cypresses grew. Christ not only to believers as fragrant cypress, but a cluster of it; not merely a cluster of cypress, but of the best and most fragrant cypress to be found,—cypress in the vineyards of Engedi. In Christ a concentration of all graces and virtues, all sweetness and excellence. Abraham's faith, Moses' meekness, Job's patience, David's devotion, Solomon's wisdom, Paul's zeal, and John's love, all united in Jesus in fullest perfection and concentrated strength. Christ in the world and in the Church like a cluster of cypress in the vineyard of Engedi. Whatever of excellence or sweetness found *there*, infinitely short of what is in *Him*. Nature lovely; Christ infinitively lovelier. Some men and women, especially believing ones, charming and attractive both in their spirit and their person. Christ incomparably fairer and more attractive than the children of men. Divine ordinances sweet and refreshing; Christ infinitely more so; and ordinances only sweet as Christ Himself is in them

## Bride and Bridegroom's Mutual Commendations.

### I. The King's Commendation of Shulamite.

(Verses 15—17.)

Behold, thou art fair, my love;
Behold, thou art fair;
Thou hast dove's eyes (ver. 15).

The language earnest and emphatic. 'Behold:' expressive of admiration. Repeated with the declaration—'thou art fair,'—as indicative of strong emotion and deep conviction, as well as of the desire to assure the bride of its truth, and the difficulty of doing so. The assurance all the more necessary from Shulamite's own sense of her blackness, and the depreciation of her by the ladies of the Court on that account. Observe—(1) Believers' eyes more readily fixed on their own corruption than on Christ's grace in them. (2) Love delights in expressing high esteem for and admiration of its object. (3) Believers never fairer in Christ's eyes than when blackest in their own, and meekly enduring the contempt of others. (4) Believers not only beautiful in the eyes of others (verse 8), but very specially in the eyes of Christ Himself. Christ looks not at the blemishes, but the beauties of His people. The beauties His, the blemishes their own. 'He seeth no iniquity in Jacob.' Christ the best judge of beauty. To be beautiful in His eyes is to be beautiful indeed, and blessed as well as beautiful. Beautiful in His eyes, it matters little what we are in the eyes of others. 'Let them curse, but bless thou.' Christ looks not only at what believers are *now*, but at what they *shall* be *hereafter*. Views past, present, and future at one glance. Christ takes delight in His people's beauty (Ps. xlv. 10, 11). Rejoices over them as the Bridegroom over the Bride (Isa. lxii. 5). The double assertion: 'Thou art fair,' probably intended to express the *greatness* as well as the *reality* of Shulamite's beauty. A *two-fold* beauty in believers: beauty of the inward spirit and of the outward life; beauty in doing and in suffering; beauty in imputed righteousness and imparted grace. The repeated assertion of Shulamite's beauty, accompanied with the King's assurance of His love to her, and her relation to Him: 'My love.' Sweet and comforting, as well as strengthening and sanctifying to believers, to be assured of Christ's love, and of their relation to Him as His bride.

A special feature in Shulamite's beauty noted: 'Thou hast doves' eyes,' or 'Thine eyes are doves.' The eyes of Syrian doves distinguished for their softness, tenderness, and lustrous beauty. The eye especially the seat of beauty. The eyes of Syrian females particularly beautiful. The eye the expression of the soul. More especially the expression of inward affection. Hence the power of the eye in captivating the heart (chap. iv. 9; vi. 5). Observe—(1) Christ notices not only the beauty of believers in general, but their single graces in particular; more especially He notices their love which has Himself for its object. (2) The eyes of believers those of doves, or doves themselves. The dove distinguished for (i.) gentleness and meekness; (ii.) affection and fidelity to its mate; (iii.) purity and cleanliness; (iv.) timidity and retiring disposition. Its character indicated in its *eyes*. The eyes of believers not those of the tiger, or the fox, or the hawk; but of the *dove*. The *contrast* of the believer's eyes indicated in Matt. xx. 15; 2 Pet. ii. 14; Ps. cxxxi. 1. Believers learn of Jesus to be meek and lowly in heart. The 'gentleness of Christ' to be a distinguishing feature in their character. 'Gentleness' is love holding intercourse with those around us. Implies tenderness of feeling; readiness of sympathy; considerateness of others. 'Gentleness' is 'love in its depth and in its delicacy.' Believers chosen in Christ to be holy and without blame before God in love (Eph. i. 4). Not to be drawn away from Christ by any suffering or persecution. Pass the time of their sojourning here in fear. Work out their salvation with fear and trembling (1 Pet. i. 17; Phil. ii. 12).

2. SHULAMITE TO THE KING.

(Verse 16).

Behold thou art fair, my beloved;
Yea, pleasant.

The Bride returns her Beloved's commendation. Every good word from Christ to be turned to His own praise. What the believer is made, he is made 'to the praise of the glory of His grace.' The title also reciprocated: 'My Beloved.' The believer made conscious both of His love to Christ and his relation to Him. Bride's commendation also commences with a note of exclamation: 'Behold.' Implies the reality and greatness of the King's beauty. His beauty a thing to be contemplated and dwelt upon. The ascription of beauty to the Bride returned as belonging rather to Himself. The believer's beauty only a reflection of Christ's. Shulamite commends her beloved as—

I. FAIR. Observe—

1. *Jesus supremely beautiful in the eyes of believers.* Their eyes anointed with Divine eye-salve to see His beauty. Able to testify with John we beheld His glory. Their blessedness, to behold even now, by the eye of faith, 'the King in His beauty.' Christ formerly to them as to others, a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness: now the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.

2. *Jesus in Himself transcendently beautiful.* Observe, in reference to the

**Beauty of Christ—**

1. Its *greatness.* His beauty such as no angel's hand could pourtray, or tongue describe. The exclamation of the prophet: 'How great is His beauty!' (Zech. ix. 17.) Of the Psalmist: 'Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips' (Ps. xlv.). (2) His beauty a glory such as becomes the Son of God: 'We beheld His glory; the glory as of the only begotten of the Father' (John i. 14). All beauty summed up and centered in Jesus. Whatever is beautiful in the creature, found in Him in an infinitely greater degree. All creature-beauty only a ray or emanation from His own. Christ the fountain and ocean of beauty; all beauty in the creature, whether angel, man, or nature, only a stream from that fountain, or a drop from that ocean. His an essential beauty; theirs a derived one. All beautiful things in nature only made to reflect something of His beauty, and to lead up to it.

2. Its *character.* His beauty mainly a moral and spiritual one: 'Full of grace and truth.' His countenance, doubtless, indicative of that spiritual beauty. Not the less beautiful because, for our sakes, marred more than any man's, and soiled with blood and tears. His beauty in His soul, but manifesting itself in His words, looks, and actions. Seen both in what He is in Himself, and in what He is to others, especially to poor sinners of mankind. His soul free from all sin, and full of all grace. All its powers and faculties in complete order and perfect harmony. His beauty seen not only in the separate graces of His character, but in their combination, proportion, and symmetry. Displayed in His love and lovingness—His self-forgetting, and self-denying benevolence, sympathy, and compassion; in His gentleness and tenderness, His meekness and humility; in His kindness and condescension to the poor, the ignorant, and the despised; in His wisdom and intelligence, combined with forbearance and child-like

simplicity; in His patience in suffering and submission to His Father's will; in his fearlessness in regard to Himself with the tenderest care and consideration for others; in His manliness combined with meekness; in His firmness of principle with flexibility of manners; in His purity combined with pity; in His hatred of sin with love to the sinner; in His ardent affection for His friends with the most generous forgiveness of his enemies; in His supreme love to God combined with untiring self-sacrificing love to man.

II. PLEASANT. Shulamite adds—'Yea, pleasant' or comely. 'Yea,' indicating the difficulty she finds in expressing her appreciation of the King's excellence, and the delight she found in Him. Not only 'fair,' but 'pleasant' besides. The most beautiful not always the most pleasant. Christ not only beautiful but pleasant. Observe in regard to the

**Pleasantness of Christ:**

In Him the greatest moral *excellence* combined with the greatest *pleasantness*. Pleasantness a special quality, and superadded to excellence. Indicates what a person is in relation to others. That which renders a man amiable, agreeable, and enjoyable to those around him. The quality in an individual that affords pleasure and delight in his presence and society. Has special reference to one's spirit and temper, manners and deportment,—a person's *looks*, and the *tone of his voice*, as well as his words and actions. Implies a combination of *graces* as well as virtues; of *charms*, as well as excellencies; of *agreeable* as well as solid qualities, fitting their possessor for imparting *pleasure* as well as profit to those in contact with him. *Such pleasantness in Jesus.* Jesus fair in Himself; pleasant to others. Such that not only angels but men—not only the godly but sinners—may find pleasure in Him. The evidence of His pleasantness seen in His disciples who so fondly adhered to Him and so closely followed Him; in John the fisherman, who was wont to pillow his head on His bosom; in the multitudes that everywhere thronged about Him; in the publicans and sinners that drew near to hear Him; in the children that followed Him with their parents, and sang His praise in the temple-courts; in the infants that He took up in His arms, putting His hands on their head and blessing them. David's testimony in regard to Jonathan that of every believer in regard to Jesus: 'Very pleasant hast thou been unto me.' Jesus 'very pleasant' to believers now while conversed with through a veil. What when they see Him face to face?

3. SHULAMITE REJOICES IN THE KING'S FELLOWSHIP AND THE PLACE OF ITS ENJOYMENT.

Verses 16, 17.

Also our bed is green;
The beams of our house are cedar,
And our rafters of fir.

The scene now the grounds of the palace. Shulamite has found the King at the shepherd's tents. Intensely happy in each other's society and love, they sit down and repose on a green and flowery bank — the resting-place at noon (verse 7). The cedars spread their shady branches over them like the beams of a palace, while the fragant fir trees form a gallery for their walk. Shulamite notices these things, and in her delighted enjoyment of the King's fellowship, and her fine appreciation of the objects of nature, expresses her gratification in these agreeable surroundings. Brought up in the country, she is everywhere exhibited in the Song as an enthusiastic admirer of natural beauty. In this way as well as others, a meet companion for him who 'spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall' (1 Kings iv. 33). Enjoyment of a dear one's fellowship gives of itself a charm to the place which is the scene of it. The place where a believer has enjoyed sweet and hallowed communion with his Saviour, especially in the season of his first love, rendered beautiful in his eyes, and endeared to his heart. All the more so when this has been in the midst of natural scenery. With the joy of a soul's deliverance from bondage and possession of a newly found Saviour, all surrounding nature seems to be in harmony. By a law of our mental constitution, the joy transfuses itself over all surrounding objects. The mountains and hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands (Is. lv. 12). Christ's graciously manifested person sheds a beauty and sweetness over every thing around us. Himself fair and pleasant, the very place becomes such where He is found and enjoyed. Where He treads, lilies and roses bloom. Hence the sweetness of Divine ordinances. Christ's fellowship usually most enjoyed in connection with the ordinances of His own institution. Gospel ordinances the shepherds' tents where the Chief Shepherd is found, and where He makes His flock to rest at noon. The promise,—'I will com

mune with them from off the mercy seat.' Hence, the very place of these ordinances, beautiful and delightful to a loving believer. 'How amiable are Thy tabernacles;' 'Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.' 'A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.' Hence his longing desire after them. 'My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord.;' 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in His temple' (Ps. lxxxiv.; xcvi.; lxiii.; xxvii.). This sweetness and charm connected with the sanctuary something very different from mere outward attraction; though it may be desirable that even that should not be altogether wanting. Nothing lost when that which meets the bodily eye is somewhat in harmony with the spiritual beauty of the sanctuary, which only the eye of the living soul can perceive and the renewed heart delight in.

Shulamite commends both the beauty of the grassy couch on which they reposed, and the agreeableness of the shade afforded by the trees which spread their branches over their heads like the beams of sylvan chambers. 'Our bed (or couch) is green (or flourishing); the beams of our house (Heb. "houses") are of cedar (or cedars are the beams of our chambers); and our rafters (or galleries) are of fir' (or fir trees are our rafters or galleries). Suggesting, in regard to

**Divine Ordinances,**

1. *Community of interest and participation on the part of Christ and His people.* '*Our* bed;' '*our* house;' as pertaining both to the bride and bridegroom. So Divine ordinances the joint property of Christ and His people. The temple at Jerusalem spoken of as both God's house and that of the people: 'Our beautiful house;' 'Your house is left unto you desolate.' The sacrifices participated in both by God and the offerer. Called 'the bread of their God,' 'the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord' (Lev. iii. 11; xxi. 6, 8, &c.). Christian ordinances intended both for the enjoyment of Christ and His people. 'If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him and he with me' (Rev. iii. 21).

2. *Repose as well as comfort to the soul.* Christ found in the ordinances of his house as 'the rest and the refreshing' wherewith 'the weary' are to be made to rest, and 'as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land' (Is. xxviii. 12; xxxii. 2). 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.' 'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most high' (Ps. xlvi. 4; xxvii. 4, 5).

3. *Freshness and life.* 'Our bed is green' or flourishing. The ordinances of the Christian Church, wherever two or three are gathered together in the Master's name, as fresh and lively, as full of blessing and as precious to believers *now* as when after Pentecost the disciples 'continned steadfast in the Apostles' fellowship and doctrine, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' (Acts ii. 42). These ordinances as sweet and refreshing to the believer at the close of his earthly pilgrimage as at the beginning of it. The promised presence of Christ and the operation of His Spirit, that which keeps the couch green and flourishing. 'There is a river, &c.'

4. *Strength and permanence.* 'The beams of our house are *cedars*.' Strength as well as beauty in God's sanctuary (Ps. xcvi. 6). Christ's promised presence gives permanance, as well as life and freshness, to ordinances. The Lord's Supper, the central ordinance of Christian worship, to continue till He come again. These ordinances have continued throughout eighteen centuries in almost all parts of the known world, and are, to a great extent, the same even in form at this day as when originally instituted and observed by the earliest converts. One precious fruit of the Reformation, the restoration of these ordinances to their primitive simplicity, after having been overlaid and disfigured both in the Eastern and Western Churches with rites and ceremonies of mere human invention. What is Divine in ordinances permanent as the cedars; what is merely human, perishable, and to be put away.

5. *Fragrance and beauty.* 'Our rafters (or galleries) of fir' (or, are firs or cypresses). The fir or cypress distinguished for its beauty as well as its fragrance. 'Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree.' Promised in connection with the sanctuary in Gospel times. 'The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree and the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary' (Is. lx. 13; lv. 13). Beauty, as well as strength, in God's sanctuary (Ps. xcvi. 6). The fragrance and beauty of Divine ordinances not in the fumes of incense, or in external decoration, whether of place or persons; but in the truths of the Gospel exhibited, the presence of Christ enjoyed, and the power of the Spirit experienced in them.

# Further Intercourse between the Betrothed.

## Chapter II. Verses 1—3.

### Shulamite's Self-Depreciation.

(Verse 1).

I am the rose of Sharon,
And the lily of the valleys.

The King and Shulamite still seated on their grassy couch. She, happy in his fellowship and love, and remembering her humble origin, appears to feel herself all unworthy of such a position, and with her eye on the wild flowers around her, to sigh out: 'I am but a wild flower of the plain, a humble lily in the valleys.' This view of the words probably more correct than that to which we have long with pleasure been accustomed, and which is rather the one suggested by our English version, viz., that which ascribes these words to the King instead of the Bride. Scarcely likely that here, and here alone, the speaker commends himself. Self-commendation, however just and becoming in the true Bridegroom, not the language of love, nor in consonance with the context and the rest of the poem. The rose probably not the flower here intended; but one of the bulbous kind; perhaps the meadow-saffron, crocus, or narcissus. The flower both common and abundant, and with little or nothing striking in it. Natural, in the circumstances of the case, for Shulamite thus to depreciate herself in the presence of the King, of whose love she sees herself so unworthy. Commentators and versions divided on the passage; the older ones applying these words rather to the King, the moderns more generally to the Bride. The spiritual instruction precious in either case.

1. *The believer's feelings, in the enjoyment of the Saviour's manifested presence and love, naturally those of deep humiliation and self-depreciation.* Such the feelings of Mephibosheth at the King's table, and of Peter on the revealed divinity of his Master in the fishing-boat. On the perception of Christ's glory, and the sense of His love to ourselves, our thoughts naturally thrown on our own unworthiness. 'I am not worthy of the least of (*Heb.*, I am less than) all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands' (Gen. xxxii. 10). So David: 'What am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?' (2 Sam. vii. 18) and Elizabeth: 'Whence is this unto me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?' (Luke i. 42) Lowly views of one's self, and lofty views of Christ, the legitimate fruit of Divine communion. The lasting wonder of heaven and earth, that the King of Kings, possessed of infinite dignity and matchless excellence, should ally Himself in bridal union with a poor vile sinner.

"How should it be, Thou heavenly King,
That Thou shouldst us to glory bring?
Make slaves the partners of Thy throne,
Deck'd with a never fading crown.

"Hence our hearts melt; our eyes o'erflow;
Our words are lost; nor will we know,
Nor will we think of aught beside—
My Lord, my love, is crucified."

2. *The description in the text true of the believer.*—(1) Nothing more in him than in the millions of his race. A fallen child of Adam, shapen in iniquity, and a child of wrath even as others (Eph. ii. 2, 3). (2) Exposed to danger and destruction; like the flower of the field, ready to be trodden on, and crushed by every foot. Often accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Like his Master in the eyes of the world—'a root out of a dry ground; despised and rejected of men.' (3) Often chosen from among the poor and illiterate. 'Ye see your calling, brethren; how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?' 'He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people' (Ps. cxiii. 7, 8; 1 Cor. i. 26; James ii. 5).

### The King's Commendation of Shulamite.

(Verse 2).

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

To Shulamite's self-depreciating remark—'I am but a lily in the valleys,'—the King immediately replies: 'But as a lily among thorns, so is my love among and in comparison with all other women.' The more a believer sees and acknowledges his own unworthiness, the more lovely he appears in the eyes of the Saviour, and the more does the Saviour assure him of His esteem and love. The language of the text true as addressed by Christ to His people. His eyes, which are 'as a flame of fire,' view both believers and unbelievers in their real character. His testimony that of 'the Faith-

ful and True Witness.' His Church collectively and His people individually, while in this world and in comparison with others, a

**Lily among Thorns.**

In this Divine assertion, notice—

I. *The* LILY. Uncertain what species of lily is meant. According to some, the Scarlet Martagon, which grows in profusion in the Levant. Possibly the White Amaryllis intended. A species mentioned by Salt, in his Voyage to Abyssinia, whose white petals are marked with a single streak of bright purple down the middle. Believers compared to lilies, from—

1. Their *beauty*. Jesus speaks of the lilies of the field as adorned with a beauty to which that of Solomon, in all his glory, could not be compared. The Scarlet Martagon an exceedingly gorgeous flower. The wild flowers of Palestine in general very beautiful. Believers possessed of a moral and spiritual beauty—the beauty of holiness. Made partakers of the Divine nature, which is love. Renewed after the image of God and conformed to the likeness of Christ, who is 'fairer than the children of men,' and the embodiment of all beauty. Believers, as members of Christ, adorned with the graces of His Spirit—'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c.' Enabled by grace to cultivate, and increasingly to exhibit, 'whatsoever things are pure, just, lovely, and of good report' (Phil. iv. 8; Gal. v. 22).

2. Their *purity*. The White Amaryllis, or our common white lily, an emblem of purity. Believers made, by Divine grace, pure both in heart and life. Enabled by the hope of seeing Christ as He is, to purify themselves even as He is pure. Have purified their hearts through obeying the truth. Are sanctified through the truth. Sanctified in Christ Jesus. Made clean through the Word He has spoken to them. As 'pure in heart,' are admitted at death to the beatific vision of God.

3. Their *humility*. The White Amaryllis rises only two or three inches from the ground. The common white lily, with its drooping head, an emblem of humility and modesty. Believers called to be 'clothed with humility,' and to learn of Him who was 'meek and lowly in heart.' Made by Divine grace to be 'meek' and 'poor in spirit.' Represented by the Publican in the temple. Enabled to grow in humility as in other graces. Exemplified in Paul. His first acknowledgment: 'not worthy' to be called an apostle;' later on: 'less than the least of all saints;' last of all: 'the chief of sinners.' The heavier the ear of corn, the more it bends. A proud Christian a paradox. Faith essentially humble, as being simply emptiness receiving out of another's fulness, and weakness leaning on a Saviour's strength.

4. Their *fragrance*. According to Salt, the flower of the White Amaryllis is sweet scented, its smell 'resembling that of the Lily of the Valley, but much more powerful. Believers, according as they walk with Christ and possess His spirit, enabled to exercise a beneficial influence on others, and to diffuse a moral fragrance which makes their very presence a blessing. God's promise even to penitent backsliders: 'I will be as the dew unto Israel;' and as the consequence of it—'he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon: his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon' (Hos. xiv. 5, 6). The believer's privilege so to carry Christ with him as to be a perfume and a benefaction wherever he goes.

II. *The* THORNS. The ungodly so called (2 Sam. xxiii. 6). Compared to a thorn hedge (Mic. vii. 4). *Thorns* as being—

1. *Unsightly*. Little beauty in a thorn. As little in the unregenerate in the sight of God and angels. Men in their fallen state and still unrenewed by Divine grace, 'corrupt, filthy, and abominable;' 'hateful and hating one another;' under the power of a carnal mind, which is 'enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' No truly good thing in them, or in the fallen nature which governs them. No longer bearing the moral image of God, but of His great adversary. 'Alienated from the life of God' who is love, and 'dead in trespasses and in sins.' Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart only evil continually (Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21; Ps. xiv. 1—3; Rom. iii. 10, &c.; viii. 7, 8; Tit. iii. 3; Eph. iv. 18; ii. 1):

2. *Hurtful*. Thorns pierce the hand that takes hold of them, and tear those that come in contact with them. So the ungodly (2 Sam. xxiii. 6). The unregenerate hurtful to their neighbours. Their influence, both conscious and unconscious, for evil rather than good. Their example injurious, as turning others away *from* God rather than turning them *to* Him. The Divine testimony: 'One sinner destroyeth much good.' Paul, in his unconverted state, 'a persecutor, and injurious.' The poison of asps under the lips of the ungodly. Their feet swift to shed blood. The impenitent and unbelieving often grieving thorns in the sides of believers, and even of their nearest relatives and best friends. Their words often such as

to leave a stain on the mind and a wound in the heart of others.

3. *Unprofitable.* Thorns and thistles part of the curse of barrenness inflicted on the earth for man's sin. 'Do men gather grapes of thorns?' Thorns only useful in making a hedge for the protection of what may do good to others. The Divine testimony regarding men in their natural state: 'They are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good; no, not one' (Rom. iii. 12). The unregenerate unable to benefit men as immortal souls. Aim neither at bringing glory to God nor salvation to men. Are only employed by God for subordinate purposes, and as His unintentional instruments for the protection of His people and the interests of His kingdom. The final sentence pronounced on the ungodly: 'Take ye the *unprofitable* servant,' &c.

4. *Destined to destruction.* Thorns, especially in the East, cut up to be burned, or set on fire as they grow (2 Sam. xxiii. 6; Is. ix. 18; x. 17; xxvii. 4; Heb. vi. 8). The end of the ungodly (Matt. xxv. 41).

III. *The* SITUATION OF THE LILY. 'Among thorns.' Beautiful wild flowers in Palestine often seen growing in the midst of a thorn bush or a thorn hedge. Believers, while in this world, necessarily among unbelievers. *In* an ungodly world, though not *of* it. Saints in Cæsar's household. The tares still suffered to grow among the wheat. The chaff and the wheat together till death separate them. Heaven or the new earth the only place where the thorns are not. The situation of believers among the ungodly over-ruled for their own improvement, for the benefit of others, and for the glory of Him whose grace makes them to differ, and whose power preserves them safe to His heavenly kingdom. The calling of believers, while in this world, to magnify the grace of God *towards* them, and to shew the excellency of His grace *in* them. Their aim to be among the unregenerate as the pure, modest, and harmless lily among thorns. Their loveliness, like that of the lily, to be all the more manifest and striking from their situation. Believers not to be surprised if called to suffer tribulation and persecution from the world. 'A lily among thorns' likely enough to be torn by them. Their comfort that it is only *here*, and for a short time, that their situation is that of a 'lily among thorns.'

IV. *The* SUPERIORITY OF THE LILY TO THE THORN. The language expressive of comparison as well as situation. The lily superior to the thorns among which it grows. So believers in relation to the world (1 John v. 19). 'The righteous more excellent than his neighbour.' Believers superior to others—

1. In *Character.* Believers renewed in the spirit of their mind after the image of God. Have Christ dwelling in them as their inward life, so that they become like Him who was 'holy, harmless, and undefiled.' Created anew in Christ unto good works; and engrafted into Him, so as to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c.

2. In *Usefulness to others.* Believers, from the new Divine nature implanted in them, able to benefit others for eternity as well as for time. Enabled by the Spirit of Christ in them to act upon the words of Christ: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' 'Freely ye have received, freely give.' Are qualified for being made, like Christ, a blessing to the world, by their example, their prayers, and their personal efforts. The salt of the earth, and the lights of the world. Unbelievers rather a hindrance than a furtherance to the real interests of others.

3. In their *Final Destiny.* Believers at death are transplanted in their spirits, and at the Lord's appearing also in their bodies, to a happier clime, to bloom as immortal lilies in the Paradise of God. Destruction and eternal death the end of the impenitent and unbelieving (Rom. vi. 21, 23; Phil. iii. 19). As thorns, destined to everlasting burnings (Is. xxxiii. 12, 14; Rev. xxi. 8).

*Application.* The world divided into two parts, lilies and thorns—regenerate and unregenerate, believers and unbelievers. To which do I belong? Am I lily or a thorn? All are thorns by nature. Lilies only made such by regenerating grace. Have I undergone this change? Out of a thorn has almighty grace made me a lily? If not, am I willing that it should be so now? Thorns spared for this purpose. The grace that has transformed others able to transform you also. That grace offered. Jesus, working in the Gospel by His Spirit, still transforms lilies into thorns, and is ready even now to transform *you*. He says: 'Look unto me, and be ye saved;' 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' 'He that believeth on me though he were dead, yet shall he live.' 'Wilt *thou* be made whole?'

## SHULAMITE'S COMMENDATION OF HER BELOVED.

### VERSE 3.

As the apple-tree
Among the trees of the wood;
So is my beloved
Among the sons.

I sat down under His shadow
With great delight,
And His fruit
Was sweet to my taste.

Shulamite compares her beloved to an apple or citron tree growing among, or compared with, the common trees of the wood. The comparison natural. The lovers surrounded with trees as well as flowers. Observe—The more Christ shews His love to His people, the more they are drawn to commend Him as their Beloved. If Christ can commend the imperfect, and in Himself worthless, believer; how much more should the believer commend Him who is perfection and loveliness itself! Christ compared to

**The Apple-Tree.**

The word applicable to any tree of the class to which the apple-tree belongs. The Hebrew term expressive of the fragrance of the fruit. Probably the citron intended. The orange still common in Palestine, especially on the sea-coast. Perhaps more so than formerly. The citron-tree distinguished for its fruit, its foliage, and its shade. Hence its superiority to the common trees of the wood. Other trees might perhaps equal it in shade, but without the fruit or its beautiful appearance. All excellence and beauty comprehended in Christ. Compared with Him, mankind in general, and even believers themselves, only as the common trees of the wood, compared with the beautiful and shady citron or orange-tree with its golden, fragrant, and delicious fruit. The world itself little worth to him who knows Christ. 'What things were gain to me these I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord' (Phil. iii. 7, 8). Observe—

I. *The* COMPARISON *made.* 'As the apple-tree,' &c. The comparison of the Beloved to the apple or citron-tree made—

1. From its *appearance.* The citron-tree, larger, nobler, and more beautiful in appearance than the trees of the wood; for example, the dwarf oak, so common in Palestine. The citron or orange-tree, with its dark green glossy foliage, its white blossoms, and its golden fruit, a picture of beauty. So Christ; 'the chief among ten thousand,' 'fairer than the children of men.' Has in all things the pre-eminence over both angels and men. The first-born among many brethren. They priests; He the High Priest. They kings; He the King of kings. They pearls; He the One pearl of great price. The highest, greatest, and best among men but as the low stunted shrub, or common wild-tree, in presence of the noble and beautiful citron.

2. From its *shade.* The foliage of the citron or orange-tree not only beautiful, but thick, and affording an agreeable shade. So Christ affords shelter and shade — (1) *To awakened sinners,* from the scorching sentence of God's righteous and broken law. The sinner, while out of Christ, pursued by the fiery law with its terrible curse: 'The soul that sinneth it shall die;' 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.' In Christ alone, as enduring the curse for him, can he find shelter. But there he can and does. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us.' 'In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins' (Eph i. 7; Gal. iii. 10). 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (Rom. viii. 1). (2) To *tried and tempted believers.* Tribulation the appointed lot of believers in this world. Persecution unavoidable to those '*who will live godly in Christ Jesus.*' For a season, at times in heaviness through manifold temptations. Sometimes tried with fiery trials. Christ then their shade and shelter. 'In me ye shall have peace.' 'When thou walkest in the fire, I will be with thee. Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.' His presence with them as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. His grace promised to be sufficient for their both doing and suffering all His will. Hence enabled to rejoice even in tribulation and made more than conquerors through Him that loved them. Christ *crucified,* the shadow between sinners and the heat of God's wrath; Christ *crowned,* the shadow between believers and the wrath of men and devils. The shadow of Christ, the true apple-tree, gives life as well as peace and comfort to those who sit under it. Every other shadow only that of the deadly *upas.* A religion of the flesh to be avoided, which is only a sitting under the shadow of the 'letter which killeth.' Divine wisdom, to sit only under the shadow of Him who is the Truth and the Life.

3. From its *Fruit.* The fruit of the apple, citron, or orange tree, fragrant, delicious, and refreshing. Such the fruit of Christ. That fruit—(1) The *redemption* accomplished on the cross, with all the varied blessings of the everlasting covenant for time and eternity, flowing out of it. (2) The *doctrines of grace* in which that redemption is unfolded, and which are revealed in the Scriptures. (3) The *promises of the Word,* 'exceeding great and precious,' adapted to every case and condition, and all 'Yea and Amen to them that believe.' (4) The *ordinances of the*

*Gospel;* as prayer, the preaching of the Word, and pre-eminently the Lord's Supper. The fruit Christ's, as—(1) Procured *through* Him in His obedience unto death. (2) Found *in* Him. (3) Communicated *by* Him. On this apple-tree hangs fruit for immortal souls and dying sinners, and that in richest abundance. Fruit sweeter than that of Eden, with neither sin nor danger in the eating of it. Instead of a prohibition and threatened death, here is a free invitation and promised life. Instead of a flaming sword turning every way to guard its access, a silver trumpet sounds, proclaiming liberty of approach to all comers: Come, buy and eat, without money and without price; eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. The fruit offered by the god of this world, however fair and inviting in appearance, found at last to be only wormwood: 'the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrha.'

II. *The* EXPERIENCE *related.* 'I sat,' &c. The very remembrance of an enjoyed Saviour sweet.

'What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd!
How sweet their memory still!'

The text expressive of repose and enjoyment. A beautiful illustration of faith in exercise. Exhibits—(1) Sense of exposure and weariness. (2) Discovery in Christ of what meets our case. (3) Trust in and appreciation of Him for the wants of our soul. (4) Feeling of security, peace, and satisfaction. (5) Continuance in such a state. Observe—(1) *Whatever Christ is, He is to be to us personally and experimentally.* In whatever aspect He is exhibited in the world, in that He is to be appropriated, embraced, and made use of. Entire confidence to be placed, and full complacency taken, in Him and in His finished work. As the apple tree, we are to sit down under His cooling shade, and partake of His refreshing fruit. Not enough to be near the shade, or to gaze upon the fruit. Without appropriation and personal use, men die even in sight of the Apple-tree. The awakened sinner to believe the testimony concerning Christ as a Saviour, and cordially to appropriate it for his own present and eternal benefit. (2) *The preciousness of Divine grace that has not only made such provision for our souls' necessities, but inclines and enables us to make use of it.* 'By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God' (Eph. ii. 8).

'Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there's room?
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come.

'Twas the same love which spread the feast,
That sweetly drew me in;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.'

(3) *Coming under the shadow of Christ for defence from the law's curse, we are invited to to sit down and partake of His fruit.* The fruit of the apple-tree for those who come under its shadow. Joy and comfort in Christ the immediate result of faith in His blood. So the awakened jailor rejoiced, believing in the Saviour preached to him by Paul and Silas. The believing Eunuch 'went on his way rejoicing' (Acts viii. 39; xvi. 34). (4) *Christ's fruit sweet to the taste of those who come under His shadow.* 'To you that believe He is precious.' A spiritual taste and a carnal one. As a man is, so is his taste. Truth in the proverb—each man to his taste. The taste of the carnal and unrenewed only carnal, and for the things that are seen and temporal—the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. The taste of a man different from that of the swine at the swine-trough. A refined and cultivated taste the result of civilization, training, and education. The taste of a believer the result of regeneration and the impartation of a new spiritual and divine nature. Hence his taste for what is spiritual, divine, and heavenly, instead of what is only carnal and earthly. Unspeakable mercy to be blessed with a renewed nature and a spiritual taste. A man's misery to be left under the dominion of an earthly, carnal, and depraved taste. To such a taste Christ and heaven itself entirely without attraction. The place of torment the only future abode for a carnal taste. The object of the Holy Spirit's work to change a man's taste. Hence the first step in his conversion—conviction of his sin and misery, and the worthlessness of the world to a dying sinner and an immortal soul (John iv. 13, 14; Luke xv. 14—19). To a renewed soul and a spiritual taste, Christ and His salvation infinitely sweeter than the choicest pleasures of a perishing world.

*Application.* Has this been my experience? Is it so now? Have I seen my exposure, as a sinner, to Divine wrath, and fled to Christ for shelter? Have I appropriated Him as just the shelter I need; and am I now using and enjoying Him as such? Have I found delight in Him and in His salvation? Has His work of redemption and the word of His grace been sweet to my taste? Is it so now? All have their different tastes: what is mine? Is it spiritual or carnal? Christ or the world? Lord, give me a spiritual taste. Make Christ precious to me as a sinner, as He is to all that believe. Give me, as a *believing* sinner, to sit down under His

shadow with great delight, and to find His fruit sweet to my taste.

SHULAMITE'S HAPPY EXERCISE.

(Verses 4—6).

'He brought me to the banqueting-house,
And his banner over me was love.

'Stay me with flagons;
Comfort me with apples;
For I am sick of love.

'His left hand is under my head,
And his right hand doth embrace me.'

Shulamite describes her happy enjoyment of her Beloved's fellowship and love. Represents it under the figure of a banquet of wine. 'He brought (or hath brought) me into the banquet-house' (or house of wine). Such a banquet among the highest of earthly enjoyments. Hence queen Esther's invitation to the king (Esther v. 4—6). The king's love already declared by Shulamite to be 'better than wine.' She now realizes this to the full. Her longing desires after the enjoyment of his fellowship and love now fully gratified. She has found him whom her soul loved, and experienced intense delight in his presence. Observe—(1) *The soul that earnestly seeks Jesus, and the enjoyment of His fellowship and love, will not seek in vain.* 'Said I to the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain?' 'Then shall ye seek me and shall find me, when ye search for me with all your heart.' (2) *The happiness in the enjoyment of Christ's presence and love, such as infinitely to compensate for all the labour and pains in seeking Him.* What it cost Shulamite to find her Beloved, forgotten in her happiness now that he is found. 'In Christ, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory' (1 Pet. i. 8). Notice, in regard to the

**Banqueting House—**

I. *The* EXPERIENCE *itself.* The nature of the 'banqueting house' or 'house of wine,' indicated in the words that follow: 'His banner over me was love.' Perhaps in allusion to some practice of suspending banners with suitable mottoes or devices over the heads of honoured guests at entertainments; or to the burning cressets carried at the head of a marriage procession, to light the party to the banquet-house. The happy experience of the banqueting-house is the enjoyment of the King's presence, and of that love which is 'better than wine.' The greatest earthly happiness experienced in the fellowship and love of one whom we ourselves greatly love. The poetry of every country full of this sentiment. Love, the poetry of life; the wine and cream of existence. Jacob's hard service of seven years for Rachael seemed to him but a few days, 'for the love he bare unto her.' The banner that floats over the head of believers' in the fellowship of Jesus, a banner of 'love.' Its emblem 'a Lamb as it had been slain;' and its mottoes: 'He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it;' 'He loved me, and gave Himself for me.' This love-banner manifestly suspended over the disciples at the Last Supper. The same banner waving over every Communion Table. Love, the ground of all the Lord's dealings with His people. His love—(1) An electing love; (2) A redeeming love; (3) A covenanting or bridal love. The manifestation of Christ's love, the believer's feast. His loving presence a banquet of wine. The assurance of His love the believer's strength and joy in the battle of life.

'With Thee conversing, I forget
All time, and toil, and care;
Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
If Thou, my Lord, art there.'

Heaven but the full bloom of this enjoyment. Christ's enjoyed presence and love the great attraction of Christian ordinances, especially of the Lord's Supper. The key-note in the Song of Solomon. The Song, like Psalm xlv., a 'Song of Loves.' The happiness in the enjoyment of Christ's love, and the language of the Song in describing it, perfectly natural. The naturalness of such language in the case of mere earthly love unquestioned. Why in the case of a Divine and spiritual one? Infinitely more in the God-man to fill the soul with delight in the enjoyment of His fellowship and love than in the loveliest, most loving, and most beloved creature. Mere creature love and creature loveliness, beside Christ's, a taper beside the sun. The love of the Man that is Jehovah's fellow, revealed in His thorn-rent brow, His nail-pierced hands, and His spear-wounded side. The language of each scar in His sacred body, love—love unspeakable, inconceivable; love of the most worthy to the most worthless; love of the Prince of the kings of the earth to a beggar on the dung-hill; love of the all-glorious Creator to the degraded creature; love of God to a contemptible worm, though a worm originally made after His own image, and capable of loving Him with the ardour of the loftiest seraph. This love and loveliness able to be apprehended, realized, and felt by the human soul, made at the same time deeply conscious of its utter unworthiness of it. The soul

capable both of enjoying that amazing love and of reciprocating it; and of experiencing, while so doing, a joy superior to that connected with any mere earthly love—a joy characterized by one who knew it as 'unspeakable and full of glory.' Such joy in Divine fellowship and love, man's normal experience as a rational creature in an unfallen state. The object of Redemption to restore man to its enjoyment; with the superadded element, that the Creator has, for man's sake, assumed his nature, and in that nature endured for his deliverance the awful curse incurred by his sin. Delight in the love and fellowship of a Divine Redeemer the experience even of Old Testement saints before that Redeemer became incarnate. Hence the impassioned language and longing of the 'sweet Psalmist of Israel': 'In His favour is life.' 'My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; Thy loving kindness is better than life; my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips, when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate upon Thee in the night watches. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.' 'My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God' (Ps. xxx. 5; lxiii. 1, 3, 5, 6; xlii. 1; lxxxiv. 2). Isaiah sings: 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God' (Is. lxi. 10). Zephaniah exhibits the joy on both sides: 'Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord in the midst of thee is mighty: He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over Thee with singing' (Zeph. iii. 14, 17). This joy in the Divine Redeemer and His love the experience of the early Christians. Raised them above the smiles and the frowns of the world, above the fear of torture and of death, of the lions and the stake. The experience of the Church in its times of greatest and spiritual prosperity, and of believers in their first-love and highest attainments in grace. Often specially realized by the Church and believers in times of suffering and persecution. The experience which gives such life, sweetness, and power to the hymns of Charles Wesley, the Moravian Brethren, and others. The 'banqueting-house' not confined to time or place; but especially found in the ordinances of God's house, and most of all in that of the Lord's Supper.

II. *The* AUTHOR *of the experience.* 'He brought (or, hath brought) me,' &c. The king recognized by Shulamite as not only preparing the banquet of love, but also bringing her to it. Her language that of amazement, admiration, gratitude, and joy. Our experience of the love and fellowship of Christ as our Bridegroom-Redeemer due entirely to Himself. Himself not only the Author of the bridal relation between Him and His people, but of their knowledge, acceptance, and enjoyment of it. The relation itself, with all the blessings connected with it, freely offered to men in the Gospel; but, apart from the grace of Christ, neither apprehended nor cared for. 'Who hath believed our report?' Wisdom hath mingled her wine, and furnished her table, and sent out her maidens with the invitation to the feast; but men reject the counsel of God against themselves, and begin to make excuse (Prov. ix. 1—3; Matt xxii. 2—6; Luke vii. 30). Blindness, carnality, pride and unbelief, only overcome by the same royal grace that spreads the feast. 'Why was I made to hear Thy voice?' &c. Christ brings to the banqueting-house—

1. By *His electing love.* 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' His love an everlasting love, which in time lays hold of its object (Jer. xxxi. 3).

2. By *His renewing grace.* The carnal mind enmity against God, and so without any inclination to the banquet of His love. Its taste the swine-trough. Its enjoyment the creature, not the Creator.

3. By *His gift of faith.* Such amazing love to the worthless and undeserving not readily believed. Unbelief as to the freeness of the Gospel offer and the reality of Christ's love, to be removed by divine grace. This done by Christ Himself through His Spirit. Christ the Author as well as Finisher of our faith. His to give as well as 'increase' it. Exalted to give repentance, which includes it.

4. By *His conquest of the heart.* His people willing in the day of His power (Ps. cx. 3). Loved with an everlasting love, and, therefore, drawn with lovingkindness (Jer. xxxi. 3). Drawn with cords of a man, and with bands of love (Hos. xi. 4). His free, forgiving love, apprehended by faith, breaks and conquers the heart. The case of the woman in Simon's house. Her many sins freely forgiven. Hence she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little (Luke vii. 47, &c.)

5. By *helping the soul over every discouragement* in the way of its full enjoyment of Christ's fellowship and love, and preparing it, both by His providence and grace, for such enjoyment. So the woman 'that was a sinner' enabled to enjoy the banquet of love at Christ's feet even in the Pharisee's house.

6. By *pouring His love into the heart,* and

affording the rich realization of it through His Holy Spirit (Rom. v. 5). Christ able to speak comfortably (margin, 'to the heart') even in the wilderness. 'I will love them freely' (Hos. xiv. 4; ii. 14). So with the woman in Simon's house: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' Christ able to *tell* the soul, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love;' 'I have redeemed thee; thou art mine' (Jer. xxxi. 3; Is. xliii. 1).

III. *The* EFFECT *of the experience.* 'Stay (or support) me with flagons (or cordials—perhaps raisin-cakes); comfort me (or surround me—strew my couch) with apples (or citrons—fruits of reviving fragrance): for I am sick of (or faint with) love. His left hand is (or, let His left hand be) under my head, and His right hand embrace me.' Shulamite, overpowered by a sense of the king's love, and the happiness she enjoyed in his fellowship, calls as if for aid in her fainting state, to the 'daughters of Jerusalem,' or ladies of the Court, perhaps waiting at some distance; though probably intending only the king himself, as indicated in her concluding words: 'Let his left hand be under my head,' &c. The effect of her present rapturous enjoyment a sense of fainting, which requires the application of reviving cordials and odours, and the support of the king's own loving arms. 'I am sick of (or faint with) love,' implying—(1) Overpowering sense of present enjoyment in the king's love; (2) Inability to sustain more of it in present circumstances; (3) Need of support under it. The sense of Christ's love sometimes attended with similar effects on the physical system. The human frame often unable to endure unusually powerful emotions without sensible weakness and derangement as the result. The language of one under the sense of Christ's love: 'Stay Thy hand or the vessel will burst.' Mr. Flavel, under a similar enjoyment while riding on horseback, felt himself at length so weak as scarcely to be able to retain his seat, and discovered that the blood had been oozing from his limbs, and flowing into his boots. Two of the writer's own friends the subjects of a similar experience. Observe—(1) *That love must be precious, and the experience of it desirable, which can cause the soul to faint under the sense of it.* (2) *Such Divine love-sickness only relieved by more of that which is its cause.* The fruit of the Apple-tree alone able to cure the sickness it makes. The Bridegroom's own arms must support the soul fainting under a sense of His love. Such sickness followed by a blessed healing, both here and in a better world. (3) *Sense of Christ's love the highest enjoyment to be experienced on earth.* Such sense, enjoyed in a high degree, next door to the felicity of heaven. (4) *The soul filled with, and fainting under, Christ's love, languishes for the fuller enjoyment of His presence in heaven.* Full satisfaction only found where Christ is seen face to face. Love-sickness only on earth. Sense of Christ's love the most effectual means of weaning the affections from the world. The 'expulsive power of a new affection.' The love-sick soul only longs the more for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

'O Christ, He is the fountain,
That deep, sweet well of love;
On earth the streams I've tasted:
More deep I'll drink above.'

(5) *Affecting contrast between sickness from Christ's love and surfeit from the pleasures of the world.* The former followed with a still richer manifestation of that love, but with an enlarged capacity for its enjoyment. The latter succeeded by an eternal thirst, with nothing to allay it (Luke xvi. 19—25).

THE KING'S CHARGE.

Verse 7.

I charge you,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up,
Nor awaken my love,
Till he (or till she) please.

Uncertain from the original whether the 'love' be Shulamite or the king, or simply the love itself as now experienced and enjoyed. Translators and commentators divided in opinion as to the speaker. The words probably spoken by the king in regard to his Beloved, now so happy in his love, or perhaps sunk into sleep by his side. The charge addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem, or ladies of the Court, in the language of oriental poetry. 'Roes and hinds' familiar objects in the country. Beautiful, but timid animals, ready to start up at the slightest noise. From their affectionate disposition suitably introduced in connection with a matter of love. A man's wife to be to him 'as the loving hind and pleasant roe (Prov. v. 19). Shulamite, Solomon's Beloved, not to be disturbed in the enjoyment of his love, or in the sleep which was occasioned by it. Observe, in regard to the

**Enjoyment of Christ's Love;**

1. *The temporary and uncertain duration of that enjoyment in the present world.* A limit to it so long as the Church is militant

on earth. The banneret of love to be soon exchanged for the banner of war. The feast to give place to the fight. The banquet-house to be followed by the battle-field. Believers soldiers of Christ as well as His Bride. The bridal chaplet to be laid aside for the warrior's helmet. The high enjoyment of the Bridegroom's love on earth may be temporary, but not the love itself. That enjoyment easily disturbed, like the repose of the timid gazelle. Intimate fellowship with Christ a tender, delicate, and sensitive thing. Numerous causes of disturbance both within and without us. Even necessary duty in the battle of life and the service of the Master may disturb it. Sin, self, and the seductions of the world, however, its main disturbers. Satan as great a foe to such enjoyment as to that of our first parents in the bowers of Eden. Heaven the place of undisturbed enjoyment.

2. *Great care necessary in order to preserve the enjoyment of Christ's love.* That enjoyment precious, as—(1). Endearing the Saviour; (2) Engaging us to His service; (3) Deadening us to the world; (4) Tending to crucify sin and increase holiness in the soul. The love of Christ constraineth us. The sense of it, therefore, to be carefully preserved. Hence the caution at the Supper Table: 'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: Continue ye in my love.' Important charge: 'Keep yourselves in the love of God,' that is, in the enjoyment of it (Jude 21). The sense and enjoyment of Christ's love only preserved by (1) Watchfulness against sin; (2) Obedience to His will; (3) Faithfulness in His service; (4) Patient endurance of the cross. 'If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love' (John xv. 10). David and Peter lost for a time the *joy* of God's salvation through sin, but not the salvation itself. Care to be taken to preserve a tender and an unsoiled conscience. Especial care necessary in our intercourse with the world, and even with the professing Church. Danger even of the 'daughters of Jerusalem' disturbing our love. Believers to be most careful over themselves when they have been nearest to Christ.

3. *The desire of Jesus that His people may enjoy the continuance of His fellowship and love.* Exemplified at the Supper Table in the Upper Room. 'Continue ye in my love: These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full' (John xv. 9—11). His desire to come in and sup with believers, and they with Him (Rev. iii. 20). From no unkindness or unwillingness on His part if the enjoyment of His fellowship and love is not of longer continuance. Only necessity and duty compel the language: 'Arise, let us go hence' (John xiv. 31).

4. *A time when sensible enjoyment of Christ's love and fellowship may be safely and properly suspended.* 'Until he (or she) please.' A suspension necessitated after the enjoyment in the Upper Room, both on the part of Christ and His disciples. Christ obliged to leave the 'banqueting-house' to go and redeem His lost sheep; believers to be ready to leave it to go and reclaim them. Others, still without, to be invited and brought to the Marriage-feast with ourselves. The loving self-denial of the Master the best way to preserve the *assurance* of His love, and to secure the frequent repetition of the *sense* of it. The temporary suspension of our own enjoyment well repaid by the Saviour's joy over another lost sheep found. Our love to Himself to be evinced by our care for His lambs (John xxi. 15). His promise to His faithful and self-denying servants: 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice' (John xvi. 22). Christ most likely to be found again by us, when joining Him in His own loved employment—seeking and saving that which is lost. 'Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.'

## PART SECOND.

# The Nuptials.

### CHAPTER II. 8, TO CHAPTER III. 11.

SCENE FIRST. **Place:** *Shulamite's home in the country.* **Speaker:** *Shulamite alone with the Daughters of Jerusalem, or Ladies of the Court.*

NARRATIVE OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S VISIT.

Verses 8—13.

The voice of my Beloved!
Behold, he cometh,
Leaping upon the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills.
My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart:
Behold, he standeth behind our wall;
He looketh forth at the windows,
Shewing himself (glancing, like a rose bud) through the lattice.
My beloved spake and said unto me
Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away.
For lo! the winter is past;
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth:
The time of singing is come;
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs;
And the vines, with the tender grape, (or, now in blossom), give a good smell.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Shulamite relates the visit of her Beloved when he came to take her to the nuptials. The visit probably made in spring. The bridegroom's invitation, from its pleasant nature, poetically represented as a call to come forth and enjoy the beauties of that delightful season. The language implies a previous absence of the bridegroom. The believers most comfortable state on earth not abiding. Its interruption, however, subservient to higher advancement.—The parts of which the Song is composed appear to shift and melt into each other like the dissolving views of a diorama.

The text a poetical and allegorical representation of what takes place in the history of the Church as a whole, and in the experience of believers individually. Historically, the Church's experience—(1) At the return of the Jews from the captivity in Babylon; (2) At the time of the Saviour's incarnation and earthly ministry; (3) At any time of great revival in the Church—pre-eminently, at the commencement of the Gospel Dispensation on the Day of Pentecost, and at the Reformation in the sixteenth century. A time of the Church's

**Revival,**

a time of Spring. The voice of the heavenly Turtle-dove, like the harbinger of an oriental Spring, then heard in the land. The Gospel,—the voice and dispensation of the Spirit—then clearly and earnestly preached, and accompanied with the Spirit's own power. Sleepers awakened and the dead made alive. The anxious inquiry heard: What must I do to be saved? Sanctuaries thronged with thirsting hearers. Converts multiplied. Believers quickened—made holy, happy, and useful; bold in testifying for Christ, and their testimony blessed. The spirit of prayer—the voice of the Turtle-dove in the believer's heart—eminently poured out. Gatherings for prayer, numerous, lively, and largely attended. The fruits of the Spirit conspicuous. Love, peace, and goodwill prevailing in the Church and in the neighbourhood. Satan may rage, and some may persecute; but the believers are unmoved, rejoicing to walk 'in the footsteps of the flock,' and to be counted worthy to suffer shame for their Master's sake. Observe—A necessity laid on believers to pray for such a Spring-time to the Church and the world (Zech. x. 1).—The Church's experience farther indicated in the text—(4) At the time of the Saviour's second coming. The new heavens and the new earth then created. The whole creation, now groaning and travailing in pain together, then 'delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' No more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain; 'for the former things are passed away' (2 Peter iii. 13; Rom. viii. 21; Rev. xxi. 4).

The experience of individual believers ex-

hibited—(1) At the time of their first enjoyment of Christ's manifested love; (2) At subsequent repetitions of the same; (3) In revived spiritual life and joy after a season of deadness and discomfort; (4) At their departure to the 'better country.'

There everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers.

The passage includes a lively and beautiful description of

### Spring.

Spring the emblem of all that is sweet and lovely, joyous and refreshing. The spring in nature only a picture of the spring in grace, and still more of the spring in glory. Its lessons manifold:—

1. *That God is love.* This proclained in the months of spring from every wood and hedge-row, every field and garden. Sung by the lark as it soars in the air; hummed by the insect as it flits from flower to flower; whispered by the daisy that shows its smiling face again after the snows and storms of winter. Spring a continually recurring testimony that God delights in the happiness of His creatures.

2. *That He rules by His providence.* By His care, the creatures he has made are again provided with the means of support and comfort which seemed for a time to be suspended. Life bursts forth out of death, and plenty out of want. His hand looses the bands of winter by preserving the earth in its motion, and the sun in its power. He brings back the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and looses the bands of Orion (Job. xxxviii. 31).

3. *That God is faithful to his promises.* The time of the singing of birds comes, however long it seemed to be deferred. The voice of the turtle or cuckoo is again heard in the land, proclaiming that God is mindful of His promise that, while the world remains, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not cease (Gen. viii. 22). Weeping may endure for a night; joy, according to His promise, comes in the morning. 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.' (Ps. xxx. 5; cxxvi. 5). The fulness of the time arrives, and the Saviour appears.

4. *That God is the author of beauty.* Himself the perfection of beauty, He delights in imparting it to His creatures. Beauty the robe of Spring. Conspicuous everywhere,—in "the blue sky, green earth, and gleaming sea." The world not a mere granary. The hand that fills the ear with the full corn for man's food, clothes the grass of the field with beautiful flowers for man's enjoyment. The voice of spring: "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" (Zech. ix. 17).

An interesting feature of Spring is the return of the migratory inhabitants of the woods. More especially that of the herald of Spring—with us the cuckoo,—in Palestine,

### The Turtle Dove.

'*The voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*'

The turtle-dove in the natural, an emblem of the Holy Ghost in the spiritual, world His chosen form, in descending on the Saviour at His baptism. Probable allusion to the figure in the account of the Creator (Gen. i. 2): 'The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.' Literally, 'brooded,' as a bird over its young. 'Dove-like, sat'st brooding' (*Milton*). The dove an emblem of the Holy Spirit, as—(1) *Distinguished for its faithful love.* In love, the Spirit visits loathsome hearts, which He renews for His abode, and then never entirely leaves. (2) *The cleanest and most delicate of birds.* The least sin hateful and grieving to the Holy Spirit. Creates, in the soul He dwells in, the same holy hatred. (3) *A very timid creature.* A hawk's feather said to be sufficient to make it tremble. The Holy Spirit easily grieved, and creates in us a holy fear in regard to sin and spiritual danger. (4) *A gentle bird.* The gentleness of the Spirit seen in the gentleness of Christ, in whom He dwelt in His fulness. 'I am meek and lowly in heart.' 'He shall not strive nor cry. A bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench' (Matt. xi. 29; xii. 20). Among the fruits of the Spirit are—long-suffering, gentleness, and meekness (Gal. v. 22, 23). (5) *The turtle takes up its abode in the land renewed under the genial breath of Spring.* The Holy Spirit loves to dwell in the heart He renews by His own gracious influence. The believer's body as well as His soul the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19). Care to be taken by the believer to cherish so blessed a guest.

The 'voice' of the Holy Spirit 'heard in the land'—(1) *When the Gospel is preached in its purity.* The Gospel the Dispensation of the Spirit. 'The Spirit and the Bride say: Come.' 'As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear His voice.' 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches' (Rev. ii. 11; xxi. 17; Heb. iii. 7). (2) *When the Gospel is preached with power.* The Gospel to be preached 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.' 'Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me' (1 Peter i. 12; Acts i. 8). (3) *When the fruits of the Gospel appear in the lives of those who hear it*

These fruits—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (or self control). Exemplified in the first hearers of the Gospel at Jerusalem, at Samaria, Philippi, Corinth, &c. (Acts ii. 44—47; viii. 8; xvi. 15, 33, 34; Phil. i. 3—7; I Cor. vi. 11). The voice of the turtle-dove never entirely silent in the earth since the first promise of a Saviour. Heard in the preaching of Enoch and Noah, in the Psalms of David, in the Proverbs and Song of Solomon, and in the strains of all the prophets. Carries in the Gospel the olive leaf of peace to a perishing but pitied world.

From the language of Shulamite in reference to her Beloved, observe—

1. *The warm affection of a believer's heart towards the Saviour.* 'The voice of my Beloved!' The first faint sound of His voice eagerly caught as it falls on the ear. Shulamite speaks as if her heart leaped within her at the sound. 'As soon as the voice of Thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy' (Luke i. 44). (2) *The waiting and expectant state of the believer in regard to Christ.* For His *first* Advent in the case of the Old Testament Church; His *second* Advent in that of the New; and His spiritual visits and appearances in the case of believers in general. Shulamite on the eager look out for her Beloved. The proper posture of believers in regard to Christ. His second and glorious Appearing the Church's 'blessed hope' (Titus ii. 13; Luke xii. 36). (3) *The love of Christ to His Church.* Shulamite's Beloved represented as coming to her, in the eagerness of his desire, like a swift and sprightly gazelle or young antelope, bounding over mountain and hill. No obstacle too great for Christ to overcome in redeeming and blessing His Church. 'He loved the Church and gave Himself for it.' Jacob's love to Rachael shewn by a hard service of fourteen years in keeping Laban's flocks. A human life of thirty-three years to fulfil the precepts of the law; and a painful, ignominious, and accursed death, with the added misery of the hiding of His Father's face, to satisfy its penalty—not too much for the love of Christ to His Church. 'Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not: then said I, lo, I come to do Thy will, O God; a body hast Thou prepared for me' (Ps. xl. 6, &c.; Heb. x. 5—9).

3. *The Saviour's desire for the believer's love and fellowship.* Shulamite's Beloved having reached her dwelling, waits outside till he obtains her consent to follow him. 'He standeth behind our wall,' &c. He addresses her by the most endearing titles, and employs arguments taken from the removal of every obstacle—'the winter is past,' &c.—and from the most attractive features of the country in the lovely season of an oriental Spring, as expressive of the sweetness enjoyed in the fellowship of love. Souls invited to receive and follow Christ by the blessedness imparted by His presence and love. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me' (Rev. iii. 20).

4. *The natural backwardness of the heart to the blessedness to which Christ invites His people.* Shulamite's backwardness indicated by the arguments employed by her waiting Beloved to overcome it. The believer's spirit willing, while the flesh is weak. Weights hanging on the soul which have to be laid aside. The natural tendency, through the remains of the carnal mind, to settle down in a state of sloth and indolence, satisfied with little of spiritual life and communion with the Saviour. 'My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken Thou me according to Thy word' (Ps. cxix. 25).

6. *The necessity of leaving everything for Christ.* Shulamite twice entreated 'to rise up and come away.' Like the exhortation addressed to the same Bride in the forty-fifth Psalm: 'Harken, O daughter, and consider: forget also thine own people and thy father's house' (Ps. xlv. 10, 11). The Saviour's call: 'Follow Me'—to be answered by a rising up, leaving all, and following Him (Matt. iv. 19—22; Luke v. 27, 28). 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple' (Luke xiv. 33).

7. The whole passage descriptive of

### The Saviour's Call.

I. *What it* COST *to make it.* Shulamite's Beloved required to come from a distance, overcoming every obstacle, 'like a roe or a young hind' bounding over one mountain peak after another. The Son of God required to leave His Father's house, assume our nature, empty Himself of His glory, take the form of a servant, be born of a humble woman, be brought forth in a stable, work as a carpenter, become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, be for a time with nowhere to lay his head, endure the contradiction, reproach, and opposition of sinners, and at last the hiding of His Father's face amid the agony and shame of an accursed death. One mountain of suffering and one valley of humiliation after another, to be passed before He could call sinners to the enjoyment of salvation,—His chosen bride to the celebration of the marriage. Many also the provocations to be come over in His saving call

to sinners, and His sanctifying call to believers, before He obtains their full consent to 'rise up and come away.' Jesus more eager to save and bless, than the sinner or the saint to experience His salvation and blessing (Ps. lxxxi. 10—16).

II. *The* MEANS *through which He addresses the call.* "The voice of my Beloved. He standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself (*margin*, 'flourishing'—glancing like an opening flower) through the lattice." Through these openings in the wall he addressed his invitation: 'My beloved spake and said unto me.' Through the ordinances instituted by Himself in His Church, Christ wooes sinners to become His Bride, and invites His Bride to the full enjoyment of union and communion with Him. 'We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.' 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ' (2 Cor. v. 20; xi. 2). The voice of Christ Himself in the word and ordinances the only effectual means of awakening and drawing the soul to Himself. 'My sheep hear my voice and follow me.' The quickened soul able to distinguish that voice as the voice of the beloved. "They know not the voice of strangers." The voice known to be that of the Saviour from its inward power and sweetness, and from its conformity to the written Word. Known by believers as having heard and experienced it before. Observe—(1) *A wall found standing between Christ and the soul whom He seeks.* Our fleshly nature, both in respect to body and mind, such a wall. The 'law of commandments' which we have broken, another. Visible nature at present a separating wall. Ordinances themselves a wall, but a wall with openings in it; or ordinances these openings themselves. Through these openings Christ shows Himself to the soul He seeks. (2) *To obtain glimpses of Christ and hear His voice, it is necessary to be at the lattice of ordinances.* Divine ordinances the meeting-place between Christ and His people (Ex. xxv. 22; xxix. 42, 43; xxx, 6, 36). 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the ports of my doors.' 'One thing have I desired, and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in His temple.' 'Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them.' 'Wherever I record my name, I will come and bless you' (Prov. viii. 34; Ps. xxvii. 4; Matt. xviii. 20; Ex. xx. 24).

III. *The* ARGUMENTS *employed in the call.* Three arguments employed by Shulamite's Beloved. (1) His own love—expressed in the titles given her; (2) The removal of hindrances: 'The winter is past, the rain is over and gone;' (3) The joyful prospect before her—'The flowers appear on the earth,' &c. Jesus invites sinners to become His Bride, and His Bride to come forth to the full enjoyment of His fellowship on the ground of—

1. *His love to them.* His great argument with Israel His argument with believers and with sinners still: 'I have loved Thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' 'I have redeemed thee; thou art mine.' 'Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you' (Jer. xxxi. 3; iii. 14; Is. xliii. 1). 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish.' 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' 'Came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many' (John iii. 16; Luke xix. 10; Matt. xx. 28). Thus Jesus gained the woman at Jacob's well, and the sinner that washed His feet with her tears. The sinner's heart only thawed by a Saviour's love. The cords that draw the soul to Christ 'the cords of a man and the bands of love' (Hos. xi. 4). Only the revelation of redeeming love able to break down the barriers and undo the bolts of a sinner's heart A loving voice heard outside before the door is opened within (Rev. iii. 20). None so fair in the eyes of Jesus as the penitent and believing soul (Luke xv. 5—7).

2. *The removal of hindrances.* The winter of a Legal Dispensation now past. The covenant of works superseded by a covenant of grace. 'Do this and live' exchanged for 'Believe and live.' Fulfilment of moral precepts and observance of ceremonial ordinances no longer a term of union with the Beloved. The invitation: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Ho, every one that thirsteth; come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; Come, buy and eat; without money and without price.' 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Matt. xi. 28; Is. lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17). Divine justice that demanded the sinner's damnation now satisfied with the Surety's blood. The sword that should have smitten the guilty sheep bathed in the blood of the Shepherd, and so put back into its scabbard. The way prepared on the cross for a righteous reconciliation with God, and the full forgiveness of the sinner. God now able to be just while justifying the ungodly. A just

God now a Saviour. All things now ready for the salvation of the sinner, and his marriage with God's own Son (Zech. xiii. 7; Eph. ii. 13—16; Rom. iii. 21—26; Matt. xxii. 2, 4). Nothing wanting but the sinner's consent. 'Wilt thou go with this man?' 'To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God' (John i. 12).

3. *The joy and blessedness attending compliance.* 'The flowers appear on the earth, &c.' The soul invited by Christ to the joy and blessedness of an eternal spring, in the enjoyment of His society and love—in the new heavens of the new earth 'wherein dwelleth righteousness.' A rest remaining for the people of God, of which Canaan, clad in all the beauties of a lovely spring, was only a type. A time in prospect for the sinner that accepts the Saviour, when all the chill and gloom, the clouds and storms, the darkness and discomfort of the present state, shall give place to the sweetness and sunshine, the brightness and beauty, the light and gladness, of a land where the sun shall no more go down; where flowers that never fade bloom under cloudless skies; where the harps of angels and the songs of the Redeemed fill the air with celestial music, and where the tree of life bears its perennial fruit on both banks of the river that waters the Paradise of God. A 'better country' in prospect to every believing soul, where purity and peace, and joy and love—the voice of the heavenly turtle—is everywhere heard, and where the true Vine diffuses its fragrance, and with its precious clusters fills the happy inhabitants with 'a joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

III. *The* CALL *itself.* 'Rise up and come away.' The call addressed by the Saviour to His first disciples: 'Follow me.' In obedience to it, they 'rose up, left all, and followed him' (Matt. iv. 18—22; Luke v. 27, 28). The general law: 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' 'Let us go forth unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.' 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider; forget all thine own people, and thy father's house: so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty' (Luke xiv. 33; Matt. xvi. 24; Heb. xiii. 13; Ps. xlv. 10, 11). The world to be given up in order to 'come away' with Christ. No man able to serve two masters of different interests and demands. 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' 'If the Lord be God, serve Him; if Baal be God, serve him.' A resolution and effort to be made to leave our present state in order to follow Christ. 'Rise up.' So the Prodigal Son: 'I will arise and go to my father,' &c. And he arose and went. The strength to arise is Christ's: the act and effort our own. So with the Paralytic: 'Take up thy bed, and go into thine house; and he arose and departed to his house' (Luke xv. 18, 20; Matt. ix. 6). Christ's call is—(1) To come *to* him; (2) To come *after* Him. We are to come *to* Him as *sinners;* to come *after* Him as *disciples.* The former verified by the latter. The blessing of coming *to* Christ realized in coming *after* Him. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' followed by—'take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; and ye shall find rest to your souls' (Matt. xi. 28, 29). Unspeakable gainers in giving up all for Christ. Christ the One Pearl of great price that makes a man up for time and eternity. Everything, therefore, wisely given up to obtain possession of it. The case of Paul that of all believers: 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,' &c. (Phil. iii. 7, 8).

### BRIDEGROOM'S SECOND CALL.

Verse 14.

O my dove,
That art in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret places of the stairs;
Let me see thy countenance,
Let me hear thy voice;
For sweet is thy voice,
And thy countenance is comely.

Love unwilling to take a refusal. Hence a repetition of the bridegroom's call. Strange backwardness on the part of a sinner to comply with the call of a Saviour. Backwardness on the part of a believer to follow Jesus to the enjoyment of a higher life of holiness and blessedness. In the Bridegroom's Second Call, observe—

I. *The* TITLE *of the Called one.* 'My dove.' A term of endearment. Love sees in its object only what is beautiful and agreeable. The called one a sinner, with much that is not dove-like. Yet love says: 'My dove.' Yet in regard to a believer, the title true. The believer is—(1) A '*dove,*' because renewed with a dove-like nature akin to that of Him who renews him and dwells in him—the Holy Spirit, whose emblem is the dove; the dove-like becoming the pre-

dominant one in him, and going on increasing until it reaches perfection and is the only one, and that for ever. Believers viewed and addressed by Christ in His love, according to their *new*, rather than their *old* nature. (2) *Christ's* dove, as—(i.) Given Him by the Father; (ii.) Purchased by His own blood; (iii.) Wooed and won by Him as His Bride, and made a member of His body. The little word '*my*' as precious to Christ in reference to believers as it is to believers in reference to Christ.

**The Dove,**

an emblem of believers, as it is—

1. *Helpless.* Unable to defend itself against birds of prey (Compare Ps. xviii. 17; Jer. xxxi. 11).

2. *Simple.* With as little wisdom as strength to defend itself. 'Ephraim is like a silly dove' (Hos. vii. 11). 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth' (Gal. iii. 1). Hence Paul's fear for the Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 2).

3. *Timid.* Trembles at the sight of a hawk's feather. 'They shall tremble as a dove out of the land of Assyria' (Hos. xi. 11). Believers tremble at God's word. Afraid to sin, though not afraid to suffer (Heb. xi. 25).

4. *Sensitive.* 'They shall mourn love like doves in the valley.' The dove's note a mournful one. Believers sensitive to evils within and without them, about which others do not care. Concerned and troubled both for Christ's cause and their neighbour's souls. Sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. Weep in secret places for the pride and destruction of others. Groan within themselves for the sins of their own nature and life. Their character and blessedness that they 'mourn,' and 'sorrow after a godly sort' (Matt. v. 4; 2 Cor. vii. 11).

5. *Beautiful.* Has 'wings covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold' (Ps. lxviii. 13). Believers to be made like them. Adorned with the beauties of holiness. Comely with Christ's comeliness put upon them.

6. *Cleanly.* Cleanly in its food, its feathers, and its nest. Believers called to be holy and without blame. Clean through the Word of Christ spoken to them. Purify themselves, as God is pure. Cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Cleansed by the blood, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ (1 John i. 7; 1 Cor. vi. 11).

7. *Harmless.* The dove's harmlessness proverbial. Believers made like Him who was 'holy, harmless,' &c. Their calling to be 'blameless and harmless, as the sons of God;' harmless in spirit, speech, and actions (Phil. ii. 15).

8. *Affectionate and faithful.* Pairs only with one mate. Mourns over its loss. Believers' love to Christ stronger than death. 'Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.'

9. *The Bearer of Tidings.* Doves employed for this purpose. A species of pigeon distinguished by this name. Noah's dove. So believers the bearers of the glad tidings of the Gospel (Is. xl. 9; lii. 7; Ps. lxviii. 11; Mark xvi. 15).

10. *Often resorting to, and making their nest in the rocks.* A species named from this circumstance. Hence what follows—

II. *Their* PLACE *and* CONDITION. 'That art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs' (or precipices). Possible allusion to the retired seclusion in which Shulamite was kept in her mother's house; or to the sequestered situation of that house among the mountains. The description suggested by the title given: 'My dove.' Doves often found in the recesses of rocks. Indicates—

1. *Timidity.* The dove in the clefts of the rock from fear of her pursuers. Believers to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear. Work out their salvation with fear and trembling. 'The wise man feareth and departeth from evil,' while 'the fool rageth and is confident' (Ps. xiv. 16). Sufficient cause for 'fearing always,' in a corrupt nature within us, a roaring lion and subtle serpent without us, and a world lying in wickedness around us.

2. *Security.* The dove safe in the clefts of the rock. Believers safe in the Rock of Ages. Their place of defence the munitions of rocks. Jehovah Himself their refuge. Sheltered in Jesus, the enemy may harrass, but not hurt them. Sin may rage, but not reign in them. Men and devils may persecute and persuade, but not prevail against them. Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1 Peter i. 5).

3. *Isolation and loneliness.* Believers *in* the world, though not *of* it. Strangers and pilgrims. 'The world knoweth us not, even as it knew Him not.' Believers at present in this world as the Bride when the Bridegroom is taken away from her. Special times in their experience when they are 'as a sparrow alone upon the house-top' (Ps. cii. 7; xxxviii. 11). Hence the promise: 'I will not leave you comfortless (*margin*, 'orphans'); I will come to you' (John xiv. 18).

III. *The* CALL *itself*, 'Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.' Christ's desire in regard to His Church in the world—(1) To enjoy their fellowship (Rev. iii. 20);

(2) To see them trustful, cheerful, and happy in Himself (Phil. iii. 1); (3) To witness in them the exercise of faith and love (Heb. xii. 2); (4) To enjoy their beauty—the reflection of His own—His own comliness which He has put upon them (Ps. xlv. 11). The believer's countenance, lighted up with faith and love, the fairest sight in heaven and earth to Christ, next to His Father. The weakest believer invited to a free and familiar intercourse with the Saviour. The believer's happiness, as well as the Saviour's joy, to turn his countenance fully and constantly towards Him. Nothing, not even sin, to be allowed to turn it away from Him when He lovingly invites him to turn it to Him. (5) To hear their voice—(i.) In speaking *to* Him as well as *of* Him; (ii.) In cheerful song; songs given the believer even in the night—in painful and perilous, as well as pleasant and peaceful, times (Job. xxxv. 10; Ps. xlii. 8); (iii.) In thanksgiving and praise. To give thanks in everything, and to praise at all times, the will of God concerning us; (iv.) In confessing sin, and Jesus as a gracious and all-sufficient Saviour from it; (v.) In prayer and supplication—praying always and not fainting; in everything making their requests known unto God; coming boldly to the throne of grace through Him who is their elder brother and High Priest; casting their care upon Him who careth for them, and pouring out their hearts before Him. No situation or circumstances in which the soul should yield to the temptation of restraining prayer.

IV. *The* REASON *of the Call.* 'For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.' The voice of a believer, though heard in groans and lamentations, sweeter to Jesus than the hallelujahs of angels. The voice of the child for whom He gave His life, and of the Bride whom He redeemed with His own blood. Sweeter still when heard in songs of faith and love, or in happy communion with Himself. The believer's countenance comely to Christ, though soiled with tears and dejected with sorrow. The Saviour's refreshment in Simon's house, not the viands on the table, but the woman at His feet with her countenance wet with the tears of penitence and love. The believing prayers and loving praises of a pardoned sinner sweeter to Christ than the songs of seraphim. The first cry of an awakened soul turns away his ear from the symphonies of heaven. His joy fulfilled, not in the angels that never fell, but in fallen and restored men. The joyous thanksgivings of redeemed sinners make the Son of God a double heaven. His joy of joys in the dead made alive again, in the lost one found. 'He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing,'—like the mother who sings for joy over her infant that lies smiling in her lap (Zeph. iii. 17). 'Hephzibah,' the name He gives to His saved people: 'My delight is in her' (Is lxii. 4).

SHULAMITE'S REPLY TO HER BELOVED.

(Verses 15—17.)

Take us the foxes,
The little foxes,
That spoil the vines;
For our vines have tender grapes.

My beloved is mine,
And I am his;
He feedeth among the lilies.

Until the day break
And the shadows flee away;
Turn my Beloved,
And be thou like a roe,
Or a young hart,
Upon the mountains of Bether.

Shulamite readily responds to her Beloved Complies with His request to let Him hear her voice. Her song, a 'song of loves' (Ps. xlv. title). Expresses her desire and joy. Believers, encouraged and invited by Jesus, lift up their voice in prayer and song to the praise and pleasure of their Beloved. The privilege of 'the ransomed of the Lord' to return to Zion with songs. 'The inhabitant of the rock' sings; though lonely, yet secure and happy. Believers enabled, through faith and love, to sing the Lord's song even in a strange land (Ps. cxxxvii. 4). Shulamite's song a mirror of the believer's experience. Expresses—

I. CONCERN. 'Take us the foxes (or jackals), the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes' (or, 'are in bloom'). Expresses her concern that nothing may exist to cool their love, or mar the happiness of the anticipated union. Speaks of herself as, in her bridal character, a vineyard, the property as much of her Beloved as her own. The vines of that vineyard, the happy intercourse of the connubial state. These, as in Spring, only then in bloom; the marriage not yet consummated, and the intercourse being only that of parties betrothed. The married state, however, anticipated, when for a time the vines would still only 'have tender grapes,' or be in flower. Natural concern in the Bride that nothing may disturb or mar the felicities of their married life. Wishes every hurtful and dis-

turbing element to be detected and removed at the very beginning. Even 'the little foxes' to be taken and destroyed. Greater danger from infirmities of temper, little jealousies, coolnesses, or estrangements, at the earlier period of their wedded intercourse than even afterwards. The thought of the possible existence of such things painful to the loving Shulamite. To remove the causes and guard against the occasions of such disturbance, the joint care of both parties, while especially lying upon the husband. 'Take us the foxes.' Observe—

1. *Care to be taken to preserve unhurt the union and communion between believers and Christ.* The peace as well as fruitfulness of believers easily marred and injured. Grace in the soul, and Christ's presence in the Church, a tender and delicate thing. The Spirit easily grieved. Many foxes about the vineyard, both great and small. Injury to the Church as a whole, and to believers individually, from various causes. These apparent in the earliest period of the Church. Exhibited in the acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation. Appeared both in the form of false doctrines and foul practices. Believers, and the Church in general, warned against them. Care, vigilance, and decision necessary to guard against their entrance and effects.

2. *Errors in doctrine and sins in life to be especially guarded against in the Spring-time of grace, and in the revivals of the Church.* Spiritual pride, uncharitableness, vain-glory, strife, error, exclusiveness, to be then especially watched against. To be crushed in their first appearances and small beginnings. 'Take us the *little* foxes.' More dangerous and more damaging *then*, as being more likely to be overlooked, and more easily admitted. Young foxes more injurious to the vines in Spring than the older ones. What might be regarded as small sins, and scarcely observable to others, often the most hurtful to the divine life, and the spiritual health of a Church. 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly,' &c. (Rev. ii. 4, 5).

3. *Sins and errors in the Church an injury to Christ as well as to the Church itself, and to individual believers.* 'Take *us* the foxes; *our* vines have tender grapes.' The purity, happiness, and fruitfulness of the Church, both collectively and individually, the common interest of Christ and His people. The Church Christ's body. His chosen rest and abode. His walk among the seven golden candlesticks. Injury to them an injury to *Him.*

4. *Christ and His Spirit's agency necessary to the preservation of the Church's purity and the believer's peace.* '*Take* us (or 'for us') the foxes.' The Bride unable to do this herself. Believers 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation' (1 Pet. i. 5). Christ alone able to keep His people from falling, and to preserve them blameless. 'A vineyard of red wine: I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day' (Is. xxvii. 2, 3). Without me ye can do nothing. My grace is sufficient for thee. The Church's efforts made effectual by the Spirit's agency. 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts' (Zech. iv. 6). Little speed in soul-matters without Christ's hand in the work.

5. *The believer's duty and interest prayerfully to put the preservation of his own soul, and of the Church at large, into Christ's hands.* 'Take us the foxes'—the Bride's earnest prayer to the Bridegroom. Paul's conduct in regard to the thorn in the flesh: 'For this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me' (2 Cor. xii. 8). Arise, plead thine own cause. What Christ can do, and has promised to do, He will do at His people's earnest prayer (Ezek. xxxvi. 37; Is. xlv. 11; Matt. ix. 38.) Prayer the mightiest weapon put by her Lord into the Church's hand, for the preservation of her purity and the conquest of her foes. Believers' duty both to work and pray. 'We will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word' (Acts vi. 4). The Church's greatest triumphs won upon her knees.

II. Joy. 'My beloved is mine and I am His.' Shulamite expresses her joy in the possession of her Beloved, and in the entire surrender of herself to him as his own. This joy enhanced by the consideration of what he is and does—the excellence of his character, the happiness he imparts to his own, and the pleasure he takes in their society. 'He feedeth among the lilies.' The Beloved compared to a noble and beautiful gazelle that pastures only in the flowery meads. Only purest joys the Saviour's choice. Only the pure His companions and friends. Purest enjoyments attend His presence. Lilies spring and bloom at His steps. Hence the believer's joy and thankfulness. Justly congratulates himself on his untold treasure. 'To you that believe He is precious.' 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: I have a goodly heritage: the Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup.' 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.' 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be very joyful in my God.'

'The opening heavens around me shine,
With beams of sacred bliss,
When Jesus tells me He is mine,
And whispers I am His.'

Observe—

1. *A real, complete, and lasting propriety in each other on the part of Christ and believers.* Each, with all that he is and has, the property of the other. The humblest and poorest believer equally with the strongest and richest, the sharer of Christ and all that is His—His life, merits, death, resurrection, glory, power, kingdom, throne (Rom. viii. 17; Rev. iii. 21). The believer entirely Christ's—his affections, talents, powers, possessions, influence. The name of King Jesus stamped on all he has and is. 'Holiness to the Lord' engraven on the furniture of his house and the tools of his workshop.

2. *The believer's happiness that Christ is his and he is Christ's.* Christ such as to guarantee this happiness. 'He feedeth among the lilies.' His presence makes a Paradise to angels, still more to His redeemed. 'Where thou art is heaven.' Infinitely blessed Himself, He is able to make all blessed who are the object of His love. The special blessedness of the glorified, that the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, that the Lamb stands on Mount Zion in the midst of the redeemed, and that He appears even in heaven as a Lamb that 'had been slain' (Rev. v. 6; vii. 17; xiv. 1).

3. *The proper character of believers to be lily-like.* 'He feedeth among the lilies.' Lilies the emblems of sweetness and purity. Descriptive of those among which the Holy and Fair One delights to dwell. The spotless and lovely One can only feed among lilies. He who is sweetness and beauty itself must have lilies for His companions and joy. This fact the guardian of the believer's life and the security of his peace. To enjoy Christ and His fellowship we must be lilies. Christ only able to live in a pure heart (Matt. v. 8; Tit. ii. 14; 1 John iii. 3).

4. *Christ to be found among His people.* 'He feedeth among the lilies.' Is to be found among such (ch. vi. 2). 'Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' 'He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks' (Matt. xviii. 20; Rev. ii. 1). Christ still to be sought and found in the temple—His own body, the Church. Found sitting, not in the midst of proud Pharisees and captious Scribes, but among His humble disciples, and the 'publicans and sinners' that draw near to hear Him (Luke xv. 1; Is. lxvi. 1, 2; lvii. 15; Acts vii. 48).

III. DESIRE. 'Till the day-dawn (or breathe), and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved,' &c. Shulamite's desire, probably, for the day of the anticipated nuptials, and her Bridegroom's frequent visits in the meantime. The day longed for that shall make her legally and publicly his own, and shall put her in possession of the happiness and privilege of his married wife. The day of the Lord's second appearing that of the public nuptials of His Church. The espousals or betrothing, here; the marriage, hereafter (2 Cor. ii. 2; Rev. xix. 7). The Bride not complete till the Bridegroom comes to be glorified in His saints and to make them all like Himself (2 Thess. i. 10; Phil. iii. 20, 21). That day the object of the believer's longing. The blessed hope (Tit. ii. 13). The day looked for and hasted to (2 Peter iii. 12). The speedy arrival of that day the last promise of the Bridegroom to His Church, and the last prayer of the Bride to her Beloved (Rev. xxii. 20). That day the termination of the Church's night. With the Bridegroom's advent the day dawns and the day star appears. Christ Himself the bright and morning star (Rev. xxii. 16; 2 Pet. i. 19; Rom. xiii. 12; viii. 18—23). His first advent the termination of the night of the legal dispensation; His second that of the present one (Luke i. 78). Meantime He visits and revives His people. 'I will not leave you comfortless (orphans); I will come unto you.' Such visits their comfort and joy in the night of their pilgrimage (Ps. xvii. 3; xlii. 8; Job. xxxv. 10). Christ, in His love, like a roe, or a young hart bounding over the mountains of Bether (or of cliffs intersected with deep fissures and ravines), when coming in humiliation and weakness; no less so when coming in glory and power. Intervening events and epochs to transpire previous to His second as well as to His first advent. Perhaps the last of these mountains of Bether already reached, or soon to be so. The Lord hasten it in His time!

## The Missing One Found.

Chapter III. Verses 1—5.

PROBABLY A DREAM RELATED BY SHULAMITE TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

By night on my bed
I sought him whom my soul loveth;
I sought him, but I found him not.

I will rise now, and go about the city;
In the streets, and in the broadways
thereof,
Will I seek him whom my soul loveth.
I sought him, but I found him not.

The watchmen that go about the city
found me; *to whom I said:*
Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

It was but a little that I passed from them,
But I found him whom my soul loveth.

I held him, and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him into my mother's
house,
And into the chamber of her that con-
ceived me.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusa-
lem,
By the roes and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up nor awake my love,
Till he please.

This section probably the narration of a dream, given in a song by Shulamite in presence of the Daughters of Jerusalem or Ladies of the Court. 'By night (*Hebrew*, 'nights') on my bed,' &c. (So Dan. iv. 10, 13). 'A dream cometh by the multitude of business;' and Shulamite's, from the occupation of her thoughts with the prospect of the approaching nuptials, and the preparations for them. Indicates how her waking thoughts were possessed by her Beloved, here again characterized by her as 'he whom my soul loveth,' as already in Chap. i. 7; and reveals her great desire to enjoy his society, and her fear lest anything should occur to prevent it. From the passage, viewed in its spiritual aspect, observe—

1. Natural that believers, especially in the ardour of their first love, should have their thoughts much occupied with Christ, and that as a consequence He should be present to them even in their dreams. Their experience expressed by the prophet: 'With my soul have I desired Thee in the night: yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early' (Is. xxvi. 9).

2. The believer's great desire, when it is well with his soul, for the presence and fellowship of the Saviour whom he loves; and his great concern not to lose it, or do anything that may occasion its loss.

3. Times when the believing soul is warranted and constrained to open up to others the treasures of her spiritual experience, and to narrate both her conflicts and her victories, her sorrows and her joys (Ps. lxvi. 16).

4. The fellowship of Christ not always and uninterruptedly enjoyed by the believer in this world. Many causes of its interruption—a corrupt nature, a tempting devil, and a world lying in wickedness.

5. Dark seasons and dull frames no proof of a Christless state. Christ always present with a believer, but not always sensibly so. Our union with Christ not affected by our want of communion with Him. Our interest in His love not dependent on our feelings, but on His faithfulness.

6. A precious mercy to be aroused to seek an absent Christ.

7. The mark of a living and loving soul, not to be satisfied with an absent Saviour.

8. Seeking Christ to be diligent and earnest, in order to be successful. The soul to stir itself up to take hold of God when He appears to be absent (Is. lxiv. 7). Christ not always readily found when missed. Not readily found in order to increase our earnestness in seeking, and our carefulness in retaining Him. A missing Christ makes prized ordinances.

9. Suitable means to be employed and inquiry made, in order to find a missing Christ. The part of a true pastor to direct inquiring souls. That direction to be sought and found both in private conference and in attendance on the public ordinances of God's house (John xii. 21; Ps. xxvii. 4). The likeliest place to find the missing Jesus was in His Father's house (Luke ii. 46). 'Christ to be found in the streets and broad ways of the city, not in the blind by-ways outside of it.'—(*Henry*).

10. Ministers to know Christ themselves in order to direct others to Him. A Christless minister a poor guide to a Christ-seeking soul. Ministers expected by their people to be familiar with Christ, and with the exercises of those who are earnestly seeking Him.

11. Ministers to be accessible to their people, and to be diligent in their duty. 'The watchmen that go about the city found me.'

12. Earnest and diligent search after Christ not long unsuccessful. 'It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him,' &c. Christ not far from a faithful ministry and an earnestly seeking soul.

13. Means to be employed, but not rested in. 'I passed from them.' The seeking soul to go *beyond* the minister. Means and ministers, like finger-posts, pointing to something beyond them. Ordinances only *means*. Angels unable to satisfy Mary at the empty sepulchre. The Bride hastens past the servant to the master.

14. Inexpressible joy in finding a missing and sought-for Saviour. 'I found Him'—the language of exultation. Like Archimedes in the bath—'I have found it, I have found it.' So Andrew and Philip in regard to the Messiah (John i. 41, 45). So the wise men rejoiced in the Star (Matt. ii. 10).

15. Care to be taken by those who have found Christ in order to retain Him. 'I held him,' &c. The language—(1) Of love and affection to the Saviour (Ruth i. 16). (2) Fear and jealousy of losing Him. (3) Earnest resolution to hold Him. Implies on Christ's part—(1) An apparent inclination to depart (Gen. xxxii. 26; Luke xxiv. 28; Mark vi. 48). (2) Gracious condescension—the Almighty allowing Himself to be held by a creature.

16. Believers who find Christ, and enjoy His fellowship, to endeavour that others also may profit by it. 'I brought him to my mother's house.' Both natural and spiritual kindred to be made partakers of the benefit. A proof that Jesus is dear to ourselves when we seek to make Him known to others. A family or congregation to be the better by any member of it that rejoices in a found Saviour. Only a present and enjoyed Christ the life of a Church or congregation.

17. Watchfulness, resolution, and care necessary, on the part of the believer, to avoid whatever may disturb his enjoyment of Christ's presence and fellowship; and on the part of the Church, to avoid whatever may grieve him away from its ordinances. 'I charge you,' &c. Danger of disturbing a found and present Christ especially to be apprehended from the 'daughters of Jerusalem.' The flesh Christ's greatest enemy, whether in the believer's own heart or in the Church or congregation.

18. Easy to provoke Christ to withdraw from the soul or the Church while He is visiting it. 'By the roes and by the hinds of the field,'—the most timid creatures, and most easily disturbed and frightened away.

Observe from the whole passage in regard to

### A Missing Saviour.

I. *The* PERSON *who misses him.* One who loves him. 'I sought him whom my soul loveth.' The character of a believer and a regenerated soul that he loves Christ. He loves Him—(1) *Sincerely*, with his 'soul;' not in mere sentiment or profession. (2) *Ardently*, with warmest affection; his 'soul' loves Him. Christ loved with the '*soul*' the proof of a soul that loves Christ. Christ only loved by a new nature. The carnal mind enmity to God, and so to Christ. Love to Christ generated by the Holy Spirit's revelation of him to the soul in his preciousness as a Saviour. The soul that loves Christ most ready to miss Him, and most pained at losing Him. That only missed which has been prized and possessed. The condemnation and curse of men who have heard the Gospel that they do not love Christ (John iii. 19; 1 Cor. xvi. 22).

II. *The* MEANS *employed to find him.* (1) *Diligent attendance on public ordinances.* These ordinances the 'streets and broadways' of the city of the great King. Christ to be found in these. 'Wherever two or three are gathered together,' &c. (Matt. xviii. 20). 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, &c. For whoso findeth me, findeth life,' &c. (Prov. viii. 34, 35). (2) *Private inquiry of spiritual guides.* Pastors and teachers appointed by Zion's King to direct anxious souls to Himself. 'Remember them which have the rule (*margin*, are the guides) over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God,' &c. (Heb. xiii. 7, 8, 17). (3) *Searching the Scriptures.* The written Word the standing direction of inspired guides. The voice of the watchmen of Zion heard in the Bible. The Scriptures testify of Christ. None long in finding Christ who search for Him in the 'testimony of the Gospel.' (4) *Earnest prayer for divine light and guidance* (Ps. xliii. 3). Shulamite turns from the watchmen to the King himself (verse 4).

III. *The* RESULT *of the search.* Christ found. 'I found him whom my soul loveth.' Such success is (1) *certain.* Promised by Him that cannot lie. 'Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart' (Jer. xxix. 13). 'If thou criest after knowledge, &c. Then shalt thou find the knowledge of God' (Prov. ii. 3—5. (2) *Speedy.* 'It was but a little,' &c. 'Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear' (Is. lxv. 24). 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, &c. My bowels are troubled for him.' (Jer. xxxi. 18—20).

IV. *The* IMPROVEMENT *of the success.* Threefold. (1) *A holding him fast*, so as not again to lose Him. 'I held Him, &c. That likely to be most carefully treasured and kept which has been once lost and found again. A believer not more known by finding Christ than by his care to keep Him when He is found. Care to be taken to retain a mercy as well as to obtain it. Care to retain Christ as precious in his sight as anxiety to obtain Him. And equally necessary. Enough in the world, the flesh, the devil, and the carnality of the 'daughters of Jerusalem,' to render such care necessary. (2) *An endeavour to make others partakers of the blessing.* Our mother's house to share the benefit of a found Christ. A living believer rejoicing in a found Christ, a blessing to a whole congregation. The found treasure not to be hid. 'Many shall see it, and fear and trust in the Lord.' 'Come and hear, All ye that fear God; and I will declare

what he hath done for my soul' (Ps. xl. 3; lxvi. 16). Our kindred not to be forgotten. 'Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee' (Mark v. 19). (3). *Watchfulness and resolution to guard against anything that might shorten Christ's fellowship and presence.* 'I charge you,' &c. Spiritual blessings to be held with a vigilant eye and a resolute hand. A cooling of first love sufficient to grieve a loving Saviour, and to endanger the continuance of the 'candlestick' (Rev. ii. 4, 5).

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# The Marriage Procession.

SCENE SECOND. **Place:** *A street in Jerusalem, with a royal Litter, guarded by a company of soldiers, seen in the distance.* **Speakers:** *Citizens of Jerusalem.*

CHAPTER III. 6—11. VERSES 6—8.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

Behold his bed, which is Solomon's:
Threescore valiant men are about it,
Of the valiant of Israel.
They all hold swords,
Being expert in war;
Every man hath his sword on his thigh,
Because of fear in the night.

THIRD CITIZEN.

King Solomon made himself a chariot
Of the wood of Lebanon;
He made the pillars thereof of silver,
The bottom thereof of gold,
The covering of it of purple,
The midst thereof being paved with love
For the daughters of Jerusalem.

The question probably asked by one citizen or company of citizens, and answered by another in reference to the Bridal Palanquin and Procession seen advancing towards Jerusalem from the country. Marriage processions in the East accompany the Bride on her way from her own dwelling to the house of the Bridegroom or his father; the Bride herself being concealed by a curtained canopy, called the *Huppah*, borne by four men holding it by a pole at each corner. The procession, accompanied by parties of musicians, generally occupies three or four hours or more, moving slowly, and taking a circuitous route for the sake of display, while aromatics are frequently burnt in honour of the occasion. When the procession is at night, it is to accompany the Bridegroom—usually to and from some house of prayer—and is then illuminated by torches or burning cressets, and other lights fixed at the top of poles, and carried by men on their shoulders, the inhabitants of the place usually pressing out into the streets to enjoy the sight. The name of Solomon connected in the context with the title of King, a sufficient indication that it is the marriage of Solomon, the king of Israel, that forms the picture or emblem in the allegory. His anticipated espousals with Shulamite now about to take place. The procession attracts the notice of the citizens of Jerusalem, who are able to discern it at a distance, and make their remarks to one another. 'Who (or what) is this,' &c.? The scene recalls the inquiry of the same citizens when Jesus, a few days before His crucifixion, made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, amid the acclamations of the multitude: 'Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord' (Luke xix. 38). 'All the city was moved, saying, Who is this? (Matt. xxi. 10). The inquiry in the text, and the description in reply to it, applicable rather to the Bridal Couch, Litter, or Palanquin, including at the same time the party conveyed in it. Exhibits, under various aspects, the Church or believer, as the

### Bride of Christ.

1. *Coming up from the wilderness.* Believers chosen out of the world. *In* it, but no longer *of* it. Like Israel, the typical and Old Testament Bride, coming up out of Egypt and the wilderness to Canaan. A wilderness between the Bride of Christ and

her heavenly home. While others take up their abode in it, the Bride makes her way out of it. The mark of Christ's Bride that she seeks 'a better country,' has her 'conversation (or citizenship) in heaven,' and sets her 'affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God' (Heb. xi. 16; Phil. iii. 20; Col. iii. 1).

2. *Perfumed.* Believers possessed of a two-fold perfume: (1) The *merits of the Bridegroom.* Made accepted in the Beloved. Christ made to those who are in Him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, as well as redemption (1 Cor. i. 30). Christ Himself the divine merchant, from whom the heavenly aromatics are to be obtained. 'I counsel thee to buy of Me.' 'Buy without money and without price.' The Lord well pleased 'for *His* righteousness sake.' The 'much incense' added to the prayers of believers by the Angel of the Covenant, who presents them to the Father (Rev. viii. 3). Believers wrapped in the perfumed garments of their Elder Brother, and so obtain the blessing (Gen. xxvii. 15, 27). (2) *The graces of the Spirit.* Those who are Christ's possess His Spirit. Have put on Christ. Receive out of His fulness grace for grace. Believers made fragrant both to God and man by the fruits of the Spirit produced in them—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, &c. (Gal. v. 22, &c.). The works of faith and services of love performed by believers through the Holy Spirit in them, a sweet smelling savour to the Lord (Phil. iv. 18). The spiritual perfume that anointed the King shed also upon His Bride (Ps. cxxxiii. 2).

3. *On their way to the marriage Supper of the Lamb, and the home prepared for them by the Beloved.* Like Shulamite, on their way to the nuptials to be celebrated in the New Jerusalem, when the Bridegroom comes 'to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe' (2 Thes. i. 10). The heavenly Bridegroom gone to prepare a place for His Bride in His Father's house, and in due time to come again, and receive her to himself (John xiv. 2). Believers at His coming caught up to 'meet the Lord in the air,' and so are 'for ever with the Lord' (1 Thes. iv. 17). The public reception and presentation of them to the Father, as His Bride, to be followed by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7—9).

4. *A spectacle and object of interest to angels and men.* Into these things the angels desire to look. To principalities and powers in the heavenly places is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God (1 Pet. i. 12; Eph. iii. 10). Believers, living as such, the object of attention, if not of attraction, to the world around them. 'They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.' The remark of the heathen in reference to the early believers: See how these Christians love one another! The people 'magnified' the Pentecostal Church at Jerusalem, while unbelievers were afraid to 'join themselves unto them' (Acts iv. 13). Believers made conspicuous by their heavenly deportment, as far as they possess the spirit of their Master, and live in His fellowship. Spiritually-minded Christians a marvel and a mystery to their fellow men. 'Men wondered at.' Christian and Faithful passing through Vanity Fair, gazed and wondered at 'as outlandish men.' Believers, as such, unlike the world in their principles, practice, spirit, views, experiences, hopes. The difference, that between the flesh and the spirit. Believers, as such, both *un*known and *mis*known by the world (1 Cor. ii. 15; 1 John iii. 1). The Church of believers going up from the wilderness, compared to

## 'Pillars of Smoke.'

1. *Pillars or columns of smoke have an upward motion and tendency.* Their direction towards heaven, whither they are constantly ascending. So believers, risen with Christ, seek the things that are above. The part of a believer to have his affections, desires, aims, hopes, &c., on things above. 'Our conversation is in heaven. Their heart where their treasure is.

2. *Such columns seen at a considerable distance.* Believers a city set on a hill. Lights in the world. Men to be able to see their good works, so as thereby to glorify their Father in heaven. The world to be able to take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. 'Epistles of Christ known and read of all men.' The heavenward aims and heavenly life of believers, that which makes them most observed by a world which only 'minds earthly things.'

3. *Yet the foundation of these pillars invisible.* The smoke ascends from a fire which is unseen. In the Allegory, the smoke probably that ascending from the incense burned as the procession advanced. The source of a believer's spiritual and heavenly life hidden from the eyes of the world. That source Christ Himself, and the fire of His Spirit in the heart. 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' A hidden fire, kindled by the Holy Ghost, burns in the believer's heart. The smoke seen, but not its source.

4. *Such pillars constant and continuous in their ascent.* The believer's spiritual life and heavenward aim habitual and abiding. Not

existing for a day or a month, but through life. The path of the just as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. iv. 18). The believer no mere Sabbath-day saint. The mark of a false heart to serve God on Sundays, and the world during the rest of the week. Believers not heavenly in the Church, and earthly in the ball-room. A man known not by what he is sometimes, and by fits and starts, but what he is habitually. A Christian discovered, not by temporary feelings or spasmodic acts, but by the even tenour of his way (John viii. 31).

5. *Yet their ascent not always uniform and undisturbed.* The column of smoke always ascending, yet subject to agitation and disturbance from the wind. The spiritual life of a believer not always alike, either in appearance or experience. Subject to disturbing influences, both from within and without. Such influence, natural corruption; the daily trials and temptations of life; the unwearied efforts of an invisible enemy. The work of a believer's life to guard his spirit against these influences, and to preserve the heavenward tendency of his thoughts and affections, and the heavenly character of his temper and conduct.

### Solomon's Bed or Bridal Palanquin.

*'Behold his bed, which is Solomon's, &c.*

The 'bed,' litter, sedan or palanquin, probably the same as the 'chariot' described in the subsequent verses. Prepared by Solomon for himself; that is, for the conveyance of his Bride from her father or mother's house to his own, where the nuptials were to be celebrated; and perhaps for the conveyance of himself on the same occasion. Guarded, as became a royal marriage, by an escort of the king's select troops, to prevent either danger or disturbance by the way; especially as the journey required to be made, in part at least, during the night. May be viewed as emblematic of

### The Covenant of Grace,

as administered both in the Old and New Testament dispensations; in the former, through a system of typical ordinances, including a typical priesthood and a typical tabernacle and temple, (these last perhaps specially referred to by the 'bed' and 'chariot,' —the same, and yet in some respects different,) accompanied with a succession of inspired prophets; in the latter, by means of spiritual ordinances and various gifts of the Spirit, with the ministration of divinely instituted office-bearers, some extraordinary and temporary, as apostles and prophets; others ordinary and permanent, as evangelists, pastors and teachers. The Covenant itself, in substance, that made with Abraham: 'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Circumcision appointed to him and his natural male offspring, as the sign or token of the covenant; 'a seal of the righteousness which he had by faith;' afterwards, in the New Testament Church, replaced by the simpler rite of Baptism. The Covenant made with David: 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things; and sure' (2 Sam. xxiii. 5), offered to all in the Gospel: 'Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David' (Is. lv. 3). Proclaimed by Peter on and after Pentecost: 'The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.' 'Ye (Jews) are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed' (Acts ii. 39; iii. 25). Called a New Covenant, as under a new administration, and especially as distinguished from that made with Israel as a people at Mount Sinai. Promised as a New Covenent by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. xxxi. 31, &c.). The promise applied by Paul to the time subsequent to the death and ascension of Christ (Heb. viii. 4—13). The covenant sealed by the blood or death of Jesus. The cup in the Lord's Supper, symbolical of that blood, called by Himself the 'cup of the New Testament (or Covenant) in my blood.' Its special blessings,—divine teaching, pardon, adoption, and sanctification (Heb. viii. 10—12). Hence, called a better covenant, and established upon better promises than that made with Israel at Mount Sinai (Heb. viii. 6). Christ the Mediator and Surety of the Covenant (Heb. vii. 22; viii. 6; ix. 15; xii. 24). The covenant made with all who are saved, on their believing in Jesus and accepting the Gospel offer. Believers hence called 'Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal. iii. 29). Observe, in relation to the 'bed' or 'chariot'—

1. *It was made by Solomon himself.* 'Solomon made himself a chariot.' Christ the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace. The Covenant ratified and its blessings procured by His atoning death. The Covenant offered by Him in the Gospel, and made by Him with all who believe and accept of it (Is. lv. 3). The whole of its administration in the New Testament dispensation, with its ordinances, offices, and gifts, directly from Him as the

Church's Head (Eph. iv. 7—11; Matt. xxviii. 18—20; 1 Cor. 11, 23).

2. *Made by Solomon for himself.* 'Made himself a chariot.' The special object of it the comfortable conveyance of his Bride to her future home. The covenant of grace devised by a Triune God, the Son as well as the Father and the Spirit, for the salvation of the Church, given to the Son as His Bride. The ordinances, gifts, and offices, for the gathering in, building up, and perfecting of the redeemed (Eph. iv. 12; v. 25—28). Christ's glory connected with the salvation of His Church (John xvii. 1, 2).

3. *Well guarded.* The chariot, with the Bride in it, during its passage through the wilderness, accompanied by a chosen guard of military, well armed, and of dauntless courage, 'because of fear in the night.' 'The period of the Church's passage through this world to her heavenly home a time of 'night' —of darkness, danger, and discomfort. Hence placed by her divine Lord under the escort of an angelic guard. 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.' Angels that excel in strength,—'ascending and descending upon the Son of man,'—sent forth 'to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation' (Heb. i. 14; John i. 51). Hence the death of a persecuting Herod (Acts xii. 1—23). The Church placed also under the care of those to whom it is given to watch for their souls 'as those that must give account' (Heb. xiii. 17). Such set for the defence of the Gospel, that its truth may continue with the Church in its purity and integrity, and by the skilful use of the 'sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,' to contend earnestly 'for the faith once delivered unto the saints' (Phil. i. 17; Gal. ii. 5; Jude 3).

4. *Worthy of its author and object.* 'Made of the wood of Lebanon'—cedar, both durable and fragrant. Its 'pillars of silver,' supporting the canopy at its four corners. Its 'bottom,'—seat for reclining on, or back for leaning against,—of gold. Its 'covering' or hangings, of purple or scarlet. Its 'midst,' or bottom, paved with love, for (or by) the daughters of Jerusalem,'—covered with a carpet, probably adorned with embroidered love-emblems and mottoes, the work of the hands of the Ladies of the Court.—The Covenant of Grace an 'everlasting covenant.' The ordinances by which it is administered, for perpetual observance till the Lord's second appearing. His presence with His Church and servants in the administration of it, 'even unto the end of the world.' The Lord's Supper to be observed until He Himself shall come. The ordinances of the Old Testament dispensation having a temporary design, superseded by those of the New, when that design had been accomplished. The tabernacle and temple with their furniture, distinguished, like the 'chariot,' for their durable materials (including cedar), and the gold and silver of which they were composed; the veil of 'blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen' (that of the temple also adorned with embroidered cherubims), and the covering of the tabernacle of 'rams' skins dyed red,' overlaid with badgers' skins,—all figures of 'good things to come,' of which divine 'love' is the beginning, middle, and end (John iii. 16; Eph. v. 25, &c.).

No journeying to heaven for sinful men but in this chariot of love. Every portion of the blood-bought Bride of Christ brought into it through the knowledge and belief of the truth which it is designed to proclaim. A place in it offered by Christ to every sinner through the voice of the Bride whom it conveys (Rev. xxii. 17). The chariot passes by wherever the Gospel is preached, with an invitation even to the chief of sinners to accept of Jesus as their Saviour, Bridegroom, and King, and to enter it as a portion of His Bride. Unspeakable blessing to have a place in this Bridal chariot of the King of Kings. Terrible consequences of slighting the invitation (Heb. ii. 3).

### The Royal Marriage.

#### Verse 11.

Citizens, *calling to the Women of Jerusalem.*

Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion,
And behold King Solomon;
With the crown wherewith his mother crowned him;
In the day of his espousals,
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

The bridal procession now supposed to have entered the city, and to be either passing along the street, or to have arrived at the palace. The language sufficiently indicative that the royal marriage is now taking place in the poem, or about to do so. That marriage the point to which the previous events in the Song were preparatory steps. This verse, therefore, to be regarded as the central part of the poem. The king exhibited as already wearing the nuptial crown or chaplet, such a crown being worn in the East by the bridegroom as well as the bride, and usually placed on his head by his mother, if still surviving. The royal marriage naturally an object of special interest and attraction to the citizens, more particularly the king himself, its central figure.

The espousals of Israel's king with Shulamite a picture of the marriage of the Lord Jesus Christ with His Church at His second coming, when His Bride shall have 'made herself ready' (Rev. xix. 7). On that infinitely solemn and glorious day of the King's espousals, those who 'have fallen asleep,' but whose already perfected spirits shall come with Him to be reunited to their raised and glorified bodies, as well as those who shall be 'alive and remain to His coming,' being 'in a moment' changed and glorified without tasting of death, shall be 'caught up to meet the Lord in the air,' and to go with Him into the new Jerusalem to be presented to His Father and their Father, and to sit down together at the 'Marriage Supper of the Lamb,' and so to be 'for ever with the Lord' (1 Thess. iv. 14—17; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; Rev. xix. 7—9). The most prominent figure in the whole transcendently glorious scene, and the object attracting the eyes of men and angels, will naturally be Christ Himself as

**The Royal Bridegroom;**

here exhibited under the name and title of one of his most distinguished Old Testament types, King Solomon. Observe—

1. *Christ will appear at His second coming in the character of* KING. His title exhibited 'on His vesture, and on His thigh:' KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS. Never till then fully manifested in this character. The dignity claimed for Himself at Pilate's bar, but denied Him by His own subjects, or those who ought to have been such. His title virtually and practically denied by the world, and, to a great extent, by the professing Church, who say by their spirit and their lives: 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' The scene indicated in the text faintly foreshadowed by the Saviour's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. (Matt. xxi. 9; Luke xix. 38).

2. *Christ will especially appear as* KING SOLOMON. 'Solomon' derived from a word denoting 'peace.' His reign a reign of peace. The sword, always drawn in the reign of David his father, slept in its scabbard during that of Solomon. Jesus the Prince of Peace. Himself our peace. The 'Man' who should be 'the peace.' Has made peace by His blood. His birth celebrated by angels as inaugurating 'peace on earth.' That peace, however, never fully enjoyed on and by the earth, till He ascends the Throne 'at His appearing and His Kingdom.' Till then His Kingly character represented by David the 'man of war,' rather than by Solomon the Peaceful. His followers now called to fight as 'good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Only then called to sit down and feast as his Bride at the 'Marriage Supper of the Lamb.'

3. *Christ will appear at His second coming in the character of a* ROYAL BRIDEGROOM Solomon's crown 'wherewith his mother crowned him,' neither a political, nor a martial, but a nuptial crown. This crown put on his head not by priest or potentate, but by 'his mother.' Worn by him not on a state occasion, or on a day of triumph, but on the day of his espousals. The period indicated, that of the public espousals of Christ with His saved Church on the day of His glorious appearing. That period, however, preceded by two secret and mystical espousals which may be blended with those public ones; namely, His crucifixion, when His human mother, in the person of the soldiers, placed on His head the crown of thorns; and the sinner's conversion to Christ and open avowal of Him as his Lord and King. His believing people presented unto Him at His coming as a chaste virgin, having been previously espoused to Him as their husband (2 Cor. xi. 2). The time to which Paul looked forward as the goal of his hopes in connection with his labours in the Gospel (1 Thess. ii. 19). Every saved soul a flower in Christ's bridal chaplet; or rather a part of the Bride herself. Saved souls the crown of those who had been the instruments in their salvation; much more to Christ Himself, who redeemed and saved them. The crown, therefore, placed on His head by His spiritual mother, the Church in which He Himself was born; in joyful compensation for the crown of thorns with which His natural mother, or humanity, crowned Him in the day of His deep humiliation and sorrow. Every act of faith and love by believing souls, a step towards Christ's coronation. Before conversion, we put the crown on our own heads; after conversion, we put it on Christ's.

4. *Christ's second appearing the 'day of the gladness of His heart.'* The day of the Bridegroom's greatest joy that on which He receives His Bride (Is. lxii. 5). That day looked forward to by Christ in the midst of His sufferings as 'the joy that was set before Him,' for which He willingly 'endured the cross, despising the shame' (Heb. xii. 3). That day the climax of His joy. His loving heart rejoiced even in the day of His humiliation, when He found the lost sheep and laid it on His shoulders. Much more in the day of His exaltation, when He has all the sheep safely and for ever with Himself at home (Luke xv. 56). The day when He presents to His Father all that had been given to Him to save, saying, 'Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me'

(Heb. ii. 13). That day the joyous harvest after the seed-time of sorrow and anguish He endured on earth. The compensating fruit of the pain He suffered, the tears He shed, and the blood He gave for the redemption of His Bride. To the joy of that day every single conversion now contributes; and accordingly, every faithful and loving effort put forth by His people for such conversion. The seed sown now in tears, then reaped in joy.

5. *The day of Christ's appearing and espousals a day of intense interest to the Church and to the world.* The daughters of Zion called to 'go forth and behold King Solomon,' with his nuptial crown' in the day 'of his espousals.' When Christ comes in the clouds as the Royal Bridegroom of His Church, 'every eye shall see Him' (Rev. i. 7). The joy of all joys to behold Him on that day as our own Bridegroom (Is. xxv. 9). The sorrow of all sorrows to see Him as the Bridegroom whom we continued to despise and reject (Rev. vi. 14—17).

The day of Christ's public espousals and of 'the gladness of His heart' fast hastening on. Eighteen centuries ago the Bridegroom left the promise with His expectant Bride: 'Surely I come quickly' (Rev. xxii. 20). His parting word not yet fulfilled. The Bride not yet ready. The number of His elect not yet accomplished. The Gospel of the kingdom not yet preached for a witness to all nations. Yet the time may be near. The Gospel never so widely preached as now. In a short time all nations will have heard it. The last vessel of mercy probably ere long gathered in, when the Bride shall have made 'herself ready.' A very short time and the cry may be heard, arousing a sleeping world and a slumbering Church: 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.'

## PART THIRD.

# The Marriage Feast.

CHAPTER IV. 1—16, TO V. 1.

SCENE FIRST. **Place:** *Bridal Apartment in Solomon's Palace.* **Speakers:** *The King and Shulamite.*

THE KING,

*Expressing his Admiration of and Delight in his Bride.*

CHAP. IV. 1—7.

Behold, thou art fair, my love;
Behold, thou art fair.
Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks.
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That appear from Mount Gilead.

Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn;
Which come up from the washing;
Whereof every one beareth twins;
And none is barren among them.

Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet;
And thy speech is comely.
Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate,
Within thy locks (or, 'behind thy veil').

Thy neck is like the tower of David,
Builded for an armoury;
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,
All shields of mighty men.

Thy two breasts are like two young roes
That are twins,
Which feed among the lilies.

Until the day break,
And the shadows flee away,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
And to the hill of frankincense.

Thou art all fair, my love;
There is no spot in thee.

Shulamite not now merely a betrothed, but a married wife. Hence in this chapter, for the first time, called by Solomon, 'My spouse.' Her veil removed in the bridal apartment, Solomon surveys her beauty, and contemplates her person with intense delight. *Spiritually*, the Church, or individual believer, still regarded as on earth, but in an advanced stage of experience as compared with that of the preceding chapters. *Historically*, the New Testament Church, or the Church after Pentecost, indicated; the crucifixion and death of Jesus, followed by His resurrection and ascension, being regarded as the nuptials. In reference to individual believers, the present part of the Allegory may be viewed as descriptive of the time when they have made the public and solemn profession of their acceptance of and self-dedication to Jesus, by sitting down at His table, and receiving that seal of the Covenant and pledge of His love.

The text, Solomon's previous commendation of the Bride now repeated with considerable enlargement and particularity. Formerly, only her dove-like eyes commended and admired. Now all her features, as well as the upper parts of her person—her hair, neck, and breasts. Observe—

1. *A growth of grace in believers.* The path of the just as the shining light. Believers changed from glory to glory. Beautiful in Christ's eyes here; much more so hereafter. Heaven the place of just men made perfect.

2. *Periods of special advancement in the history of the Church and of individual believers.* A great advance in holiness and grace in the Church of the New Testament after the day of Pentecost, as compared with that of the Old Testament. A similar advance to be experienced in the Millenial Church as compared with the Church in its present state. The light of the moon made to be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun as the light of seven days (Is. xxx. 26). A great increase of grace often visible in the case of a believer after a solemn and public dedication of himself to the Lord, and a sealing of the Covenant at the Lord's Table. Believers frequently sensible of a considerable advance in grace, and of an elevation of their spiritual life to a higher level. Such elevations often preceded by painful trials, deep soul-exercises, and renewed conviction of sin. Much higher attainments in grace to be gained than are ordinarily arrived at. Such attainments to be earnestly desired and sought after. Provision made for them. 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' 'Be ye filled with the Spirit' (Ps. lxxxi. 10; Eph. v. 18).

3. *The highest delight of Jesus in the spiritual beauty and perfection of His Church and people.* 'Forget thine own people and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty' (Ps. xlv. 10). 'The Lord in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing' (Zeph. iii. 17). Christ's joy fulfilled in the spiritual prosperity and perfection of His people. The description of the Bride's beauty in the text a climax, indicative of the joy of the Bridegroom—his affection kindling as he contemplates the object of his love. Commences with: 'Thou art fair;' and ends with: 'Thou art all fair; there is no spot in thee.'

4. *The believer's love, as expressed in the 'eyes,' her main attraction in the view of Christ.* The Bride's dove-like eyes the first feature described, and the only one previously mentioned. The eyes the expression of the soul, and especially of the tender emotions. Doves distinguished for their affection, especially to their mates. Hence, 'doves' eyes' particularly expressive of the affection of a loving Bride. The believer's eyes such; as being meekly and lovingly directed to Christ as His Bridegroom.

5. *The beauty and excellence of the believer in Christ's eyes made up of a variety of particulars.* Seven here mentioned, as perhaps indicative of the believer's perfection. Not necessary exactly to fix the spiritual reference of each, though desirable to find the corresponding grace in the believer's character. The various particulars that constitute the spiritual beauty and excellence of the believer scattered up and down in the Scriptures. Sometimes brought together in a cluster, as in the text. So in Gal. v. 22; 2 Pet. i. 5; Phil. iv. 8; Col. iii. 12. These particulars all seen combined in their perfection in the person of Christ Himself. The believer's duty and interest to see that none of these features in the spiritual character are wanting or defective in him. Symmetry, proportion, and completeness necessary to the perfection of the Christian character.

6. *The comparisons in the description not all equally obvious, though equally suitable.* Their aptness more obvious and natural to an Oriental than a European reader. That aptness seen more in the general impression than in the particular resemblance. Beautiful and striking things in the person of a beloved one compared in the East by an ardent admirer, or by a writer of poetry, to other beautiful and striking things, where only a general or distinct resemblance might exist. The Bride's breasts thus compared to 'two twin fawns' feeding among 'lilies' or in a flowery mead; the prominent idea

being probably that of love and conjugal enjoyment (Prov. v. 19). Her fair neck, with its jewelled and golden ornaments, suggestive, in the eyes of Solomon, of the lofty marble 'tower' erected by his father David, with the glittering 'shields' of warriors suspended on its walls as indicative of the nation's strength; thus conveying the idea of moral firmness, dignity, and purity in the Bride. Her black tresses—a prominent feature in Oriental female beauty—suggestive, to those accustomed to the pastoral scenes of Judæa, of 'a flock of goats,' with their long, dark, glossy hair, seen at a distance browsing on the mountain side; suggesting to *us*, however, the true ornament, not only of the female but of the Christian character in general—that 'of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price' (1 Pet. iii. 3). The Bride's 'lips' compared to a 'thread of scarlet,' as, while beautiful in themselves, suggesting a still greater charm,—the sweetness and comeliness of her 'speech,' as expressive of a pure, affectionate, and intelligent soul, and rendering her a meet companion for an enlightened husband; a prominent feature in a spiritual believer being that his 'speech' is 'with grace, seasoned with salt;' able to 'minister grace to the hearers;' and that 'no corrupt communication' is allowed to proceed out of his mouth, but 'that which is good to the use of edifying' (Col. iv. 6; Eph. iv. 29) The whole presence of the Bride suggests to the admiring husband a 'mountain of myrrh' and a 'hill of frankincense,' where all is fragrant, sweet, and delightful: what the pure-minded and loving wife is to her husband, and what the Church and the believer's soul is, or ought to be, to Christ.

7. *Christ's great enjoyment in the grace and fellowship of His believing people.* The Bridegroom, after surveying and admiring Shulamite's unveiled charms, with the delightful consciousness that she is now all his own, resolves, for her comfort as well as his own, duly to enjoy her society and love. 'Till the dawn and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,' &c. The 'mountain of myrrh' to Jesus is not so much the 'quiring Seraphim' and the angels of light, as 'his people, whom he has redeemed with his most precious blood,' whether these be triumphant in heaven or still militant on earth. 'This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it' (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14). His place of enjoyment is among the 'golden candlesticks,' or Churches of the saints (Rev. ii. 1).

8. *Christ's presence in and with His Church promised during the whole of her stay in this world.* That period, one of *night*—of darkness, danger, and discomfort (Rom. xiii. 12). His second coming to His Church, the dawning of a bright and never-ending day. Till then His presence promised both to believers individually and to their assemblies convened in His name. (John xiv. 23; Matt xviii. 20). His promise to His servants and people in connection with the great commission: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world' (Matt. xxviii. 20). The words of the text those of Jesus at the Supper Table in the upper room at Jerusalem: 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you' (John xiv. 18), Specimens of the fulfiment of the promise given immediately after His resurrection (John xx. 16—28; Luke xxiv. 15—32; Acts i. 4).

9. *The Church, both in its individual members and in its assemblies and ordinances, made a 'mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense' by the person of Jesus Himself.* No fragrance or sweetness apart from Himself. 'Thy name is as ointment poured forth.' All His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Ordinances themselves insipid without Christ. Believers 'stale and unprofitable,' but as they have Christ dwelling in them by His Spirit. Christ the 'bundle of myrrh' that sweetens both the believer's spirit and the Church's ordinances. The care and concern of Churches and believers to be constantly, by the presence of Jesus and His Spirit, a mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense.

10. *If the Church on earth is made by the presence of Jesus a 'mountain of myrrh and a hill of frankincense, what shall heaven be?'*

### THE BRIDEGROOM'S INVITATION.

(Verse 8.)

Come with me from Lebanon,
My spouse, with me from Lebanon;
Look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Shenir and Hermon,
From the lions' dens,
From the mountains of leopards.

The King intimates to his beloved that he has a better place of residence prepared for her than that which had hitherto been her home; that it was his desire that she should soon accompany him to it; and that in the meantime she should withdraw her affections from her former abode. Her previous home is represented as being in Mount Lebanon with its snow-capped heights, either really, or in a locality thus poetically named. Lebanon, in its higher regions, with its adjacent peaks of Amana, Shenir or

Sirion, and Hermon, mentioned as a place both of danger and discomfort, notwithstanding the pleasant spots found in its valleys and lower slopes. The text the language of tenderest affection. For the first time Shulamite called by the King 'my spouse.' The marriage viewed as now having taken place. The Bridegroom's earnest desire to have his Bride always with him. His care that she should be with him in a place of comfort and security. Wishes her to leave those cold bleak mountains, the haunts of the lion and the panther; but to do so with the aid and protection of his arm and the solace of his company.

The text may be viewed as corresponding with the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3). Observe, in reference to the Bridegroom's

### Call from Lebanon,

I. *The* CALL *itself.* 'Come with me,' &c. To be viewed as a Call—

1. *To leave the world in heart and affection.* The world, in its present state of apostasy and rebellion, here represented by Lebanon and its snowy peaks. This the believer's native home. The place where he is born and brought up. Christ's Bride originally *of* the world as well as *in* it. 'Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past' (Eph. ii. 3; Tit. iii. 3). This world, in its present state, however, not to be the home of Christ's Bride. A place prepared for her in His Father's house. The world is to believers—(1) A place of *discomfort.* Like Lebanon with its bleak and barren rocks, and its cold snowy heights. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.' (2) A place of *danger.* Lebanon a place of lions' dens. 'Your adversary, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' 'My soul is among lions—the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows' (1 Pet. v. 8; Ps. lvii. 4). (3) Yet a place *not without attractions.* Lebanon adorned with some of the loveliest spots in nature. The world, even in its fallen state, possessed of many attractions which might entangle the affections of Christ's Bride—'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life' (1 John ii. 16). The call in the text, not to leave the world as to bodily presence, but in *heart and affection.* This, perhaps, indicated in the parallel clause: 'Look from the top of Amana,' &c. Withdraw your thoughts and affections from those rugged heights to your better home. 'Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest.' 'Seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.' 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world' (Mic. ii. 10; Col. iii. 1, 2; 1 John ii. 15). The Bride to forget her own people and her father's house (Ps. xlv. 11). Believers to look not at the things which are seen and temporal; but at those which are unseen and eternal (2 Cor. iv. 18). This world not be viewed as our home, but as an inn where we tarry for a night. Believers, while here, only strangers and pilgrims, journeying to their own country. Their home in the better land, the heavenly Canaan, the new Jerusalem, the city that hath foundations. Their language to be that of the pilgrim in reference to the cities which he passed on his way to Jerusalem—"very beautiful; but this is not Jerusalem."

2. To leave it in *life and practice.* Believers not to be 'conformed to this world, but transformed,' by the renewing of their mind. Though *in* the world, not to be *of* it. 'Be ye not, therefore, like unto them.' Believers to be as strangers in this world in *life and practice,* as well as in heart and affection. Christian and Faithful represented as passing through Vanity Fair without buying any of its wares, or even so much as pricing them. Gazed at in the Fair as 'outlandish men.' Their only answer: 'We buy the truth.' Paul's testimony, in the name of believers—'Our conversation (life or citizenship) is in heaven.' Believers to act and comport themselves in this world as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, to which they belong (Phil. iii. 20).

3. To leave it as to its *friendship and society.* Too great a difference between believers and the men of the world to admit of cordial friendship and society. 'We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness' (or 'in the Wicked One') (1 John v. 19). 'How can two walk together except they be agreed?' 'Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath light with darkness? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate' (2 Cor. vi. 14—17). 'The friendship of this world is enmity with God: whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God' (James iv. 4). The believer's proper language: 'I am a companion of all them that fear thee.' 'My goodness extendeth not unto thee; but unto the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.' 'I have not sat with vain persons: I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the

wicked.' 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God' (Ps. xvi. 2; xxvi. 4, 5; cxix. 115). Men known by the company they keep. Peter and John, 'being let go, went unto their own company.' 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another' (Mal. iii. 16; Acts iv. 23).

The believer's life a daily coming 'from Lebanon.' 'If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.' Believers, being redeemed from this present evil world, to take heed lest they be 'again entangled in the yoke of bondage.' Need the daily prayer: 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' Their standing caution: 'Remember Lot's wife.'

4. To leave the world *at death.* The comfort of believers that they have to leave this world, not merely in heart and affection, in life and practice, and in respect to its friendship and society, but also, in due time, in actual bodily presence. A better home provided for them. Their happiness in being where their Husband is. The death-call to them only their Bridegroom's voice: 'Arise, my Love, my Fair One, and come away.' To the believer, the passage to the tomb no Dolorous Way. Sense sings a dirge at the grave; faith, a Hallelujah. A believer enters his sepulchre through pearly gates. Not deadly nightshade, but roses and lilies line the path to it. It is the last step in the journey home, or rather the actual arrival at it. The funeral bell may toll its slow and solemn strokes on earth, but cheerful peals are rung in heaven. The pardoned soul's desire now granted: 'I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. To me to die is gain.' 'I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord.' 'Now, Lord, lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.'

5. To leave the world *at the Lord's Second Coming.* Till then, a part of the Bride always still in Lebanon. The bodies also of those whose spirits are with Christ in Paradise still in the earth. The final call to come from Lebanon given at last. 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust,' uttered by the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. The Lord Himself descends from heaven with a shout that echoes through the mansions of the dead. They that sleep in Jesus, joining the living and now glorified saints, ascend to meet Him in the air. The Church's blessed hope at last accomplished. The Bride's last recorded prayer on earth now answered. The Bridegroom's last loving promise now fulfilled—'Surely I come quickly.'

II. *The character of the* JOURNEY. 'Come with me from Lebanon.' The journey from Lebanon and its snow-capped heights neither easy nor safe. Its rugged paths, steep precipices, and ferocious animals, sufficient to render the descent both painful and perilous to the bride. A picture of the believer's passage from this world, the place of his nativity, to the home prepared for him in the Father's house. Manifold temptations often mingling heaviness with our joy. Much tribulation the way to the kingdom. Persecution promised to all who will live godly in Christ Jesus. The world's hatred in proportion to their faithfulness to their Master and to their character as the Bride of Christ. Their adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, going about and seeking whom he may devour. Principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, leagued to obstruct or annoy their passage. A carnal mind and evil heart of unbelief still lingering within themselves. The flesh lusting against the spirit, and its lusts warring in their members. The flesh weak to what is good, even when the spirit is willing. Need for constant watchfulness and prayer. The foot easily slipping, and the consequence a bruising fall. Broken bones not unfrequent in the descent from Lebanon. Noah, David, and Peter, humbling examples. No easy matter to walk safely down the rugged steeps. Difficult so to keep ourselves that that Wicked One touch us not. Not easy to break with a world lying in wickedness, and to pass through it unscathed. Faithful made a victim in Vanity Fair, and Christian well nigh the same. Not easy to pass through pollution without being soiled; to travel through an enemy's country without getting into trouble; or to walk among gins and pits without making a fall. Constant need for the prayer: 'Hold thou me up, that my footsteps slip not. Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust.' Death, too, in the journey from Lebanon. A passage from which poor human nature instinctively recoils. To us an unknown and naturally a formidable road. Beset also with spiritual adversaries. Not unfrequently accompanied with acute and prolonged suffering. The taking down of the tabernacle not always a smooth or easy process. The presence of earthly friends often of little avail. The roughest and dreariest part of the passage, perhaps, to be travelled alone. Sometimes the pathway tracked with blood. Lies at times through torture, the scaffold, and the stake. The path at first too rugged even for a Cranmer. The prayer in the Burial Service not entirely needless: 'Suffer us not, in our last hour, for any pains of death to fall from thee.'

III. *The* COMFORT *and* AID *in the journey.* Indicated in the two little words: 'With me.' These precious words repeated, to call special attention to what they imply, to confirm their truth, and to indicate their importance. An argument to induce compliance with the Call. The Bridegroom's society preferable to the Bride beyond that of all others. Who would remain among lions and panthers when they can have the fellowship of the king? No great loss to leave the cold bleak heights of Lebanon to be with the heavenly Bridegroom. A twofold blessing implied in the words—(1) The everlasting presence of Christ after the journey is over; (2) His company and support all the way through. The descent from Lebanon made safe and comfortable to the Bride by the Bridegroom's presence. Precious to believers to know that they are not called to leave the world, whether in heart and affection, or in life and practice, or in bodily presence, alone and unaided. The presence and aid of the Friend 'that sticketh closer than a brother,' promised in every trying, difficult, and dangerous passage of life, as well as in the last dark valley. 'Fear not, for I am with thee.' 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest in the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.' Hence the triumphant language of faith: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise up against me, in this will I be confident.' 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me' (Ps. xxiii. 4; xxvii. 1, 2).

"The soul that on Jesus hath lean'd for repose,
He will not, he cannot desert to its foes.
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
He'll never, no *never*, no NEVER, forsake."

The presence of Jesus with the believer in his descent 'from Lebanon' on the way to his future home—(1) For *comfort.* The company of a friend a solace in a difficult and dangerous journey. (2) For *aid and protection.* The Bridegroom's arm employed to support and defend, as well as His voice to solace and cheer. 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved?' The grace of Jesus sufficient for the most difficult duties, the strongest temptations, and the most painful trials. His strength made perfect in our weakness. Hence faith's language: 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' (3) For *example.* The Bridegroom has descended from Lebanon before us. Points us to His steps as He came down its difficult and rugged steeps. 'He hath left us an example that we should walk in His steps.' 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.' (1 Pet. ii. 21; Heb. xii. 2).

The promise indicated in the words 'with me,' applicable to the believer's death, as well as his life. His presence with them also in that final, solemn, and untried journey. Joseph sent his servants and waggons to convey his father to Egypt. Jesus not only sends His angelic servants to fetch His Bride and escort her through the darksome valley, but comes Himself. Not only makes a passage for them through the dark swelling waters of death, but, like the Ark in Jordan, is with them Himself in the passage. Seen by Stephen on the eve of martyrdom, not sitting as usual, but standing at the right hand of God, as if risen up to be with His faithful servant in the last great conflict, and to give him a loving welcome when it was over. The footsteps of Jesus seen also in that last dark passage. The Bridegroom Himself trod the pathway to the tomb. Encountered death in its most formidable aspect. Passed through the valley in excruciating pain, amid jeers of men and assaults from Satan, and in a bath of blood. Travelled the last hours of His life in loneliness, darkness, and desertion of soul. Has lain in the tomb a lifeless corpse before us. The grave made by His presence there a perfumed bed to all His followers.

Important questions: Have I Jesus with me for my comfort and aid in going through this world? Shall I have His presence in death? Have I heard and obeyed His call to come with Him *now*? Am I taking up my cross daily, and following Him? Have I given up the world, or am I still making it my home? We come *to* Christ as sinners, before we come *with* Him as saints. Have I done this? Reader, if not, lose no time; but do it *now.*

### THE KING HAPPY IN HIS BRIDE.

Verses 9—15.

Thou hast ravished my heart,
My sister, my spouse;
Thou hast ravished my heart,
With one of thine eyes,
With one chain of thy neck.

How fair is thy love,
My sister, my spouse!
How much better is thy love than wine;
And the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

Thy lips, O my spouse,
Drop as the honeycomb;
Honey and milk are under thy tongue;
And the smell of thy garments
Is like the smell of Lebanon.

A garden enclosed
Is my sister, my spouse;
A spring shut up
A fountain sealed.

Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates,
With pleasant fruits;
Camphire with spikenard,
Spikenard and saffron,
Calamus and cinnamon,
With all trees of frankincense;
Myrrh and aloes,
With all the chief spices.

A fountain of gardens,
A well of living waters,
And streams of Lebanon.

The climax of the King's admiration of, and delight in, his Bride. Realization of the words of the forty-fifth Psalm, the Song of Loves: 'So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.' The happy Bridegroom had already described the charms of his Bride; he now declares, in the language of impassioned affection, the effect which these produced upon him: 'Thou hast ravished my heart.' Literally 'Thou hast hearted me.' A new word coined to show the intensity of Christ's love to and delight in His believing people. Christ's heart in the possession of the loving believer. His love to His people that of the most ardent lover; yet calm, deep, and holy His Church His peculiar treasure. (Ex. xiv. 5). The King, in addressing his Bride, combines terms expressive of the nearest and tenderest relations, each supplementary to the other. 'My sister, my spouse;' or, 'my sister spouse.' Names of nearest kindred employed in the East as terms of affection. These combined terms immediately afterwards repeated by the King in order to indicate the reality of the relationship, the intensity of his affection, and his delight in employing the title. The believer not to forget that he belongs to Christ, both as his Brother and his Bridegroom. Is at once both the sister and the spouse of Jesus. His *sister*, as having the same Father and the same nature; Christ assuming the believer's human nature and imparting to him His Divine one. His *spouse*, as now united in a marriage-bond with Himself, having been betrothed by Him in an everlasting covenant (Hos. ii. 19; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Rom. vii. 4). In the believer the ardour of a spouse's love combined with the purity of a sister's. Typified in Eve, at once the sister and the spouse of Adam. The ardour of Christ's love to His people grounded—(1) On the relation in which they stand to Him as the Bride given Him by the Father. (2) On the fact that, as His Bride, He has brought them from the bondage of sin, Satan, and the curse of a broken law, by the price of His own agony and blood. (3) On the holy beauty which, as His blood-bought Bride, He imparts to them by the renewing and transforming grace of His Holy Spirit, more especially the beauty of their faith and love. What costs most, usually most beloved. The Shepherd rejoices most over the sheep which He had lost, but with much toil and trouble had found. A saved soul an addition to the happiness of heaven. The Saviour's joy bound up in the sinner whom He saves. The *grounds* of the King's admiration of and delight in his Bride, rapturously indicated by himself:—

1. Her *beauty*. More especially that of her 'eyes' and 'neck,' the one directed to himself in a tender affection, the other bowed in humility and self-surrender: 'Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.' One, as indicating the perfection of beauty and redundancy of charms beheld in the Bride. One believing penitent look of the sinner sufficient to secure the Saviour's love. (Zech. xii. 12). Christ overcome by the look of the Syro-Phœnician woman and of the dying thief. The Bride's eyes and neck contrasted with the wanton and adulterous eyes, and the stiff and stubborn neck of an impenitent world.

2. Her *love*. 'How fair is thy love,' &c. Literally 'loves,' as in chap. i., verse 4. Probably expressions and manifestations of love. The term and the comparison following formerly applied by the Bride to the King's love; now returned to her with tender emphasis. The love of the loved one the sweetest enjoyment of the lover. The love of the saved soul the joy and reward of the Saviour. The faith and love of the forgiven woman in the Pharisee's house, infinitely sweeter and more refreshing to Him than the wine on Simon's table, and even the precious ointment with which she anointed His feet. His wine-cup on the cross the love of a pardoned sinner.

3. Her *savoury spirit.* 'The smell of thine ointments is better than all spices.' The fragrance of her spirit properly her own ointments. This sweeter to the king than all the 'powders of the merchant' with which she might perfume her person. 'The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon,' celebrated for its odoriferous trees (Hos. xiv. 5, 7). Her garments properly her spirit and deportment. 'Be ye clothed with humility.' 'Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies.' 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' Garments, in the East, often richly perfumed, especially on marriage and other festive occasions. So those of the King Himself (Ps. xlv. 8). The 'ointments' both of the King and of the Bride the graces of the Spirit, imparted first to Christ, without measure, then to His members, 'according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' The precious ointment poured on the head of Aaron runs down upon the beard, 'even to the skirts of his garments' (Ps. cxxxiii. 2). The 'smell' of the Bride's garments, the sweetness of the actings and exercises of those graces. The part of believers, as having Christ and His Spirit in them, to carry about with them a spiritual fragrance, sweet to Christ and profitable to men.

4. Her *speech and conversation.* 'Thy lips, O my spouse drop as the honeycomb,' &c. An enlarged repetition of the commendation already given,—'Sweet is thy voice,' 'thy speech is comely.' Shulamite's speech the index of her soul. 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' A wife's sweet, savoury, enlightened conversation the delight of an intelligent husband. Especial attention paid by Christ to the speech of His people. 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard' (Mal. iii. 17). Believers to be of circumcised lips as well as heart. Their lips touched with the live coal from off the altar (Isa. vi. 4). The poison of asps is changed for the honey and milk of the Holy Spirit. Honey and milk under the tongue, when the milk of God's Word is in the heart. Christ's Word dwelling richly in us shows itself in sweet and wholesome conversation. The sweetest honey gathered from the flowers of Holy Scripture. To have honey dropping from our lips, we must have the honeycomb in our heart. The honey first under the tongue, then on it. Meditation on the Word the best means for speech that shall minister pleasure to Christ and 'grace to the hearers.'

5. On *her general excellence and beneficial influence.* This represented under four comparisons—(1.) *An Enclosed Garden.* 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse.' A garden a place for pleasure. An Oriental garden a scene of special beauty. A garden enclosed indicative of—(i.) Its preciousness; (ii.) The care taken of it; (iii.) Its preservation for the owner's exclusive enjoyment. The Church and each individual believer Christ's enclosed pleasure-garden. 'I will walk in them;' not merely *with* them. His Church the object of His special care. 'I, the Lord, will keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day' (Isa. xxvii. 3). Believers set apart for His own enjoyment. 'The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself' (Ps. iv. 3). The Church, as a garden, distinguished from the world. The world, apart from Christ's Church, a moral desert. That Church enclosed for its safety and defence. Safe, though surrounded by wild beasts and raging enemies. God Himself a wall of fire round about her (Zech. ii. 5). Believers 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' (2.) *A locked-up Spring and a sealed Fountain.* 'A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.' Such locked and sealed fountains frequently found in the East. The lock and seal indicate value, care, and exclusive use. The fountains thus kept from being dried up by the heat, defiled by animals, or employed by strangers. Springs and fountains especially valuable in the East. The special delight of Orientals during the heat of summer. Gardens and courts usually provided with them. The Church of living and loving souls a spring of delight to Christ, as He is to His people. 'I will sup with him and he with me.' The believer's heart shut up to all but Christ. The Bride exclusively for her husband (Prov. v. 15—18). Believers 'holiness to the Lord.' Their life hid with Christ in God. Sealed by the Holy Ghost to the day of redemption. The motto of the seal: 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' Under the Old dispensation the fountain sealed in one nation; under the New, spread over all the world. (3.) *An Orchard of fruit trees and spices.* 'Thy plants are an orchard,' &c., 'with pleasant fruits,' or 'fruit of excellence,' or 'precious things' (Deut. xxxiii. 13—16). 'Camphor,' cypress, or henna (chap. i. 14). 'Calamus,' or sweet cane (Jer. vi. 20; Exod. xxx. 23). 'Frankincense,' employed in the composition of the holy anointing oil (Exod. xxx. 34). 'Myrrh,' distilling from an Arabian shrub, and hardening into a gum. 'Aloes,' a costly and sweet-smelling wood; connected with myrrh also in Psalm xlv. 9; Proverbs vii. 17; John xix. 39. Solomon, familiar with orchards, fruit trees, and spices (Eccles. ii. 5), saw in these only a picture of the excellencies found in his beloved Shulamite. Such Christ's estimate of His Church. His Church to Him the antitype of Eden (Gen. ii. 8, 9). Believers 'trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.' Represented as olives and vines, palms and cedars, firs and myrtles. The Church collectively an orchard containing a variety of trees, and

each believer one containing a rich variety of Christian graces (Gal. v. 22). All the fruits of the Spirit found in believers in a greater or less degree of development. Their duty to cultivate each, and to seek its maturity. To 'abound in every good word and work' (Col. i. 9). To be 'filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.' To abound in every grace (2 Cor. viii. 7). The object for which Christ gave himself for His Church (Eph. v. 27; Tit. ii. 14. The Church and each believer to produce not only 'fruits,' but 'spices.' A believer's life, spirit and conversation, to be not only pure, holy, and upright, but sweet and savoury. Believers to exhibit not merely what is sterling and excellent, but also what is lovely and attractive. (4.) *A Fountain sending forth refreshing and fertilizing streams.* 'A fountain of gardens' — by which gardens are watered, hence affording an abundant supply (Jer. xxxi. 12; Isa. lviii. 11). 'A well of living waters'—always full and always flowing. 'Streams from Lebanon'—such as those in the Zebdani Valley, or the 'Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus,' fed by the snows of Lebanon (Jer. xviii. 14). The Bride in one sense a 'sealed fountain;' in another a fountain sending forth its streams for the general benefit (Prov. v. 15, 16). The virtuous woman not only the confidence and joy of her husband, but kind to all, and the benefactor of the poor (Prov. xxxi. 11, 12, 20, 26). The Church, while the delight of Christ, a blessing to others. Christ, the fountain of living waters, makes the believer a well of living water by being in him. The Holy Spirit in believers as a well of living water (John iv. 14). Renders them a means of life, strength, and comfort to others. Believers not only recipients of the living water, but channels for the communication of it to their fellow men and fellow Christians (John vii. 38). Made receivers in order to be givers. Receive the manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit of others (1 Cor. xi. 7). Believers to be refreshed by one another (Philemon 7, 20). To comfort and edify one another. One believer like Harlan Page, the means of life and blessing to a whole neighbourhood. The Church the means of spiritual verdure and fruitfulness to the world at large. Through Christian missions, the desert made to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Believers watered themselves while watering others, and in order that they may do so (Prov. ix. 25). 'Living water' indicative of (i.) the *perpetuity;* (ii.) the *excellence;* (iii.) the *wholesomeness;* (iv.) the *exhaustless nature,* of Christ's grace. The voice or breath of prayer the first bubbling up of the 'well of living water' (Acts ix. 11). Grace in a believer makes him as

### Streams from Lebanon.

The streams visible; their source hidden from human view. What is good, holy, and spiritually beneficial, communicated by Christ through His Spirit to the believer, and from the believer to the world. Grace in the Church exhibited as 'streams.' Indicative of—(i.) the *fulness;* (ii.) the *freeness;* (iii.) the *liveliness;* (iv.) the *beauty;* (v.) the *abundance;* (vi.) the *refreshing nature*—of Christ's grace. The 'streams from Lebanon' in the Zebdani Valley, among the most beautiful things in nature, and making all beautiful in their neighbourhood. The most beautiful as well as the most beneficial things in Creation employed by Christ to set forth the excellence of His Church, and the grace which produces it.

Important questions suggested by the passage: Does Christ take delight in me and in what He sees in me? Is it my aim to afford joy to Him as my Saviour and Bridegroom? Are my feelings towards Him those of a bride towards her husband? Am I seeking to cultivate all the various fruits of the Spirit? And not only the fruits, but the 'spices?' Am I endeavouring, through the Spirit of Christ in me, to practice not only what is pure, and just, and honest, but also what is lovely, and of good report? Am I careful not only as to *what* I do, but the *manner and spirit* in doing it? Is my life useful to others, as 'streams from Lebanon,' beautifying and refreshing those I come in contact with? 'Strike out of my heart, O God, a well of living water!'—*Dr. Chalmers.*

### Bridegroom's Prayer for his Garden.

Verse 16.

**Awake, O north wind,**
**And come, thou south!**
**Blow upon my garden,**
**That the spices thereof may flow out.**

The Bride still viewed by the Bridegroom as his garden. That garden one of spices as well as fruits. Her spirit and conversation sweet and refreshing to her husband. His desire that that sweetness may be fully exhibited in all their intercourse with each other. The fragrance of aromatic plants not always evolved alike. Some circumstances more favourable for its evolution than others. Its evolution chiefly dependent

on the state of the atmosphere, and the kind and degree of wind flowing. Hence the Bridegroom's wish poetically expressed: 'Awake, O north wind,' &c. The north wind, perhaps, thus called to depart and give place to the south wind, as more favourable for the emission of the fragrance. Possibly, however, the call equally to both, as both alike needful to that emission.

Not enough that gracious dispositions, or the fruits of the Spirit be implanted in a believer's soul. These not to be latent and dormant, but to be drawn forth in lively exercise, so that Christ may be glorified and find pleasure. That exercise dependent, in some degree, on external circumstances, on the situation in which the believer may be placed, and even on his physical health. More especially, however, on the degree of divine influence which he may at any time enjoy. The breath of the spiritual wind as necessary for the lively exercise of the gracious affections, as that of the natural one for the exhalation of the fragrance of a bed of spices. The spiritual wind the Holy Spirit. The Spirit frequently in Scripture compared to a wind (John iii. 8; Acts ii. 2; Ezekiel xxxvii. 9). That Spirit the 'spirit of love, power, and a sound mind.' Hence essential to a believer's spiritual prosperity, and to the gracious and beneficial influence he may exercise on the world. Equally important to personal happiness, domestic peace, and conjugal comfort. Especially necessary to Christ's enjoyment of His Church, both collectively and individually. Hence, the text a call on the part of Christ for the gracious influence of the Spirit upon the Church and the believer's soul. These again viewed as

### The Garden of Christ.

The text presents to our notice—

I. *The* GARDEN *itself.* The Church and the believing soul is—

1. *A Garden.* It is so, as being—(1) *Reclaimed from the world.* Originally the children of wrath, even as others. Separated by distinguishing grace. Chosen out of the world. Called out of darkness into marvellous light. 'We are of God, but the whole world lieth in wickedness' (1 John v. 19). (2) *Safely enclosed.* Hedged round by divine protection. 'Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' 'A vineyard of red wine; I the Lord do keep it.' 'The Lord is thy keeper.' 'I will be a wall of fire round about her.' 'Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.' 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' (3) *Carefully cultivated.* A Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—engaged in its cultivation. 'My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' 'I will water it every moment.' For its cultivation also, a number of human labourers, for various departments of work, employed in the garden. 'He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.' (4.) *Planted with choice plants* Every believer a tree of righteousness. The fruits of the Spirit produced in the garden: 'Love, joy, peace, long-suffering,' &c. The loveliest specimens of humanity found in Christ's garden. Naturally, because sanctified and renewed humanity. 'The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree; they shall grow as the cedar in Lebanon. They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be fat and flourishing' (Ps. xcii. 12, &c). (5.) *Designed for the pleasure and enjoyment of the Master and his friends.* The garden in the text, with its beds of spices and flowers a pleasure-garden. So the Church and a believer's soul. 'I will walk in them!' 'The Lord taketh pleasure in His people.' The name given by Himself to the Church, 'Hephzi-bah'—'my delight is in her.' 'This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it.' The Lord in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing (Zeph. iii. 17). (6.) *Kept clean and orderly.* Weeds not suffered to grow or continue in it. 'Lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envies (or grudges), and all evil speakings.' 'Purge out the old leaven.' 'Put off the old man, with his deeds, which are corrupt.' 'Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.' 'Ye also put off all these—anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, out of your mouth.' 'Looking diligently lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you.' 'Keep yourselves in the love of God, hating the garment spotted by the flesh.' Believers to keep themselves unspotted from the world. In the Church all things to be done 'decently and in order' (1 Cor. xiv. 40).

2. *Christ's Garden.* As being — (1) *Chosen and given to Him by the Father* (Eph. i. 3; John x. 30). (2) *Chosen by Himself for His own.* 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' (3) *Purchased by His blood.* 'He loved the Church, and gave himself for it.' 'The Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.' The Church, like the rest of the world, originally

under sentence of death through sin. That sentence removed by the substitution of Christ in their stead. (4) *Reclaimed by the Spirit.* The Church not only redeemed by price, but separated by power. The Spirit given to Christ for that purpose. The instrumentality employed, the truth of the Gospel in the lips and lives of believers. (5) *Employed for His own use and pleasure.* 'This people have I formed for myself.' Believers the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

II. *The* CALL. Observe—

1. The *Called.* The Call addressed to

**The Holy Spirit as a Wind.**

So John iii. 8; Acts ii. 2; Ezek. xxxvii. 9. The Spirit so represented—(1) From His *invisibility* (John iii. 8). (2) From His *power.* 'A mighty rushing wind' (Acts ii. 2). Nothing able to resist the wind in Nature, or the Spirit in grace. (3) From the *universality of His operations.* The wind blows everywhere, over the whole earth. The Holy Spirit's operations confined to no land place, class, age, condition, or circumstances. (4) From the *mysterious character of His movements and operations.* The general nature of the wind as air in motion, and the general principle of its movements, tolerably understood. But its local changes and varieties among the most difficult things in Nature to account for. Blown in every possible variety of direction. Sometimes changes from one direction to another entirely opposite. Sometimes from opposite directions at once. Sometimes in one form and degree, sometimes in another. Two winds here mentioned: the North and the South. The North wind cold to those in the Northern hemisphere, as from the region of ice about the Pole. In the East, a healthful and refreshing wind (Prov. xxv. iii; Job xxvii. 21, 22). The South wind warm, as from the regions about the Equator, always greatly heated by the direct rays of the sun (Job xxxvii. 17). The effects of these opposite winds consequently of an opposite character. The tendency of the one to bind up and restrain; that of the other to loosen and disengage, the odours of aromatic plants. So the operations of the Holy Spirit various in their character and effects. Sometimes as a piercing North wind, convincing, reproving, awakening, disturbing, shaking. Sometimes as a soft and balmy South wind, melting, softening, soothing, comforting. Under His convincing operation, the multitude at Pentecost cried: Men and brethren, what shall we do? Under His comforting agency, they gladly received the word of reconciliation, and experienced peace (Acts ii. 37, 47). The dispensation of the Law, and its application to the individual conscience, one operation of the Holy Spirit; the dispensation of the Gospel, and its application to the heart, another. Both North and South wind necessary in the economy of Nature; and both the convincing and comforting operations of the Spirit needful for the Church and the individual soul. The first rather preparatory to the second. The warm and quieting South wind more suited for the evolution of the spices of the garden. So the fruits of the Spirit brought forth in the Church and in the believer rather under the Gospel than under the Law; under the still small voice of evangelical consolations, than under the whirlwind of legal terrors. Yet the latter often necessary to the former.

2. The *Caller.* Christ Himself. His constant concern and care about His Church's spiritual prosperity. None so interested in its fruitfulness and beauty. Never forgetful of His Church's interests. While on earth His constant prayer to His Father on its behalf. Still walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, as the High Priest of His Church, attending to their proper condition. Intercedes for His people at God's right hand. Prays also on earth in the person of His members. The Holy Spirit given in answer to such prayer. The disciples waited in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father; but waited in prayer and supplication, for ten days. Their prayer the Call of Christ in them: 'Awake, O North wind,' &c. The Spirit only given in His fulness after Jesus had completed His work of atonement (Luke xii. 49, 50; John vii. 39; xvi. 7). The Spirit committed into His hands after His ascension into heaven. His added title then — He that hath the Seven Spirits of God (Rev. iii. 1). As if to point to the words of the Song and to intimate their meaning, the Spirit's descent on the Day of Pentecost like that of 'a mighty rushing wind' (Acts ii. 2). Still continues the part of Christ to call for the Spirit to blow upon His garden, the Church, in answer to the fervent, believing prayers of his people. 'Ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain: so shall the Lord make bright clouds (or lightnings), and give them showers of rain.' 'If men who are evil know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Zech. x. 1; Luke xi. 13). The Church's duty not only to pray for the Spirit, but to seek the removal of every hindrance to His effusion. 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me herewith; if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Mal. iii. 10).

3. The *Call* itself. 'Awake—come—blow.' The Holy Spirit, though given, not always and alike in actual operation. Never entirely absent from the Church. Believers

His permanent abode. May be present, however, in different degrees and in different ways. In the Old Testament dispensation, as a spirit of bondage; in the New, as a spirit of liberty. Through defective faith and careless walking, may still be a spirit of bondage. Hence different states of the Church and of individual believers. The Spirit given in the greatest measure yet known on and after Pentecost. Often greatly withheld from the Church's unfaithfulness, unwatchfulness, and unprayerfulness. The candlestick in danger of being removed from its place. Churches and individual believers aroused at times to a sense of their need of the Spirit, and to earnest prayer for His gracious and powerful operation. This usually the first indication of the Spirit's visitation. Earnest and persevering prayer for the Spirit's effusion the token that that effusion will be bestowed. Such prayer either the call of the Bridegroom in the text or its happy precursor. Fervent prayer for spiritual blessing the voice of His Spirit in the believer's heart (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

III. *The* OBJECT *of the Call.* 'That the spices thereof may flow out.' Not enough that the spice-plants are there. The odours may be shut up in their cells and no fragrance be emitted. The pores to be opened and the odorous particles to be exhaled. Grace given to believers to be exercised and made sensible. Not enough that a Church exists, and that grace is in it. The Church to be in a spiritually lively state, and the grace of believers to be in lively exercise. Only thus may Christ enjoy the fellowship and works of the Churches. See his epistles to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. i. and ii.). The Church at Laodicea in a condition only to be spued out of His mouth. Neither a church nor a believer to be satisfied with a lifeless and lukewarm state. Lukewarmness—a state *between* hot and cold—Christ's greatest abhorrence. Yet too often the state of Churches and professors when enjoying rest and outward prosperity. The state most agreeable to the carnal mind. The duty and privilege of believers not only to have life, but to have it 'more abundantly.' A divine injunction: 'Be ye filled with the Spirit.' Churches and believers in a spiritual and lively condition such as Christ delights to dwell in, and such as He can employ for the conversion of others. The Spirit promised to the disciples, that they might be His witnesses to the end of the earth. David's prayer and resolution: 'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee' (Ps. li. 12, 13). A lively and spiritually prosperous state of the Church and of believers the result of the Spirit's gracious operation, in obedience to the Call in the text. As the Holy Spirit blows, the Church's odour flows. Hence His gracious and abundant effusion to be earnestly and perseveringly sought. 'For this will I be inquired by the house of Israel to do it for them' (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). Believers to stir themselves up 'to take hold of God and His gracious power. Their's to awaken the arm of the Lord, to put on strength as in the days of old' (Is. li. 9). His will that they should not keep silence, and should give Him no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 'Concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.' 'Ye have not, because ye ask not' (Is. xlv. 11; lxii. 6, 7; James iv. 2).

THE BRIDE'S DESIRE.

Verse 16.

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

The Bride reciprocates the Bridegroom's love. 'My love,' answered with 'My Beloved.' Christ's love to us the ground and occasion of ours to Him. The Bride's desire one with her Husband's. He admires and commends her as his garden. She invites him to the enjoyment of it. *His* desire that its spices should flow forth; *hers* that he should come and eat its pleasant fruits. Believers made such for Christ's enjoyment: their desire that He should have it. The Bride calls herself: '*His* garden.' Believers no longer their own, but Christ's. 'Ye are bought with a price.' Christ claims the Church as *His* garden: believers gladly respond to the claim. 'One shall say: I am the Lord's.' 'O Lord, I am Thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds' (Is. xliv. 5; Ps. cxvi. 16). Christ's *presence* in and with His Church the believer's greatest desire. 'Let my beloved come into his garden.' His presence in His Church and with believers, not always alike. Times in the Lord's earthly ministry when He hid Himself. Such times still. 'Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.' 'He hideth His face from the house of Jacob.' Times when the Bride has to cry to her Husband: 'Why hidest thou Thyself.' Israel exhorted to keep their camp holy, lest the Lord who walked in the midst of it should see any unclean thing and turn away from them (Deut. xxiii. 14). Christ's visit to and continuance with believers connected with their love and obedience. 'He that hath My commandments and keepeth them,' &c. (John xiv. 21).

The Bride's desire that nothing may hinder his presence and stay with her. The Church and the believer who desires Christ's presence, to be careful to put away whatever is offensive to Him. His words to the lukewarm, self-satisfied, and self-righteous, yet poor, wretched, miserable, and blind, and naked Church at Laodicea: 'Beloved, 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' (Rev. iii. 20). Christ's condescension and love to His Church, that He finds His sweetest entertainment in it. Finds and eats 'his pleasant fruits.' 'With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.' Fellowship with loving and lively believers His greatest joy. The desire of such believers that He may find in them that joy. The believer, notwithstanding his own corruption, conscious that through grace there are with him pleasant fruits for Christ to eat. No part of faith to deny the Spirit's work. 'Know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' 'The care of believers that Christ may have pleasant fruits in them, both in abundance and in good condition, for His own enjoyment. No pleasant fruits in the Church or a believer, but what are *His*, and the production of His own Spirit. '*His* pleasant fruits.' The fruits in the garden Christ's; the weeds and briars our own. The productions of grace in the soul, 'pleasant fruits;' those of unsanctified nature, sour crabs. Christ's 'pleasant fruits' found only in His Church. Elsewhere, only 'wild grapes.' Pleasant fruit found only on the branches of the True Vine. The smallest service of believers rendered in faith and love, reckoned and enjoyed by Christ as 'His pleasant fruits.' Their believing prayers sweet incense to Him. Their thanksgivings and praises a well-pleasing sacrifice. Their gracious words recorded in His Book of remembrance. Their tears of godly sorrow put into His bottle. Observe—

1. Believers to be more concerned about Christ's enjoyment than their own. Their desire to be rather that Christ may eat His pleasant fruits than that they themselves should.

2. Believers to consider that all that is theirs is His, and that what He accepts at their hands is best bestowed. Their honour and happiness that He can accept of anything they have, and can employ it for His own glory and pleasure.

3. Fruitfulness and love on the part of the Church most likely to secure Christ's presence in it. To gain the Bridegroom's presence the Bride must have her 'pleasant fruits.'

4. The believer's best time when Christ comes in to him, and eats with him his pleasant fruits. 'I will sup with him and he with Me.'

# The Bridegroom's Response.

CHAPTER V. VERSE I.

SCENE SECOND. **Place:** *Banquet Hall in the Palace.* **Speaker:** *The King.*

TO THE BRIDE.

I am come into my garden,
My sister, my spouse;
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;
I have drunk my wine with my milk.

TO THE GUESTS.

Eat, O Friends;
Drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.

I. *The Bridegroom's address to the Bride.* 'I am come,' &c. The King, like Ahasuerus, accepts the Queen's invitation to the banquet of wine. Expresses his readiness and delight to do so. The believer's desire for Christ's presence no sooner expressed than fulfilled. 'Before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear' (Isa. lxv. 24). Christ's visits not long delayed when His people are earnest and ready to receive them. 'When the hour was come, He sat down with the twelve.' The Bride herself the banquet; yet a material feast the accompaniment and outward expression of it. The marriage celebrated with a marriage feast. The feast now prepared, and the guests assembled. The bridegroom conducts his bride to the table. Picture of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, after the reception and presentation of the Bride. Also, historically, of the Last Supper, soon after the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and immediately preceding the crucifixion. That Supper to be continued in the

Church till Christ the Bridegroom come again. Believers, especially while seated at the Lord's Table, and, according to His dying command, showing forth His death by eating and drinking the symbols of His body and blood in remembrance of Him—His garden and His banquet. The Bride, as well as the table and all its provisions, His own. These provisions only mentioned by the Bride, but enlarged and dwelt on by the rejoicing Bridegroom. A higher value set by Christ on the fruits of His Spirit and His own mediatorial work, than by the believer himself. Those fruits of great variety. Each of them a special delight to the Saviour. The myrrh of a believer's repentance as acceptable to Christ as the spice of His love. The humblest gifts of love as acceptable as the most costly. The honeycomb as well as the more valuable honey within it. The common milk as well as the richer and more costly wine. The widow's two mites more precious in His eyes than the larger offerings of the rich. Enough for Him when He can say: 'She hath done what she could.' The turtle dove or young pigeons of the poor as acceptable as the lamb or bullock of the rich, when laid in love upon the altar. 'It is accepted according to what a man hath, and not what he hath not.' The cheerfulness of the giver makes the acceptableness of the gift. 'Where Christ gets a welcome, He never complains of the fare.' — *Durham.* When Christ was risen from the dead, 'His disciples gave Him a broiled fish and a piece of a honeycomb, and He ate before them.' (Luke xxiv. 42, 43). Probably designed by the Holy Spirit as another connecting link between the Song and the Gospels.

II. *The Bridegroom's address to the guests.* 'Eat, O Friends,' &c. The king invites his friends to partake of his joy. Recals the Saviour's language to His disciples at the Supper table: 'Take, eat: Drink ye all of it.' 'I have not called you servants, but friends: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you.' The Marriage Supper of the Lamb partaken of by His friends, who are also the Bride herself. Observe—

1. A high honour and privilege to be called Christ's friends; though a higher still to be called His Bride.

2. Where Christ is, He wishes her friends to be with Him. Those who invited Christ must also invite His friends. At Cana, both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the marriage (John ii. 1).

3. Christ's desire that all who are His should share His joy. His reward to His faithful servants: 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

4. When Christ comes into His Church and people, He brings His provisions with Him; and while He sups with them, He gives them to sup with Him (Rev. iii. 20).

5. The provisions of Christ's house and table, of great variety, richness, and plenty (Ps. xxxvi. 8; lxv. 4). 'I am come that my sheep might have life, and have it more abundantly.' 'I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my pe shall be satisfied with my goodness; I ople satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished evey sorrowful soul' (Jer. xxxi. 14, 25). Christ's provisions both nourishing and refreshing—both milk and wine. Correspond with the blessings of salvation offered in the Gospel (Isa. lv. 1). At His rich banquet, no danger either of surfeit or excess.

6. Christ gives not only wholesome and heaped cheer, but a hearty welcome.—'Drink, yea drink abundantly.' 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' 'Be ye filled with the Spirit' (Ps. lxxxi. 10; Eph. v. 18).

7. All the provisions of Christ's table the purchase of His own suffering and death. Perhaps indicated in the first article mentioned by the king: 'I have gathered my myrrh.' Myrrh bitter to the taste. This gathered by the King Himself. Vinegar and gall, the symbol of His own bitter sufferings, handed to Him on the cross, before the wine and milk, emblems of the blessings of salvation, could be handed to us. The bread given at the Supper Table the symbol of His broken Body; the wine that of His shed Blood. 'The bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (John vi. 51).

8. A threefold Feast provided by Christ for His friends, as the Bridegroom of the Church — (1) In their personal and private experience as they journey through the wilderness. The 'feast of fat things' made by Christ in His holy mountain, the Church, for the benefit of Zion's travellers. The 'bread eaten in secret' (Rev. iii. 20). (2) In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, as first instituted in the upper room at Jerusalem, and celebrated in the Church from time to time until He come again. The happiest experience of the believer often connected with that sacred Feast. (3) The Marriage Supper of the Lamb after He has come to take the Bride to Himself, and she has made herself ready; the number of the elect being then accomplished, and the kingdom having come. The Lord's Supper an image and foretaste of that heavenly banquet.

## PART FOURTH.

# The Coolness and its Consequences.

CHAPTER V. VERSE 2.—CHAPTER VI. VERSE 9.

SCENE FIRST. **Place:** *The Palace at Jerusalem.* **Speakers:** *Shulamite and the Ladies of the Court, or the Daughters of Jerusalem.*

### SHULAMITE RELATING A NIGHT'S EXPERIENCE.

Verse 2.

I sleep (*or*, was sleeping),
But my heart waketh (*or*, was awake).

The second great division of the Song now reached: the period after the marriage. The exposition more difficult. In the present section the Bride relates to the ladies of the Court her experience during the night. Probably a dream. The narrative, however, possibly given by the Bride in a song sung at the marriage, with the view of exhibiting both the Bridegroom's excellences, her entire love to him, and, at the same time, her own unworthiness of him. She has retired to rest, perhaps at the close of one of the seven days during which the nuptial feast continued (Judges xiv. 15—17). Her ardent love to her husband, and the delight she enjoyed in his fellowship, give rise apparently to a dream, exhibiting, as often happens, the opposite of the reality. After she has retired to rest, her Beloved knocks at her door, desiring admittance. She strangely and unkindly hesitates, and makes silly and selfish excuses for not admitting him. After pleading in vain for admittance. he withdraws, but not until he has inserted his hand into the hole of the door as if, according to oriental custom, for the purpose of opening it. Seeing his hand, she relents, and rises to open; but too late. He has withdrawn and is gone. Full of distress, she searches for him in the city, but in vain. At last, as if recalling to mind his ordinary haunt, in the eagerness of her desire to find him, she hastens to the spot.

The narrative, whether given as that of a dream or otherwise, designed, like the rest of the Song, to exhibit the experience of believers individually, as well as that of the Church as a whole. What was, perhaps, a dream to Shulamite, too often the reality in the case of the believer and the Church. The experience, in either case, as in hers, the effect of *sleep*. The narrative illustrative of—

### Spiritual Sleep and its Effects.

Verified—(1) In the state of the *Jewish Church* at the time of the Saviour's advent. 'He came to His own, but His own received Him not.' Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation. (2) In the case of *the disciples*, after the Last Supper, in the garden of Gethsemane. Heavy with sleep and unable to watch but one hour with their Master agonizing under the dews of the night; and afterwards abandoning, denying, or betraying Him. (3) In the experience and history of the *Christian Church* after the Apostolic age. That state of the Church in general represented by the Church at Laodicea. So described as readily to recall this portion of the Song (Rev. iii. 19, 20). (4) In the occasional experience of a *child of God*. A believer's enjoyment of the Saviour's fellowship not unfrequently followed by a state of carnal security and sleep. The danger here indicated for our warning. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' 'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' The warning never more needed than at a time of special spiritual enjoyment. Like the Master Himself, believers often taken from the Jordan of enjoyment to the Wilderness of temptation.

The Bride asleep, though her heart was awake. In a believer's worst state, spiritual life and love still in existence. His sleep that of carnal security, not that of spiritual death. His slumber that of the *couch*, not that of the *grave;* one from which an awakening is not difficult, and must sooner or later come. The *flesh* in a believer only asleep, while the *spirit* in him is still awake. Believers to distinguish between the two, and to understand their own spiritual experience.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S APPEAL.

Verse 2.

The voice of my beloved that knocketh,
Saying, open to me, my sister, my love,
My dove, my undefiled;
For my head is filled with dew,
And my locks with the drops of the night.

Natural for a husband to repair to his home after the fatigues of the day; and as natural for him to expect a cordial welcome. Christ's love indicated in the fact that He, too, comes from time to time, and knocks for admission into the heart (Rev. iii. 20). His desire to receive entertainment from His people, and to enjoy fellowship with them. '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.' The love and fellowship of His people the reward of His toil and travail for their salvation. The Son of God left His Father's bosom to find a home in the sinner's heart. His head, for our sakes, 'filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night.' His nights often spent under the open sky in prayer on our behalf, while others rested in their bed. His last night on earth a sleepless one in some part of the high priest's palace, with His hands still bound with cords as a criminal. In the text we have—

**Christ's Call to His Sleeping Church.**

I. *The party* CALLED. The Bride. Indicated in her own language: 'The voice of my beloved.' Also in that of the Bridegroom: 'My sister, my love,' &c. Strange that Christ's Bride should ever be slow to admit Him. As true as it is strange. An effectual call addressed to those who constitute the Church whom He loved, and for whom He gave Himself. These found by Him originally in the sleep of death. Too apt to fall again into carnal slumber, though not into spiritual death. Only living souls able to distinguish Christ's voice as the voice of their Beloved. Only a believer able to say: 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.'

II. *The* STATE *implied.* One of spiritual sleep. Our natural state. One into which the believer may relapse, though never so deeply as before. Such

**Spiritual Sleep**

a state—(1) Of security and ease. (2) Of indifference and unconcern. (3) Of indolence and sloth. (4) Of carnal indulgence. (5) Of spiritual inactivity. (6) Of insensibility to one's best interests. (7) Of self-deception—sleep usually accompanied with *dreaming*. Such a state the result of—(1) The body of sin and death still adhering to us. (2) The world's temptations—its cares, pleasures, pursuits, society. (3) Satan's endeavours—his old trade (Gen. iii. 14; 2 Tim. ii. 26, *margin*). (4) Sense of safety experienced after believing. (5) Neglect of watching unto prayer, and other appointed means. (6) A state of comfort and enjoyment. (7) An avoidance of the cross.

III. *The* KNOCKING. 'The voice of my beloved that knocketh' (or 'knocking'). Christ's Bride not allowed to remain in a state of spiritual sleep. Christ has to knock both before conversion and after it. Knocks both in outward warnings and inward calls. Knocks—(1) By His *Word*. Every appeal in the Bible a knock at the sleeper's heart. The language of Christ in the Scripture as well as of all His faithful servants: 'Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light.' (2) By His *Providence*. A thorn in the flesh sent both to awaken and to keep awake. Christ's knocks often heard on a bed of sickness, and in the chamber of death. His language often in trouble: 'As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be ye zealous, therefore, and repent (Rev. iii. 19). (3) *By His Spirit*. The Spirit Christ's Agent in dealing with men's souls. Knocks from without *before* conversion; from within, *after* it.

IV. *The* CALL *to open.* The voice added to the knock. Christ in earnest to be admitted. 'Open unto me.' Will not force an entrance, but produce a welcome one. His people willing in the day of His power (Ps. cx. 3). To 'open' implies—(1) To *invite His entrance*. Like Laban to Eliezer, 'Come in thou blessed of the Lord.' (2) To *give Him a hearty welcome* as the inmate of our heart; glad to entertain Him and enjoy His fellowship. (3) To *remove the hindrances to His entrance*—any sinful habit, indulgence, or disposition. 'The dearest idol I have known,' &c. (4) To *receive Him as an entire Saviour*, and to surrender ourselves to Him as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

V. *The* PLEA *for admission.* A threefold plea employed by the Bridegroom—

1. *His relation to the sleeper.* 'My sister.' Open to *me*. The last words emphatic. To '*Me*,' thy husband and Saviour. To *Me*, whom thou hast sworn to love, honour, and obey. The *person* who knocks, the strongest of all arguments for admission. The greatest

of all shames to keep such a friend and Saviour at the door. When Christ knocks for admission into the heart, it is either as already a husband, or seeking to become one.

2. *His love to the sleeper.* Indicated in the terms He employs: 'My love, my dove, my undefiled.' Christ's love to sinners in general, and to His Church in particular, as seen especially in giving Himself for them, a powerful reason for admitting Him to their heart. That love further seen in passing over their defilement and unworthiness, and in regarding only the work of His Spirit in their hearts. The multiplication of the tenderest terms in addressing the sleeper, indicative—(1) Of the Bridegroom's great and unchanging love. (2) Of His earnest desire for admission. (3) Of the difficulty of awakening the sleeper.

3. *What He has endured on the sleeper's behalf.* 'My head is filled with dew,' &c. In visiting the Bride, and in seeking admission as the Bridegroom of His Church, during His earthly ministry, this often literally true. 'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' Often spent the whole night in prayer for His people under the open sky. 'Every man went unto his own house; but Jeses went into the Mount of Olives' (John vii. 53; viii. 1.) In redeeming His Church and saving a lost world, 'His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.' His last night on earth one of accumulated sufferings. His mental agony in the Garden towards midnight indicated by 'great sweat-like drops of blood falling down to the ground.' His betrayal and arrest at midnight, followed by long weary hours in the high priest's palace, while He stood bound as a criminal before the tribunal, first of Annas and then of Caiaphas, and remained the rest of the night in the hands of ruffian menials in the guard-room — spit on, buffeted, struck with rods, and made the subject of their fiendish sport—till led away at daybreak to the general council-room to undergo a third examination. His sacred head filled with the wrath-drops of that awful night, and of a still more awful day that followed it. Such a night and day of anguish, suffering, and blood it cost the Son of God to obtain admission to the sinner's heart, in order to fill Him with the joys of salvation. What more powerful plea can be used for admission?

THE UNKIND RESPONSE.

Verse 3.

SHULAMITE.

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

Sad answer from the beloved spouse of a king. More like the answer in a dream than in reality. The language only of one oppressed with physical or moral sleep. The excuse for not opening at once as silly as it was selfish. No great difficulty in resuming a garment just laid aside. No great sacrifice in soiling the feet by walking across the floor. The effects of spiritual sleep—(1) To see difficulties in the way of duty where none exist, and greatly to exaggerate those that do. The language only of the sluggard, 'There is a lion in the street' (Prov. xx. 4; xxvi. 3. Haggai i. 2—4). (2) To be unwilling to deny ourselves, or make sacrifices for Christ; and to think those we are called to make much greater than they really are. (3) To be more careful about personal comfort and carnal ease, than about the pleasures of Christ and the interests of His kingdom. (4) To be oblivious of our own best interests. (5) To forget our character and condition as believers, and to act in a way entirely inconsistent with it. Too common for believers to act in a way unlike themselves. In a low state of religion this usually the case. The wise virgins too often slumbering with the foolish ones. An early Apostolic rebuke to a Christian Church: 'Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?' Possible even for believers to act at times more according to the flesh than the Spirit. (6) To act rather as *in a dream* than as one awake. The life and conduct of men in general. Possessed of deathless souls, yet caring only, or most, for a short-lived body. Born for eternity, yet concerned only, or most, for the things of time. Possessing interests inconceivably high, glorious, and important, and yet expending their time and energy on trifles. Sentenced as sinners to eternal damnation, but with the gracious offer of a free pardon; and yet under no concern to secure it. Under the power of a loathsome disease that must, unless removed, exclude them from heaven, and shut them up in hell; and yet slighting the freely proffered services of the only Physician who is able to cure them. The endless glories and felicities of heaven, with peace and comfort in the way to it, procured at an amazing cost by the Son of God, and freely

offered, along with Himself, for the immediate acceptance even of the chief of sinners; and yet slighted and refused for the paltry enjoyments of time and 'the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.' The testimony of Scripture true: 'Madness is in their hearts while they live, and afterwards they go down to the dead' (Eccles ix. 3).

The language of the Spouse an example of the

**Excuses,**

made for not giving immediate attention to the Saviour's call, and the concerns of the soul. Such excuses usually either — (1) *Want of time and leisure;* (2) *The difficulty and sacrifice* involved—as, loss of worldly favour, friendship, or enjoyment; the scoff and ridicule of neighbours and associates; the effort required to keep up a religious profession and attendance upon religious ordinances, &c.; or, (3) The *intention* to give more heed to the things of eternity at a *future and more favourable opportunity.* Such excuses foolish and unreasonable; as—

1. Nothing of an earthly nature can for a moment be compared, in point of importance, with the concerns of eternity. 'What shall a man be profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' Well-being for eternity obviously, with an immortal soul, the one thing needful.

2. No difficulty involved in accepting Christ and His salvation which His grace will not enable us to overcome; and no sacrifice which will not be infinitely more than compensated. His own testimony true: 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' 'When I sent you without purse or scrip, lacked ye anything? And they said: Nothing, Lord.'

3. The present moment only ours. A more favourable opportunity may never come. Felix never found his 'more convenient season.' With our salvation it may be now or never. Delay only hardens the heart, and makes salvation more difficult.

4. Persons of all classes, and in all circumstances and conditions, are continually by their example shewing the practicability and blessedness of receiving Christ and experiencing His salvation.

Main truths suggested by the passage in reference to believers:—

1. The carnal mind remaining in a believer always the same, and as much disinclined to spiritual communion as it was in his unconverted state.

2. *That* in a believer, through the remains of a carnal nature, which continually subjects him to condemnation, with the increased guilt arising from greater knowledge and past experience of the divine mercy.

3. Only the unchangeableness of Christ's love, and of the Covenant of grace which has been made with him in Christ, along with the existence of a new and spiritual nature imparted to him at conversion, preserves the believer from final apostacy, and from sinking back into his former state of carnality and unbelief.

**Love's Conquest.**

Verse 4.

My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,
And my bowels were moved for him.

Shulamite continues her narrative. The Bridegroom, unwilling to take a refusal, employs further means for obtaining admission. Inserts his hand, through the hole made for opening the door in the inside. The sight of his hand gains the desired compliance.

Observe—

1. Christ unwilling to take a refusal on the part of redeemed sinners, and especially of His believing though backslidden people. His patience unwearied, because His love is unchangeable (Hos. xi. 7—9).

2. A work of Omnipotence needed as well for restoring saints as for converting sinners. The *hand* to be employed as well as the *voice;* the power of the *Spirit* as well as the call of His *Word.* Preachers successful because the Lord works with them, giving testimony to the Word of His grace, and confirming that Word with signs following. 'The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord' (Acts xi. 21; xiv. 3). The Lord's hand also often put forth in *Providence,* when His voice is not hearkened to in His *Word.* The secret springs of the soul in the Saviour's hand. 'He that openeth, and no man shutteth: and shutteth and no man openeth.

3. Christ turns the heart, but employs suitable means and rational motives in doing so. The Bridegroom shewed his hand; but left the Bride to draw back the bolt herself 'Christ puts no force upon our *nature,* but upon our *ill* nature.'—*Henry.* His people willing in the day of His power. God, in a work of grace, does His part, and leaves us to do ours. Believers to work out their salvation, because God works in them 'both to will and to do.' The apostles 'so spake that many believed.' The Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended to the things spoken by Paul. The believing connected with the

speaking as its result. The Lord opens the heart, but Lydia attends to what is spoken (Acts xiv. 24; xvi. 14). Christ's voice raised Lazarus from the dead, but the people were to remove the stone from the grave, and then to 'loose him from his grave-clothes and let him go' (John xi. 39—44).

4. Faithful preachers not to despond. If one means or message fails, another may be made successful. 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper.' 'If the axe be blunt, he putteth forth more strength.' Sometimes a providence successful where the preacher has failed.

5. Christ acquainted with the best means of reaching the heart. Sometimes the least likely means the most successful. The Lord's mere look broke Peter's heart. The mere sight of the Bridegroom's hand did more to melt the heart of the Bride than either his repeated knock or his imploring call. A preacher's loving earnestness often the means of moving the careless more than the words he utters.

6. Inward motions necessary to outward action. 'My bowels were moved for him' (or, 'in me'). The Spirit, in conversion or restoration, acts upon the conscience and feelings. The three thousand at Pentecost pricked in their hearts, and then cried: 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' The moving of Peter's bowels the turning point of his second conversion.

7. The exhibition of Christ and His love the most effectual way of leading to true repentance. 'My bowels were moved for, or on account of him.' 'They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn because of Him' (Zech. xii. 10). Preaching Christ, and Him crucified, the readiest as well as most Scriptural way of moving mens' hearts.

8. Great and palpable effects on the soul under the Holy Spirit's operation. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof.'

9. Believers able to mark and record the operations of the Spirit on their heart, and their inward experience in relation to Christ.

### The Bride's Repentance.

Verse 5.

I rose to open to my beloved;
And my hands dropped with myrrh,
And my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh,
On the handles of the lock.

Shulamite not only *felt*, but acted. 'I rose to open to my beloved.' In matters of religion, feeling valuable as it leads to action. Such actions to be prompt. 'Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' 'I made haste and delayed not.' 'Repentance, when real, puts the most careless on their feet.'—*Durham.* So the Prodigal Son: 'I will arise and go to my father. And he arose and went.' So the penitent Corinthians (2 Cor. vii. 10, 11).

A circumstance connected with Shulamite's action related. 'My hands dropped with myrrh, &c., upon the handles of the lock.' Did she bring it with her? or did she find it there? Probably the language only a poetic way of expressing the feelings of sweet and joyful ardour with which she hastened to admit her beloved, and anticipated his embrace. Thoughts of him were now to her in the place of the best sweet-smelling myrrh. Observe from the passage—

1. No time to be lost in opening to Christ. The Bride delayed and suffered for it. Now shakes off her sloth and rises at once. Christ's call to Zaccheus that to each soul: 'Make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house.' The conduct of Zaccheus to be ours: 'He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully' (Luke xix. 5, 6).

2. A special sweetness accompanying true penitence and a hearty reception of Christ. Shulamite's hands dropped with sweetest myrrh while attempting to open to her beloved. Every act of faith and self-denying obedience for Christ accompanied with a sweetness and satisfaction unable to be found in the pleasures of the world or in the indulgence of the flesh. True penitence a sweet sorrow. Myrrh bitter to the taste, but sweet to the smell. Christ brings sweetness with Him. His name: 'Ointment poured forth.'

Grace acts in order to move the soul to action. When the Bridegroom puts forth his hand at the hole of the door, the Bride must put forth her hand to open to him. Believers to work out their salvation, because God works in them both 'to will and to do of His own good pleasure.'

4. Nothing sweeter to Christ than a soul penitently and earnestly rising to open to Him. Fingers perfumed that open to Christ.

5. Grace supplied as the soul rises to perform its duty and obey Christ's call. Only when Shulamite rose to open, her hands dropped with sweet-smelling myrrh. Duty earnestly and obediently attempted at the Saviour's call found both easy and pleasant. The handles of the lock found perfumed with myrrh. Delay accumulates rust, and renders duty more difficult.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

Verse 6.

I opened to my beloved;
But my beloved had withdrawn himself,
And was gone.
My soul failed when he spake.

I sought him;
But I could not find him.
I called him;
But he gave me no answer.

Shulamite's delay has disappointment for its fruit. Christ's call not to be trifled with. Duty may be attempted too late to be immediately successful. God forgives His sinning people, though He may see fit to chasten them. Indulgence of the flesh, even for a short time, may bear bitter fruit. David's short sin produced long sorrow. Falls, though not fatal, may bring broken bones. Samson, awaking from his sleep in Delilah's lap, 'wist not that his strength was departed from him' Observe, in regard to

**Divine Withdrawings,**

1. These withdrawings *real*. A fact stated. 'My beloved had withdrawn himself.' Such a thing as God hiding His face.

2. These withdrawings such as to be observed and known. The Bride bears testimony to the fact. She knew it. Believers to know their case.

3. Well for believers and others to know when the Lord withdraws Himself. The saddest case for a man when God withdraws from him, and he either does not know it or pays no attention to it. Israel's misery that 'grey hairs were here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not' (Hos. vii. 9). An ill sign for men when God's anger 'sets them on fire round about, and they know it not; when it burns them, and they lay it not to heart' (Isa. xlii. 25).

4. The withdrawings of Christ, in the case of a believer, the result of *love*. The greatest sign of wrath when men are allowed to sleep and sin on. 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.'

5. These withdrawings in *wisdom*, as well as in love. Wise as well as gracious reasons for them. (1) To teach the sin of neglecting divine calls and invitations. Such sin to be seen and lamented (Jer. ii. 19; Hos. v. 15). (2) To make His presence more prized. The value of a blessing best known when it has been withdrawn. The misery of Christ's absence to be sometimes learned by experience. Lamented absence better than slighted presence. (3) To prove the believer's love. Love unable to endure absence. (4) To render more watchful and careful in the future.

6. Divine withdrawings the believer's greatest distress. My soul failed (or fainted, as Genesis xlii. 28) when He spake (or, at His speaking — at the remembrance of what He had said). So with Peter (Matt. xxvi. 75). The Bride's felt calamity indicated by a double expression: 'Had withdrawn himself, and was gone.' The sweeter the past enjoyment of Christ, the greater the pain of His present withdrawal.

7. In the case of a believer, the joy of Christ's presence withdrawn, but not His love. David mourned the loss of the joy of God's salvation, but not of the salvation itself (Ps. li. 10).

Other lessons from the passage—

1. The remembrance of a Saviour's slighted calls, one day the bitterest ingredient in the sinner's cup. 'My soul failed when he spake.' Well when the remembrance is here, and not hereafter. An awful word to the rich man in hell: 'Son, remember' (Luke xvi. 25). One element of a true repentance, in the case of hearers of the Gospel, is the remembrance of a slighted Christ. The remembrance of past guilt an aggravation of present trouble.

2. Christ still loved by the believer in the midst of His withdrawing. 'My beloved,' &c. True love made more ardent by the withdrawing of its object. One of the lessons of the Song. Realized in the disciples after the Saviour's resurrection. The proof of a believer that he loves even an absent Christ.

3. Better to follow Christ in sorrow, than to live at ease in sin.

4. The more the soul has tasted of Christ's love, the more deeply it repents its coldness.

5. Means to be diligently employed to recover a missing Christ. 'I called,' &c.

6. The prayer of a penitent believer not always immediately answered. 'He gave me no answer.'

7. A withdrawn Christ not immediately found. 'I sought Him, but I found Him not.' The Saviour's threatening to the Jews: 'Ye shall seek me but ye shall not find me.'

8. Sin often visited with a corresponding chastisement. The Bridegroom had called, and the Bride had not answered. Now *she* calls to him, but receives no answer. Observe in regard to

**Answers to Prayer.**

1. Answers to prayer, and the contrary, to be carefully noted and recorded.

2. Prayers not immediately answered not therefore rejected. Efforts not immediately successful not therefore in vain. The promise of finding made not to search begun, but persevered in. Believers' prayers often only apparently rejected. Never really unanswered without a greater benefit being bestowed. Moses not permitted to enter Canaan, but taken direct to a better land. Paul's thorn in the flesh not removed, but more of Christ's grace imparted to him. Direct answers to prayer often withheld for the best and wisest reasons (Job xxx. 20; Ps. xxii. 2; Lam. iii. 8, 44). Prayer often answered by terrible things in righteousness (Ps. lxv. 5).

3. Strength and grace given a believer still to pray even when no answer is received. Such grace often an equivalent for a direct answer. The greatest praise bestowed by Christ in the Gospels on one who still prayed earnestly after repeated repulses (Matt. xv. 21—28).

THE SEARCH AND ITS RESULTS.

Verse 7.

The watchmen that went about the city
Found me; they smote me; they wounded me:
The keepers of the walls
Took away my veil from me.

A painful experience awaited the Bride on returning to herself and her duty. Those who should have been for her protection and her help, now add to her distress. Her character suspected, and her veil taken from her as an immodest woman (Ezek. xxiii. 25, 26). Her experience in seeking the Bridegroom and the conduct of the watchmen towards her, much more painful than in a former search. The reason, *that* was *before* marriage, this *after* it. The greater our privileges, and the higher the degree attained in the Divine life, the greater the sin in backsliding from and unfaithfulness to it. Hence the greater the difficulty and the more painful the experience in returning to it. The ways of transgressors hard, even in the case of

**Backsliders.**

Often the most painful of all experiences connected with a missing Saviour, and a backslidden state. The very means of grace and messages of the Word often an aggravation of the grief. Promises apparently silent, and threatenings only uttering their voice. The two-edged sword of the Word felt only to cut and wound. Ministers seem only commissioned to smite. The backslider apt to lose the character of the spouse of Christ, and to be taken for a hypocrite. No help now, for a time at least, received from the ministers of the Word, as at a former period. No word now of Shulamite finding her beloved after only passing a little from them as before. Different effects from the preaching of the Word according to the condition of the hearer. Ministers and their messages only what the Master is pleased to make them. When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes his enemies to be at peace with him. When the opposite is the case, even his friends may be made to appear against him. Nevertheless, the conduct of the watchman unjustifiably rigorous, harsh, and unfeeling. On the part of

**Ministers,**

the greatest tenderness due to backsliders who are seeking Jesus sorrowing. The example of Jesus towards Peter. The bruised reed not to be ruthlessly broken. An untender minister a great affliction to an exercised soul. The 'tongue of the learned' required to 'speak a word in season to him that is weary' (Isa. l. 4). Sad when ministers talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded (Ps. lxix. 26). The part of hireling shepherds to thrust with the side and shoulder, and push at the diseased instead of healing them (Ezek. xxxiv. 21). A sore calamity to the Church when its pastors become brutish (Jer. x. 21). False shepherds hunt the souls of God's people, making the righteous sad, instead of binding up their wounds (Ezek. xiii. 20). The reproofs of ministers to be an excellent oil which shall not break the head (Ps. cxli. 5). The truth to be spoken, but to be spoken in love. Ministers to be both plain and faithful, but neither harsh nor severe. The conduct of the watchmen in the text realised in that of the Jewish priests and elders in their treatment of the spouse of Jesus after His departure to heaven (Acts iv. 1—3; v. 17, 18, 33, 40). The same spouse not unfrequently smitten by ecclesiastical rulers, as heretics and schismatics. Church rulers to be themselves a part of the spouse, and so acquainted with her exercises and temptations. Jesus Christ the model of Ministers. Had compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. Is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Having Himself suffered in being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15; v. 2). Ministers to be not only lawfully called, but spiritually qualified.

THE CHARGE.

Verse 8.

I charge you,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem;
If ye find my beloved,
That ye tell him that I am sick of love.

Shulamite probably still relates her dream. Receiving stripes instead of sympathy from the watchmen, she addressed herself to the women of the city. Such incongruities natural in a dream. The language that of—

1. *Intense concern:* 'I charge you,' &c. A kind of adjuration, as in chap. ii. 7; iii. 5; viii. 4; indicative of the unity of the poem. Observe—(1) The soul seeking a missing Saviour, glad to find sympathy and obtain help wherever it can. Necessity neglects no means. (2) Sad to find private Christians more sympathizing and helpful to exercised souls than the ministers of the Word. (3) Backsliding makes a believer an inquirer when he ought to have been a teacher. Guilt seals a believer's lips, which only a renewed sense of pardon can open (Ps. li. 12—15). (4) In darkness and desertion, others supposed to know better how and where to find Christ, and to have more access to Him, than the soul who is seeking Him. (5) Young believers sometimes found to have nearer access to Christ, and more sensible communion with Him, than those of greater experience. The strongest believers sometimes in a condition to be assisted by the weakest (Rom. i. 12). Times when the believer feels unable directly to address himself as usual to the Saviour. Power to pray not always present with the desire to pray. (6) The duty and privilege of earnest seekers of Jesus to request the prayers and assistance of others. Pride often the hindrance to the anxious soul obtaining peace. (7) Communion with Christians often the best way of finding a missing Christ. Believers to be able and ready to help others to find the Saviour.

2. Shulamite's language indicative of *confusion and distraction.* 'If ye find my beloved, that ye tell him,' &c.; literally: 'What shall ye tell him? that I am sick of love.' Hardly knows what she wants, and what message to send, or how to express her feelings. A state of great perturbation and perplexity natural to a soul seeking a loved but offended and missing Saviour. Shulamite's present case realized in Mary weeping beside the empty tomb, and addressing Jesus Himself as if He were the gardener: 'Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away' (John xx. 14, 15). Neither knowing to whom she spoke, nor what she said. Her soul absorbed with one thought, and not even naming the object of her search.

3. Her language that of *ardent affection.* 'Tell him that I am sick of love.' Formerly said in the enjoyment of Christ's presence; now in distress for His absence (chap. ii. 5). Love to Christ not dependent on present enjoyment, or confined to happy frames. Pursues Him when absent, as well as rejoices in Him when present. Observe, in reference to

**Love-sickness for Christ,**

That it is—

1. *Natural and reasonable.* This true, whether the sickness arise from the overpowering enjoyment of Christ's presence, as in chap. ii. 5; or, as here, from the painful sense of His absence. No reason in nature why love-sickness should exist in reference to an imperfect creature, and not to the all-perfect Creator, who has, at the same time in His love to me, become my Brother. Natural that the more excellent, lovely, and loving the object of our love, the more intense and ardent that love should be. Love due from an intelligent creature to the infinitely excellent Creator. That love not to be a cold and languid, lukewarm and formal love; but one ardent and intense—with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind—with all the affection which He has Himself implanted in our nature, and of which He is infinitely worthy (Rev. iii. 15, 16). The claims of a Creator upon our most ardent love unspeakably enhanced by those of a Redeemer. An evidence how far sin has blinded the mind, depraved the heart, and deadened the soul, that love-sickness for Christ is not as extensively experienced as the Bible is read and the Gospel preached. If the Creator, who is love and excellence itself, humbling Himself, in love, for the deliverance and happiness of His creatures, so as to assume those creatures' nature, and in that nature to be bound and spit upon, scourged and crucified—is not ardently loved by those who profess to believe they have been the objects of such love, the only reason must be that what the Bible declares about man's heart is true, that it is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' The day will declare what every truly awakened and enlightened soul even now sees to be true, that it is man's sin and shame that a creature should be loved with greater warmth, and longed for with greater intensity, than the Creator who died for them; and that the sentence pronounced by the inspired Apostle, and re-

corded in the Bible, is just: 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed' (1 Cor. xvi. 22).

2. *Blessed and desirable.* A love-sickness according to truth and righteousness, and sure to obtain its end. A pain which those who feel it would not exchange, even for a moment, for all the pleasures of the world and sin during a lifetime. Ask Mary weeping at the empty grave, and the woman of the city washing the Saviour's feet with her tears. Love-sickness for Christ one of the evidences of spiritual health. Good to carry such sickness with us to the grave. Death only welcome and agreeable to those who love and long for Christ. Paul's experience: 'I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Death necessarily gain to the lovers of Christ, as it brings them to the sight and presence of Him 'whom having not seen they loved' (1 Peter i. 8; 1 John iii. 2). One of the strongest proofs of Christ's love to a soul is to make that soul sick of love for Himself. The prayer of Dr. Chalmers that of true enlightenment: 'O God, spiritualize my affections: Give me an ardent love to Christ.'

### First Enquiry by the Daughters of Jerusalem.

Verse 9.

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

Greater tenderness and consideration from the daughters of Jerusalem than from the watchmen of the city. The people of Jerusalem 'magnified' the early converts, while the priests and rulers sought to put them to death. The Spouse, in the eyes of the daughters of Jerusalem, the 'fairest among women;' in those of the watchmen of the city, a mere street-walker. That, in Christ and His Church, revealed to babes, which is hidden from the wise and prudent. Hopeful and others in Vanity Fair attracted to Christain and Faithful, while the rest mocked and persecuted them. A hopeful indication to discern the beauty and excellence of holiness, especially in times of persecution and spiritual desertion. Observe from the appellation given to the Bride—

1. Something especially lovely and beautiful in a believing soul earnestly seeking after a missing Christ. Grace in exercise makes the most plain-looking lovely.

2. Believers to appear in the eyes of the world what they really are—possessed of a spiritual beauty which exalts them above others. 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.' The Spouse of Christ the 'fairest among women.' The world to be compelled by a believer's life and spirit to acknowledge the reality and beauty of true religion. Christ's preciousness and excellence to be seen in the character and disposition of His people.

From the inquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem: 'What is thy beloved,' &c., observe—

1. Earnest search after a missing Saviour often blessed to the awakening of a spiritual concern in others. The 'daughters' especially struck with the earnest manner and language of the Bride: 'that thou dost *so* charge us.' Nothing more likely to impress others than earnestness in seeking Christ. One living, loving, earnest Christian may shake a whole Church and neighbourhood out of its slumbers.

2. The world to learn from the earnestness of believers that there is a preciousness in Christ not to be found in anything else.

3. The world and mere nominal professors of religion, ignorant of Christ's loveliness and excellence. This ignorance the reason why others are put in competition with Him, and preferred before Him.

4. Serious inquiry about Christ often the beginning of a new life. A hopeful inquiry of the Greeks: 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'

5. All have something as a 'beloved'—either Christ or something else. The world full of Christ's rivals and candidates for men's hearts.

6. Believers expected to give a reason for their attachment to Christ, and to show His superior excellence and claim to men's affection.

7. Christ infinitely above all other 'beloveds,' and supremely worthy of men's hearts; as (1) More excellent and lovely in Himself—the sum and source of all loveliness and excellence. (2) More satisfying as a portion, being more suited to man's nature and requirements. (3) More durable, never changing either in Himself or His love, and unable to be taken from us either in life or in death. (4) More loving and kind; having given the greatest proof of His love in what He has done and suffered for us—humbling Himself, laying down His life for us, seeking us in our wandering, and bearing with our weakness and waywardness. (5) The longer and better known, the more loved and admired. (6) Able, as being divine as well as human, to be loved with the whole heart, without danger either of idolatry or excess.

SHULAMITE'S DESCRIPTION OF HER BELOVED.

Verse 10—16.

SHULAMITE.

My beloved is white and ruddy,
The chief among ten thousand.

His head is as the most fine gold;
His locks are bushy,
And black as a raven.

His eyes are as the eyes of doves,
By the rivers of waters,
Washed with milk,
And fitly set.

His cheeks are as a bed of spices,
As sweet flowers;
His lips are like lilies,
Dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.

His hands are as gold rings,
Set with the beryl.

His belly (or body) is as bright ivory,
Overlaid with sapphires.

His legs are as pillars of marble,
Set upon sockets of fine gold.

His countenance is as Lebanon,
Excellent as the cedars.

His mouth is most sweet:
Yea, he is altogether lovely.

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

In reply to the daughters of Jerusalem, Shulamite gives a full-length portrait of her beloved. The description one of enraptured admiration and affection. 'Superlatively glorious, and given in brief and comprehensible language.' Rich specimen of Oriental poetry. Observe from it—

1. Believers able to give a true, if not a full description of Jesus. Living Christians well acquainted with Christ, and able to give a reason of their love as well as their hope.

2. Believers to be ready to make others acquainted with Christ. This their calling and privilege. 'Ye shall be my witnesses.'

3. The joy of a living believer to testify for Jesus, and to guide inquirers to Him. 'I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.' Love *must* speak of its object.

4. Better to be employed in setting forth Christ's excellence, than in dwelling on our own defects or troubles.

5. Testimony concerning Jesus to be borne with heartiness and love. The truth to appear not only in the matter but the *manner* of our testimony.

6. Thoughts of Jesus, and the expression of them, the best anodyne for a troubled spirit. McCheyne's recipe: 'For one look at self take ten at Christ.' Confession *of* Christ often the shortest way to comfort *in* Christ. Speaking of Him for others, a precious help to our realizing Him for ourselves.

7. Testimony to Christ's loveliness and excellence for others, to be accompanied with a personal appropriation of Him for ourselves. 'This is my beloved,' &c. Preachers to commend Christ and speak of Him as their own Beloved and Friend.

8. Christ's excellence and preciousness the best subject for the fellowship of believers with each other. Believers thus to stir up their own love to Christ and that of others.

9. A pre-eminence and perfection of beauty in Jesus. The concentration of all creature loveliness. The union of all the elements of loveliness found in Him. The sum of all conceivable and all possible beauty and sweetness. 'Thou art fairer than the children of men.' The chief (conspicuous, or a standard-bearer) among ten thousand. The one Pearl of great price. Natural that the source of all beauty should Himself be the perfection of beauty.

10. The happiness of believers to be made to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy that beauty. Eyes anointed by the Spirit's eye-salve, and hearts renewed by His grace, required for that perception and appreciation.

11. The beauty and excellence of Christ made up of a variety of particulars. The holy perfume composed of various ingredients (Exod. xxx. 34, 35). His offices, relations, attributes, words and works, make up the one Christ.

12. Everything in Christ excellent and glorious in itself, as well as attractive and precious in the eyes of a believer. 'Altogether lovely;' or, 'all desirable things.' Christ an unalloyed congeries of excellencies and delights. Every divine and human perfection found in Him, and nothing but what is absolutely perfect.

13. That in Jesus which exceeds all description and all knowledge. The Bride breaks off as unable to describe the beauty and excellence of her beloved. A breadth, and length, and depth, and height in Jesus and His love, never to be fully comprehended. The duty and happiness of believers to *grow*

in the knowledge of Christ. All comparisons fall short of fully exhibiting Him. The most beautiful and excellent things in nature and art employed, but fail.

The description of the bridegroom inclusive of his dress and ornaments, as well as his person. That of a youthful prince eminent for dignity and beauty. Probably such as Solomon himself appeared to the eyes of beholders in the early period of his reign. Corresponds to his father's appearance at a similar age (1 Sam. xvi. 12). Not necessary to find in Jesus an exact counterpart in every particular. Yet every part suggestive of something to be found in Him. The application to be made as the Holy Spirit gives understanding. We have in

### The Bridegroom's Portrait,

1. His *Complexion*. 'White and ruddy.' Fair and blooming. The perfection of a beautiful and healthy complexion. Suggests the Saviour's general loveliness, as well as His purity and spiritual health. 'Holy, harmless, undefiled.' 'Fairer than the children of men.' Recalls His spotless life and atoning death, as well as the union of the divine and human nature constituting the one God-man Redeemer. His meek and heavenly 'visage' not less lovely because, for our sakes, 'marred more than the sons of men.' His form not less beautiful because bruised and lacerated with the scourge and the nails, and 'ruddy with His own precious blood.'

2. His *Head*. 'As the most fine gold.' For excellence, a mass of pure and precious gold. Perhaps including an allusion to the golden crown which at times adorned it. Suggests the kingliness and nobility of Jesus, as well as His 'excellent wisdom.' 'Head over all things to His Church.' 'Head over all principality and power.' 'In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

3. His *Hair*. 'His locks are bushy (or curled and pendulous), and black as a raven.' Expressive of youthful and manly vigour. Jesus only known on earth as one in the prime and bloom of life. His death at the age of thirty-three. Jesus ever young. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Appears in heaven 'as a Lamb that had been slain.' In another description of his appearance: 'his hair white as snow' (Rev. i. 14), as expressive of His eternity — the Ancient of Days. His raven locks perhaps symbolical of His human, and His snow-white hair of His divine, nature.

3. His *Eyes*. 'As the eyes of doves (or, as doves), by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set' (or, 'sitting in fulness'—in full streams). Suggestive of the love, tenderness, and gentleness of Him who was meek and lowly in heart; who, 'when He beheld the city, wept over it,' and when He saw the sisters of Lazarus weeping at his grave, and the Jews also weeping, wept along with them.

4. His *Cheeks*. 'As beds of spices' (or, balsams), as sweet flowers,' (or, 'towers of perfume'). The loving aspect of Jesus the index of His loving heart. His countenance ordinarily lighted up with gracious smiles that cheered the penitent, invited even publicans and sinners to draw near to Him, and made Him attractive even to little children. His benignant aspect made His presence like a bed of spices to such as, like Mary, 'sat down at His feet, hearing His words.

5. His *Lips*. Like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.' Expressive either of the gracious words that proceeded from His mouth, and which, as recorded in the Scriptures, have been the comfort of millions ever since, or the sweetness felt in the communication of His love to the soul—'the kisses of His mouth' (chap. i. 2).

6. His *Hands*. 'As gold rings (or cylinders), set with the beryl' (chrysolite or topaz). The image probably from the rings that usually adorned the hands of Oriental princes. His hands themselves were as the costliest jewels. Suggestive of those works of benevolence and love—'wonderful and glorious'—wrought by Jesus when on earth, as well as those which, though invisible, He is working still, as the Head and High Priest of His Church.

7. His *Body*. 'His belly (or body) is as bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires.' The tender compassion of Jesus, combined with heavenliest purity. He who said: 'I have compassion on the multitudes,' said also: 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' 'Ye are from beneath; I am from above: Ye are of this world; I am not of this world' (John viii. 23, 46).

8. His *Legs*. 'As pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold.' The marble whiteness of His pillar-like legs suggestive of the spotless purity and integrity of His life, as well as His faithfulness and ability to support all who trust in Him. 'His feet like sockets of fine gold,' descriptive of Him who went about doing good. 'Beautiful on the mountains,' as the feet of Him who brought glad tidings to a perishing world.

9. His *Figure* or *General Aspect*. 'Like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.' The majesty and stateliness of His figure, resembling in its general character and aspect the 'goodly mountain' with its noble cedars, expressive of the amiable dignity of Him who

is both Son of God and Son of Man, the man that is Jehovah's fellow, the brightness of the divine glory, while not ashamed to call us brethren.

10. His *Mouth.* 'Most sweet.' Recalling the sweetness of the discourse of Him who 'spake as never man spake.' Suggestive also of the divine sweetness of that love which is 'better than wine.'

The enraptured and magnificent description closes 'with a holy admiration and amazement which ends in silence.' 'Yea, He is altogether lovely' (or, 'all of Him is lovely and desirable things.') Winds up with an emphatic

### Appropriation of the Beloved.

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

Commendation of Christ to others to be accompanied with conscious choice and personal appropriation of Him by ourselves. That choice and appropriation of Christ by ourselves to be openly avowed while we commend Him to others. Conscious interest in Christ by ourselves, that which gives heart and life to our commendation of Him to others. The Bride's language expressive of—

1. The believer's personal apprehension of Christ's loveliness and excellence. 'This'—the person I have described to you—'is my Beloved.'
2. Choice of Him in preference to all other objects of attraction.
3. Appropriation and personal possession of Christ as our own.
4. Consciousness of such choice and appropriation. 'My Lord and my God.' 'I know whom I have believed.' 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'
5. Unchanged and unchanging attachment. 'My Beloved,' notwithstanding present appearances. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,' and love Him. 'I will wait on him who hideth himself.'
6. Full satisfaction with and glorying in Him as our choice and portion, our beloved and friend. 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.'
7. A bold and fearless confession of Him as the object of our choice, and the Saviour in whom we trust. Christ not only to be believed in with the heart, but confessed with the mouth (Rom. x. 9, 10).
8. Christ at once the believer's beloved and friend—beloved and lover. The love a mutual one. Christ, as

### The Christian's Beloved,

Is loved—(1) For what He is in Himself—the 'chief among ten thousand,' and 'altogether lovely.' (2) For what He is to us, Saviour, Redeemer, husband, brother, and friend. (3) For what He has done for us—given Himself to humiliation and anguish, a bloody and shameful death, to satisfy, as our sacrifice and substitute, the demands of Divine justice upon us; sought us when we were wanderers; won our hearts, and espoused us to Himself as His own. That Christ is our beloved implies—(1) *Wonderful condescension and love* on the part of Christ, that sinners should be able to call Him their beloved. (2) *Precious grace,* that so changes the heart and renews the nature that we can thus truly and sincerely speak of Christ. (3) *Blessed condition of believers,* that they are able to claim Jesus as their beloved. Christ, as

### The Christian's Friend,

Is—(1) Loving, generous, and sympathizing. (2) Faithful and true,—'sticketh closer than a brother.' (3) Unchanging—loving 'to the end.' (4) Rich and powerful. His hand able to answer the dictates of His heart. (5) Tried and proved—proved both by suffering *for* us, and suffering *from* us. Performs all the offices of a loving and faithful Friend—

1. Pays our debts.
2. Redeems our person.
3. Supplies our wants.
4. Comforts us in trouble.
5. Counsels us in difficulty.
6. Warns us of danger.
7. Reproves and corrects our faults.
8. Confides to us His secrets.
9. Delights in our society.
10. Entrusts us with His interests.
11. Defends our name and reputation.
12. Takes our part against all adversaries.

Christ a friend in need and a friend indeed. Rich and blessed the pauper who has Christ for his friend; poor and wretched the prince who has not. A man's highest wisdom to make Christ his friend while he may. Happy and only happy the man that can say of Him, 'this is my beloved, and this is my friend.' Reader, let this happiness be yours.

SECOND INQUIRY BY THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

Chapter vi. Verse 1.

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

Result of Shulamite's description of her

beloved on the women of the city. Their sympathy excited, and a desire awakened partly to aid her in her search, and partly to see so beautiful and excellent a person for themselves. Shulamite supposed to know something of her beloved's haunts. Observe—

1. The faithful and loving tetimony for Christ not always unsuccessful. Often made the means of awakening in others the desire to seek Him and become acquainted with Him. 'Encouragement to be ready to commend a precious Christ.' Good for preachers and ministers to dwell on the beauty, excellence, and preciousness of the Saviour.

2. Earnest and loving seekers of a known Christ likely instruments in awakening the interest of others in regard to Him. A holy zeal for Christ the natural means of provoking many (2 Cor. ix. 2). Preachers, to be of use in winning others to Christ, must be in earnest about Him themselves, and be able to commend Him both as the Friend of sinners and their own.

3. One end of Christ's dealings with His people, that they may be the means of leading others to the knowledge and possession of Him. The troubles and afflictions of believers, spiritual as well as physical, often designed for the good of others as well as their own.

4. Every exhibition of Christ's preciousness and excellence to excite the desire to become personally acquainted with Him, and possess Him for ourselves. Description not to satisfy. 'Come and see.' Testimony to issue in personal knowledge. 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world' (John iv. 42).

5. Earnest seekers of Christ, bearing faithful testimony of Him to others, not likely to be alone in seeking Him. 'With Thee.' Thorough earnestness sympathetic. Hence Zech. viii. 20, 21. Apparent in extensive revivals of religion. The nature of enthusiasm, like fire, to extend itself. One heart kindled by the warmth of another.

6. Christ most likely to be found when sought in connection with the Bride—His living people. Good to seek Him alone; still better to seek Him with others who are able to help us.

7. 'With Thee,' an indication of the mystical and spiritual nature of the Song; otherwise an unacceptable compliment to the Bride.—*Henry.* Christ's true lovers and possessors, desire to see their number multiplied as much as possible. Joy in the possession of Christ by one, not diminished but increased, by the possession of Him by another. The Spouse of Christ one body, consisting of a multitude of individuals.

8. Earnestness required in seeking Christ. The earnestness of the 'daughters' seen in their repeated inquiry: 'Whither is thy beloved gone?' &c.

9. Knowledge of Christ and His ways to be sought with a view to seeking and professing Him. The inquiry of the women made with a practical object: 'That we may seek Him with thee.' An unpractical and uninfluential knowledge of Christ of little value. A knowledge of Christ merely 'after the flesh' to be renounced (2 Cor. v. 16).

10. Believers expected to know where Christ is to be found, and to be better acquainted with His ways than other people, so as to be able to guide them in their seareh after Him.

11. In regard to believers, Christ's absence only a temporary 'turning aside,' not a final departure. 'In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment' (Isa. liv. 7, 8). The covenant made with believers an everlasting covenant. 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever' (Hos. ii. 19). 'The Lord will not cast off His people' (Ps. xciv. 14; 1 Sam. xii. 22).

12. A soul never fairer than when earnestly seeking Christ. The earnestly seeking spouse addressed four times as the 'fairest among women.'

The inquiring 'daughters of Jerusalem' represented historically by the Greeks at the Feast, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, the women that followed Christ to the cross and observed the place of His interment, and by the inquirers on and after Pentecost—'devout men dwelling at Jerusalem, out of every nation under heaven' (Acts ii. 5, 14).

### The Inquiry Answered.

### Verse 2.

SHULAMITE, *to the Daughters.*

My Beloved is gone down into his garden,
To the beds of spices;
To feed in the gardens,
And to gather lilies.

Shulamite continues her Narrative and Song. Relates her answer to the inquiring women. Suddenly recollects herself, and at once and unhesitatingly declares whither her Beloved is gone. 'He is gone down to his garden.' Literally, Solomon's garden in a valley below Jerusalem, on the South East. The allusion, however, probably to the Bride herself, already called 'his garden,' which he

had been invited by her to enter and 'eat his pleasant fruits' (chap. iv. 16). A delicate hint that the Bridegroom was expected to be with his Bride, and to find his chief enjoyment in her society. So Prov. v. 15—20. Christ the Bridegroom of His Church to be found in the assemblies of His people (Matt. xviii. 20; Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14). Walks among the golden candlesticks (Rev. ii. 1). Never absent from His Church in general, though apparently and for a time from individual believers. Observe—(1) By commending Christ to others we often find Him ourselves. (2) The spiritual darkness of a believer often broken in upon by a ray of light which at once removes his difficulty and sorrow. Hagar's eyes had but to be opened to see the fountain by her side. 'Mary!' suddenly and in a moment turned her sorrow into joy. (3) Historically, Christ's body, after His crucifixion, found in Joseph's garden, and His Spirit in the paradise of God. The Bride's answer suggestive of what constitutes

### The Saviour's Joy.

1. *The fellowship of His believing people on earth.* The Church His 'garden.' Separate congregations and individual believers His 'gardens. Christ goes down 'into His garden,' 'to feed in the gardens.' Indicated in His call to the Church at Laodicea: 'I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with Me' (Rev. iii. 20). 'The Lord's portion is His people.' 'He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing' (Zeph iii. 17). The name given by Him to His Church: 'Hephzibah,' or 'my delight is in her.' 'The Lord taketh pleasure in His people.' 'He walketh in the midst of thy camp.' 'I will walk in you.' Christ delights in His Church and people as a man in his garden of fruits, flowers, and spices. Hence the responsibility resting on them to be such that Christ may find in them the enjoyment which He seeks. No unclean thing to be in Israel's camp. The garden to be kept clean and orderly for the proprietor's pleasure. Believers to keep their hearts and lives for Christ's sake as well as their own. The Church to purge out the old leaven of malice and wickedness. To put away from among them the wicked person. To keep the ordinances as delivered to them. To see that all things are done decently and in order (1 Cor. v. 7, 13; xi. 2; xiv. 40). Believers to see that they are bearing not only fruit, but much fruit. All the fruits of the Spirit to be produced in them—love, joy, peace, &c. (Gal. v. 22). 'I looked that it should bring forth grapes.' 'My soul desired the first ripe fruit.' His complaint that Israel was an empty (or yielding) vine, bringing forth fruit only to himself (Isa. v. 4; Mic. vii. 1; Hos. x. 1). Christ leaves His heritage, and 'gives the dearly beloved of His soul into the hand of her enemies, when it becomes to Him as a 'speckled bird' (Jer. xii. 7—11). A lukewarm Church or Christian He can only spue out of His mouth (Rev. iii. 16). Believers to see that no root of bitterness springing up trouble them, and defile the garden of Christ. Spices, as well as fruits, to be growing in Christ's garden. His people and Churches to be 'beds of spices'—fragrant and attractive, as well as useful.

2. *The presence of His people in heaven.* 'He goes down into His garden to gather lilies. Heaven a place of

### Gathered Lilies.

Lilies, his believing people (chap. ii. 2). Gathered out of His garden on earth for His presence in heaven. Christ first transforms thorns into lilies, then transfers the lilies to Paradise. A world lying in wickedness not a place for His lilies to remain longer than is necessary. Every departed saint a gathered lily. The lilies enjoyed by Christ while growing in His garden below; still more when blooming in the Paradise above. The lilies gathered in fulfilment of His own promise (John xiv. 2). Preserved safe with Himself till His return, when He brings them with Him (1 Thess. iv. 14; iii. 13; 2 Thess i. 10). Heaven delightful and attractive as the place of gathered lilies. 'The spirits of just men made perfect.' Those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Believers depart to be with Christ. 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' Absent from the body, present with the Lord. Lazarus carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Christ's lilies in heaven without a spot in them. 'Without fault before the throne of God.' Presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. Faultless before the presence of His glory. A glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Holy and without blame before Him in love. All like Himself, seeing Him as He is. The former things passed away. The blessedness of heaven is, that it is free from all moral defilement. The happiness of the glorified, not so much that there is no more sorrow, as that there is no more sin. Christ's people lily-like here; much more hereafter. No remains of the thorn in heaven. The flesh carried to the grave, but no farther. The lilies gathered for Christ's own enjoyment as well as that of His people. Each departed believer an accession to the joy of heaven

and of heaven's King. Christ's heaven to have the hundred and forty and four thousand of His redeemed around Him on Mount Zion, praising the Father in the midst of the General Assembly and Church of the First-born the (Heb. ii. 12; xii. 23). Hence—(1) A reason why believers should gladly leave this world. (2) A ground of sweet consolation in regard to friends who fall asleep in Jesus. (3) Believers not to grudge Christ the lilies which He gathers.

### Renewed Self-Dedication.

Verse 3.

Shulamite.

I am my beloved's
And my beloved is mine:
He feedeth among the lilies.

Shulamite repeats in presence of the Daughters the declaration of her devotedness to and interest in her beloved which she had formerly made to himself (chap. ii. 16). The declaration possibly now also made in his presence, at the conclusion of her narrative. Perhaps the whole sung in his presence at the Feast, or he himself comes now in view. The language of exultation and joy, as well as of devotedness and love. Observe—

(1) Faith and love in a believer never dead, though sometimes in a swoon. True faith like wood rather than iron—if it sink, it will rise again. A believer's falls not final. 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not' (Luke xxii. 32).

2. Withdrawals on the part of Christ no proof of abated love (John xiii. 1; Isa. liv. 8). The covenant of grace too firmly established to be broken by the infirmities of the flesh. That covenant steadfast, because of grace and not of works. Christ betroths believers to Himself in faithfulness for ever, because in righteousness and judgment, in loving kindness and in mercies (Hos. ii. 19, 20). The the way transgressors always hard; but transgression unable to cast out of the covenant of grace as it did out of the covenant of works. God's faithfulness not affected by His people's falls. The gifts and calling of God without repentance or change of mind on His part. He pardons His people's sins though He takes vengeance on their inventions. Rebukes not only consistent with covenant love, but a necessary part of it. The Bridegroom bears with the Bride's ill manners in the wilderness, though He wisely expresses His displeasure. Withdraws the joy of salvation for a time, though not the salvation itself.

3. The chastened and penitent believer restored to the full consciousness of his interest in Christ, and with that to joy and comfort. Joy unspeakable in a conscious interest in Christ and full surrender to Him.

4. Good for a believer frequently to recal his covenant relationship to Christ, his self-surrrender to Him, and his interest in Him. Paul's comfort in prison,—'I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day' (2 Tim. i. 12).

5. Surrender of ourselves to Christ, and acceptance of Him, the two sides of a saving faith. 'I am His,' indissolubly connected with 'He is mine.' The two confirmatory of each other. Interest *in* Christ necessarily follows surrender *to* Christ. The consciousness of the one bound up with the consciousness of the other. Those fleeing to Christ and closing with Him may safely conclude that Christ is theirs.

6. The order of the two first clauses of the text changed from what it was before. The bride's declaration of self-surrender now *first*, as having been placed in suspicion by her recent coolness. So Peter, after his threefold denial, must make a threefold declaration of his love. Renewed and open declaration of our faith and love necessary to full restoration to former enjoyment.

7. Christ's presence, both on earth and in heaven, among His lily-like people. 'He feedeth among the lilies.' His presence promised to His Church till the end of the world, when faith is changed to sight. Christ both feeds others and has joy Himself in His Church and its ordinances. To enjoy His presence and His care we must be among the lilies. 'Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.' No mark of Christ's sheep to 'separate' ourselves from the flock. The happiness of believers to find themselves among Christ's people and in the enjoyment of His ordinances. 'All my springs are in thee.'

8. The text historically verified in the disciples after Christ's resurrection. 'Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.' The language of Shulamite that of Mary at Jesus's feet — 'Rabboni,' — 'My Master!' That of Thomas with his finger on the nail-prints,—'My Lord and my God!' That of penitent Peter,—'Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee.'

# The King's Admiration of His Bride.

SCENE SECOND. **Place:** *The Royal Garden.* **Speaker:** *The King to Shulamite.*

VERSE 4—10.

THE KING.

Thou art beautiful, O, my love, as
Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem,
Terrible as an army with banners.
Turn away thine eyes from me,
For they have overcome me.
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That appear from Mount Gilead.
My teeth are as a flock of sheep,
Which go up from the washing,
Whereof every one beareth twins,
And there is not one barren among
them.
As a piece of pomegranate
Are thy temples within thy locks.

There are threescore queens,
And fourscore concubines,
And virgins without number:
My dove, my undefiled, is but one;
She is the only one of her mother;
She is the choice one of her that bare
her.

The daughters saw her,
And blessed her;
Yea, the queens and the concubines,
And they praised her:—
'Who is she that looketh forth as the
morning,
Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,
Terrible as an army with banners?'

The king himself now appears, and expresses his joy in and admiration of his bride, notwithstanding her temporary coldness. Perhaps found by her in the royal gardens, where she had gone to seek him. Possibly only her exclamation on the conclusion of her song at the Marriage Feast. The place and circumstances of the dialogue now more difficult to determine. The application or spiritual meaning of the allegory, however, under the Spirit's teaching, not difficult to find. Among the truths suggested by the passage, we notice—

1. Christ's love not forfeited by His people's falls. Shulamite is still 'my love.' So Christ revealed Himself after His resurrection to His disciples, who had forsake Him and fled; and to Peter, who had thrice denied Him.

2. Earnest seeking after Christ sure to be followed by a happy finding of Him. Fervent longings for His presence succeeded by sweet enjoyment of it. Faith in and love to an unseen Christ sure of His blessing (John xx. 29).

3. The penitent believer, seeking Christ sorrowing, the object of His admiration and delight.

4. Christ's withdrawal from and silence towards His erring people not of long continuance. 'In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a moment,' &c. (Isa. liv. 9).

5. Christ returns to His people in love when they return to Him in penitence. No upbraiding for past sin. Lays the lost sheep on His shoulder, and returns with it rejoicing (Luke xv. 4).

6. The fruit of chastening after a fall only greater endearment.

7. Christ's views of His people, like His love towards them, unchanged by their falls. Their beauty, on repentance, the same in His eyes as before. The diamond a diamond still, notwithstanding temporary sullying. The beauty of nature fading; that of grace, fast colours.

8. Beauty a character essentially belonging to the Church and believers. 'Thou art beautiful.' Observe, in regard to the

### Church's Beauty.

1. A moral and spiritual beauty to be recognized, as well as a corporeal or sensuous one. The former as far superior to the latter as the soul and spirit is more excellent than the body, and the divine nature is superior to the human. Spiritual beauty, or the beauty of holiness, a portion of the beauty that is in God Himself; or rather is that beauty itself. Holiness the divine nature and image. Its essence love. That moral and spiritual beauty the beauty of believers. Believers renewed in the image of God. Made partakers of the divine nature. Conformed to

the image of Christ, the perfection of beauty. Love the essential feature in their character, and that which distinguishes the children of God. 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity (love), I am as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal,' &c. (1 Cor. xiii. 1). That love, embracing both God and man, the sum of moral beauty, or the beauty of holiness. Believers chosen in Christ by God the Father, and blessed with all spiritual blessings, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. i. 4). Beautified with salvation — salvation from sin into holiness. The Church's holy beauty the delight of her divine Lord (Ps. xlv. 10, 11). The Bride's beauty compared to that of Tirzah, the royal city of one of the ancient kings of Canaan, and afterwards the metropolis of the kings of Israel. In Solomon's time the northern, as Jerusalem was the southern, capital of Palestine. Its name, denoting the 'pleasant' or 'agreeable,' probably given from its situation or appearance.

9. A comeliness as well as a beauty belonging to the Church and to believers. 'Comely as Jerusalem.' Comeliness closely allied to beauty. Conveys the additional idea of pleasantness. The sweetness and the pleasantness of beauty. Shulamite comely —pleasant to look upon and converse with, as well as beautiful. In this respect also the Bride's beauty a counterpart and reflection of the Bridegroom: 'Thou art fair, my beloved; yea, pleasant' (chap. i. 16). A comeliness, as well as a beauty, in holiness. The one to be cultivated and exhibited by believers as well as the other. Believers to be, like Christ, not only loving but lovely. Their character to embrace not only whatsoever things are true, just, and pure, and honest, but 'whatsoever things are lovely' (Phil. iv. 8). Christ not only the holiest, but the most *attractive* of men, even to publicans, and sinners, and little children. Believers to resemble Him by imbibing His Spirit. 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' 'Love one another as I have loved you.' Shulamite's comeliness compared to that of 'Jerusalem.' Jerusalem the city of the great King. Beautiful for situation. The joy of the whole earth. At first a stronghold of the Jebusites; afterwards the metropolis of Palestine and residence of the kings of Judah. Its name— the 'City or Foundation of Peace.' Mostly surrounded by mountains. Compactly built. Fortified by lofty walls. Adorned with palaces. Beautified and ennobled especially by the temple, the peculiar abode of Jehovah, in the midst of it. An emblem of the Church in its unity and brotherhood, its security and peace, and especially in its being the chosen habitation of God through His Spirit' (Eph. ii. 20, 21). The Church's beauty not so much her own as that of Him who dwells in her.

10. A terribleness as well as comeliness in the Church's beauty. 'Terrible as an army with banners.' Something in extraordinary beauty that awes beholders and forbids approach. 'Terror in love and beauty, not approached by stronger hate.'—*Milton.* A terribleness in holiness or spiritual beauty. 'He perceived how awful goodness is, while in its form most lovely.' Terribleness and beauty combined in the Church when enjoying much of the Divine presence and blessing. 'Kings of armies did flee apace,' while Israel was 'as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold' (Ps. lxviii. 12, 13. So Ps. xlviii. 1—6). The people magnified the Pentecostal Church at Jerusalem, while awed by its holiness and afraid to join themselves t its (Acts ii. 43; v. 13). Paul terrible both to Felix and Agrippa. Believers walking in their true character as kings and priests to God, not only amiable but awful. Observe, in regard to

### The Church's Terribleness,

I. *The* GROUNDS *of it.*

1. *Her holy and spiritual character.* The Church terrible through the heavenly walk and spirit of her members. One believer, by this Christ-like spirit, able to overawe a multitude.

2. *The presence of Christ, promised to His Church and to His people individually.* 'God is in the midst of her.' 'I am with you alway.' 'Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.'

3. *The power committed to her.* 'Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come you.' 'Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.' That power exhibited—(1) In the Church's prayers and the *answers* to them. 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us.' The earthquake at Philippi connected with the prayers of Paul and Silas in the prison. The power of Elijah's prayers to be repeated in the Church of Christ (James v. 16—18; Rev. xi. 6). The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints ascending up before God, followed by 'voices and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake' (Rev. viii. 4, 5). (2) In the Church's *ordinances,* and especially its faithful *preaching.* 'Strength' as well as 'beauty' in God's sanctuary. Power with the Word, both to convince and to convert. The hearers

is 'convinced of all and judged of all, and the secrets of his heart made manifest; so that falling down on his face he worships God and reports that God is among you for truth' (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25). So Felix trembled before Paul. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds' (2 Cor. x. 4). (3) In its *discipline*. A disciplinary power committed to the Church by its Head,—to bind and to loose, to remit or to retain sins (Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18; John xx. 23). The Kingdom of God not in word but in power. 'I have judged already, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus' (1 Cor. iv. 20; v. 3—5). Effects of the spiritual and faithful exercise of discipline by the Church realized from the age of the Apostles to our own.

II. *The* OBJECTS *of it.* The Church terrible to her adversaries (2 Cor. x. 4). So Israel in the wilderness (Deut. xxxiii. 29; ii. 25; Exod. xv. 14—16; Num. xxiv. 5; Ps. xlviii. 5, 6; lxviii. 12). 'Satan trembles when he sees,' &c. A holy Church and a spiritual believer the terror of the devil. 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?' The Church terrible in the eyes of her adversaries only as she is beautiful in those of Christ. More formidable to her enemies when arrayed in the beauties of holiness, than when armed with Acts of Parliament, and the sword of the civil magistrate. The Church, when faithful, ever terrible to her adversaries and to the world in general. Tyrants made to tremble by the constancy and firmness of believers (Acts xxiv. 25). Mary, Queen of Scotland, more afraid of Knox's prayers than of an army of soldiers. Attila overawed by Leo and his attending presbyters. Sin and ungodliness often put to shame by the zeal and consistency of a single believer (Heb. xi. 33—35). Christ's weak Bride, both collectively and individually, mightier by her faith, holiness, and prayers, than the combined hosts of earth and hell. Samson in his locks of consecration and Nazariteship, a terror to the Philistines.

III. *The* NATURE *of her terribleness.* 'As an army with banners.' The Church terrible in her militant character as arrayed against the powers of evil. An army with banners terrible from its arms and armour flashing in the sun, its numbers, its order and array, its unity and compactness, its courageous spirit, determined mien, undaunted aspect, and firm step; resolved to conquer or to die in the conflict. The Church of Christ terrible as an

### Army with Banners,

1. *With Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, as its commander-in-chief,* the Captain of the Lord's host, the Captain of our salvation. The Church led on by Him who has already 'overcome the world,' and 'spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in His cross' (Col. ii. 15; John xvi. 33).

2. *Marshalled under subordinate leaders.* 'He gave gifts; some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers' (Eph. iv. 8—11). Every pastor and Church ruler an officer under Christ.

3. *Arrayed with goodly order, and governed by wholesome discipline.* The Apostle's joy in beholding the 'order' of the Church at Colosse (Col. ii. 5). His direction: 'Let all things be done decently and in order' (1 Cor. xiv. 40.) A Church with Scripture order and discipline something terrible to the world.

4. *Divided into various sections.* Israel marched through the wilderness in four divisions, exclusive of the Levites (Num. x. 14—28). One Church and yet many Churches. An army composed of many regiments, each with its own uniform and banner, yet serving one King and obeying one Commander-in-chief. Christian Societies and Missions in the Church as the battalions and squadrons of an army.

5. *Animated with one spirit.* Unity without uniformity the order of Christ's army. One body and one spirit; one faith and one baptism (Eph. iv. 4, 5). The Church's terribleness seen and felt when its members stand 'steadfast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel' (Phil. i. 27).

6. *Furnished with suitable armour and weapons.* The armour of Christ's Church —the helmet of the hope of salvation; the breast-plate of righteousness, faith, and love; the girdle of truth; the shoes of the Gospel of peace; the shield of faith. As John Bunyan remarks—no armour for the *back.* Christ's soldiers expected not to flee but to fight. Their weapons the arrows of truth, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, and earnest, believing, and persevering prayer. Believers' armour a panoply provided by God Himself—'the whole armour of God' (Eph. vi. 13—18; 1 Thes. v. 8). The armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left (2 Cor. vi. 7). Their weapons not carnal, but mighty through God (2 Cor. x. 4).

7. *Distinguished by appropriate banners.* Israel's host in the wilderness said to have marched under four standards (Num. x. 14—28). A banner given by Christ to be displayed because of the truth. His banner that waves over His people, Love. Christ himself set up for an ensign. Some of the emblems on the Church's banners—a Lamb as it had been slain; a Cross; a Shepherd, carrying a lamb in His bosom. Some of their mottoes: 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.' 'He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.' 'The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.'

The army of the Church composed of all who as sinners accept of Christ as a Saviour, and surrender themselves to Him as their King. Every true conversion to Christ an enlistment. Every genuine Christian a soldier of Jesus Christ. Baptism and Church membership a nominal enrolment. The baptized and professors found in the ranks of the world and the devil, deserters from Christ. Professing Christians, with the *heart* still in the world, traitors in the camp. The Church, as an army, not only *prepared* for battle, but always in it. Its enemies the world, the flesh, and the devil. Their worst enemy within—fleshly lusts that war against the soul—the law in the members warring against the law of the mind (1 Pet. ii. 11; Rom. vii. 23). The devil to be daily resisted (1 Pet. v. 8, 9). The world to be overcome by the disciple as by the Master and in the Master's strength (1 John v. 4, 5). The world to be won for Christ. Hardness to be endured as by good soldiers. Perseverance in the conflict to be maintained to the end. Victory certain. Every believer already a conqueror, fully in Christ and partly in his own person. The conflict hastens to a close. The crowning at hand.

The true and spiritual Church of Christ, 'His body and the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,' the living embodiment of Christianity. That Christianity 'no failure; not feeble, but strong; not vanquished, but valorous and victorious; a spiritual power in the midst of a godless world; working in the early centuries, and during the middle ages, and ever since; working in spite of resistance and corruption, in spite of violence and sophistry, in spite of errors and perversions; often apparently imperilled, but never really overcome; assailed, but invincible; warred against, but triumphant.'—*Stoughton's Ages of Christendom.*

Christ's joy in His Church not only from her beauty and comeliness, but her *terribleness.* Believers never fairer in His eyes than when going forth in His strength to the spiritual conflict, and fighting the good fight of faith. The Bridegroom delights in contemplating his Bride as an army with banners led on by Himself as Her Captain. The Church often fairest in Christ's eyes when foulest in the eyes of the world. Most like her Lord when incurring the world's hatred, because testifying against its sin. 'Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.' 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you' (John vii. 7; xv. 18).

The description in the text realized in the Pentecostal Church to the present day. To be so still more hereafter (Rev. xix. 8, 14).

The Bridegroom acknowledges the power of the Bride's beauty over himself. 'Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.' Eyes mentioned as the principal seat of beauty, and the expression of the soul. The language of the eye often more powerful than that of the tongue. A look from Christ broke Peter's heart; a look from Peter overcomes His own. The part of the believer to have power with God as well as with men; with God first, then with men. The believer's power with Christ in the look of penitence, dependence, and prayer. 'He wept and made supplication unto him. He had power with the angel and prevailed' (Hos. xii. 3, 4). Christ unable to hold out against the beseeching eye of the woman of Sidon. The pleading eye of the penitent thief drew forth from the dying Saviour His longest utterance on the cross. The eyes of the Spouse like those of doves. The more dove-like the believer, the more power he has with Christ. Doves' eyes overcome the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The proper character of the believer's eyes that they 'are ever toward the Lord' (Ps. xxv. 15). Not lofty, but waiting on the Lord until he have mercy (Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2; cxxxi. 1).' Hence the believer strongest when he is weakest. Paul's paradox: 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' 'The lame take the prey.' 'Christ constrained by the earnest love of His dependent people (Luke xxiv. 29, 30).

The particular description now given of the Bride's beauty mostly a repetition of a former one (chap. iv. 1, &c.). Lips, neck, and breasts, only now omitted.

Observe—

1. The Church's beauty a permanent one. May, however, be more fully exhibited at one time than another. The same parts and features not always equally developed. In the Seven Churches, some things commended, and the want and weakness of others reproved. The Church at Ephesus praised for its patience and its works, but blamed for having left its first love. Israel's love warmest at the earliest period of their

history. 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.' Peter's fall brought his love into question, and perhaps for a time cooled its ardour. 'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.' Young converts to preserve the ardour of their first love, and so to guard against the chilling influence of the world around them. Probably the earliest and the latest periods of the Church's history those of its greatest spiritual beauty. Believers to seek to cultivate *all* the graces of the Spirit. To be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. To pursue, possess, and exhibit whatsoever things are true, just, pure, honest, lovely, and of good report: 'if there be any virtue and if there be any praise.'

2. Christ's love to His Church unchanged and unchanging. Speaks comfort according to the requirements of her case. Assurance of continued love and esteem needed after reproof for undutiful conduct. So with Peter after his fall. The charge to feed Christ's lambs and sheep renewed as often as he had before denied His Master.

3. Truth requires repetition. Believers need to be reminded of what they have heard, and to have their minds stirred up by way of remembrance (Phil. iii. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2). More earnest heed to be given to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. Line to be given upon line, and precept upon precept. Truth not easily imprinted on the mind so as to be retained, recollected, and always realized. The Spirit specially given to bring to our remembrance whatsoever Christ has said to us in His Word. Words spoken by Christ to His disciples after His resurrection those He had spoken before, but which they had either not understood or had forgotten (Luke xxiv. 44). Words spoken by Christ must be spoken again by *Himself*, in order to have their relish and effect. Believers to be frequently reminded of their proper character and holy calling as Christ's Bride, in order to be the more careful to exemplify that character, and to walk according to that calling.

The Bride commended by the Bridegroom as superior to all others. 'There are threescore queens,' &c. Possible allusion to the Ladies of an Oriental Harem. Something similar in Solomon's own Court at a later period of his life (1 King xi. 1—3). Perhaps only a comparison intended between Shulamite and all other women, even the queens, concubines, or secondary wives, and virgins, or candidates for that position, belonging to all Oriental Courts. Solomon's Bride attended by ladies of high rank. King's daughters among his 'honourable women,' while the queen stood at his right hand, accompanied by her virgins (Ps. xlv. 9, 14). The comparison viewed in relation to the

### Church of Christ,

Suggestive of—

1. *The excellence of Christ's Church or true believers.* None of all the queens, concubines, or virgins to be compared with Shulamite. Christ's 'little flock' more beautiful and precious in His eyes than all other members of the human family, whatever their position, talents, or acquirements. This, however, not from anything in themselves, either original or acquired by their own efforts. 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty,' &c. 'God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him.' Christ's chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people His 'beautiful flock.' Made comely with His comeliness put upon them. The best and most gifted of unrenewed men, in comparison to the subjects of His grace, but as 'chaff to the wheat.' The saints in Cesar's household the true royalty—kings and priests unto God. The true 'Sons of Zion,' as partakers of Christ and His Spirit, 'comparable to fine gold.' Out of Christ, men at the best but flesh, and carnally minded. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. But the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. To be carnally-minded is death. The carnal mind not subject to the law of God, nor can be. 'In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.' Apart from renewing grace, men have not the love of God in them. The character of the unregenerate, that they love the praise of men more than the praise of God; are alienated from the life of God; are without God in the world; and do not seek after God, but mind earthly things. The comparison in the text true also of the Church of Christ collectively, as a visible and organized community, in relation to all other bodies of men, whether civil or religious. True, notwithstanding all the defects to be found in the Church visible; but true in the degree in which it approaches the Scriptural model, 'the pattern showed in the Mount.' The reason is, that the Holy Spirit is ever more or less at work in it, renewing men in the image of God. 'The abode of the Spirit in the Church, from Pentecost, is a fact. A succession of ages is presented, on all of which the Spirit sets a seal.' Even in those

ages, 'overshadowed by ignorance and spiritual despotism, the light of the Spirit's presence may be traced amidst the gloom; not only amongst those who stood apart from the corruptions of Christendom, but even in the heart of the Roman Church. Faith, love, and purity may be found in the lives of many in that communion; connected, it is true, with error and superstition, with much that was foolish, and worse than foolish; but yet faith, love, and purity were there—all the more manifestly, indeed, for the evils and hindrance that surrounded them.' — *Stoughton's Ages of Christendom.*

2. *The Unity of the Church.* 'My love, my undefiled is one, the only one of her mother.' This unity farther expressive of the Church's excellence. Shulamite more precious and excellent in her mother's eyes than all her other children, and in her Bridegroom's eyes than all the Queens, concubines, and virgins united. Her excellence enabled her to stand alone—one against ten thousand. Perfection needs no help or addition, and admits of none. The one diamond in the ring more precious than all the stones set round about it. The Church of Christ *one in herself.* 'Jerusalem is a city that is compact together' —united or made one in herself. 'One body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.' Apostles and other gifts bestowed by the Church's Head, 'for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in (or into) the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph. iv. 4, 5, 12, 13). The Church many individuals, and many separate congregations and organizations, but one Church. Its true members the one Bride of Christ, united to Him by a living faith, and inhabited by His Spirit. United also to each other by a substantially common faith; by a common inward life, which is Christ Himself living in them by His Spirit; by a common birth and common nature, that of the Spirit, in virtue of which they are all made God's children; and by a common love, as, notwithstanding all their diversities, brethren of each other. Christ's prayer that that unity might be increasingly and perfectly developed and displayed to the world. That unity much more precious than uniformity in rites, ceremonies, and Church government, and independent of it. Exhibited in the Lord's Supper: 'We, being many, are one bread.'

8. *The greatness of Christ's love to His Church.* Solomon's love concentrated on Shulamite. So Christ's love in regard to His redeemed. Israel loved by Jehovah with a peculiar love (Deut. vii. 7, 8; Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20; cxlviii. 14). The Lord 'loveth the stranger to give him food and raiment:' but loved Israel with the love of a Bridegroom. 'You only have I known of all the nations of the earth.' The love of the Father and of Christ to the Church, also a peculiar love. A general divine love towards all mankind. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,' &c. A special love to His Church. Christ 'loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.'

4. *The undividedness of the Church's love to Christ.* 'My dove, my undefiled.' Shulamite's love to the Bridegroom that of the dove, distinguished for its undivided attachment to its mate. Herself 'undefiled,' as loving him with an undivided love. The mark of Christ's true Spouse to be able to say: 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides Thee.' 'What have I to do any more with idols?' 'What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.' 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' The whole heart sought by Christ, and yielded through His grace. 'My son, give me thy heart.' His complaint against the nominal Israel: 'Their heart is divided.' The prayer of the regenerate: 'Unite my heart that I may fear Thy name.' The part of grace to make the double heart single.

5. *The smallness of the Church as compared with the world.* Shulamite one; the queens, concubines and virgins many. So with the true spiritual Church of Christ at any period of her history. In comparison with the world, and even with religious professors, Christ's believing people but a 'little flock.' 'We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' Among the Gentiles, as in Israel, the saved only a 'remnant according to the election of grace.' The gate of life straight, and 'few there be that find it.' The prophet's complaint regarding Israel a general one: 'Who hath believed our report?' So the Saviour's own, as addressed to the multitude: 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.' The Gospel preached among the nations to 'take out a people for His name.' God hath 'chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.' Christ's Church His 'hidden ones,' whom 'the world knoweth not, even as it knew Him not.' Yet collectively, a 'multitude that no man can num-

ber, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues' (Rev. vii. 9).

Shulamite represented in the text as an object of admiration and praise to spectators. 'The daughters saw her, and blessed her (pronounced her happy)' &c. The Bride's beauty and excellence thus strongly commended by her royal Bridegroom, who extols her as the object of admiration to those who might have been her rivals. The New Testament Church and converted Israel similarly spoken of by the prophet. 'Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed' (Isa. lxi. 9). Jerusalem to be made a praise in the earth and a joy of many generations (Is. lx. 15; lxii. 7). Israel was to be an object of admiration and wonder to other lands, on account of the wisdom and understanding through the Divine law which had been committed to them, and to be made 'high in praise, and in name, and in honour above all the nations' (Deut. iv. 6; xxvi. 19; Jer. xxxiii. 9). A thing which actually happened (Ezek. xvi. 14; 1 Kings x. 8). So after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the people collected from every nation under heaven, wondered when they heard the illiterate Galilæans declaring in all their respective languages, 'the wonderful works of God.' Subsequently, the infant Church at Jerusalem 'had favour with all the people' who 'magnified them' (Acts ii. 6—11, 47; v. 13). The rulers, 'seeing the boldness of Peter and John, marvelled, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.' The council 'looking steadfastly on Stephen' as he stood before them, 'saw his face as it had been the face of an angel' (Acts iv. 13; vi. 15). King Agrippa, hearing and seeing Paul, 'almost persuaded' to become a Christian. The testimony of the heathen in regard to the early Christians: 'See how these Christians love one another!' 'They are astonished who behold thy order.'—*Theodoret.* Believers the living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. So to live that others seeing their good works may glorify their Father who is heaven. 'They magnified the grace of God in me' (Gal. i. 24). Men to see that faith in Jesus makes believers not only holy but happy. Others to be attracted to Christ by what they see in His people (Zech. viii. 23). 'Now I saw in my dreams that Christian went not forth alone; for there was one whose name was Hopeful (being so made by beholding of Christian and Faithful in their words and behaviour, in their sufferings at the Fair), who joined himself unto him. Thus one died to bear testimony to the truth, and another rises out of his ashes to be a companion with Christian in his pilgrimage.' The language of the admiring daughters apparently given: 'Who is she that looketh forth,' &c. Perhaps the exclamation of the king's female attendants, as they saw Shulamite enter the garden while they had accompanied him. The language, not of ignorance, but of admiration. That in the Church of Christ fitted to awaken the wonder and admiration of the world. The Church a wonder in heaven (Rev. xii. 1). The Apostles a 'spectacle to the world, to angels and to men' (1 Cor. iv. 9). In reference to

### New Testament Believers,

The language suggestive of—

I. *Their* POSTURE. 'That looketh forth as the morning.' Indicates—

1. *Deliverance and change for the better.* The morning looks forth out of the darkness of the night. The shadow of death turned into the morning. The case—(1) Of the Church at and after Pentecost. 'Ye shall have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice.' Darkness made light before them. 'The day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness.' 'The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.' At Pentecost the light of the moon made as the light of the sun. (2) Of believers at conversion. 'His going forth is prepared as the morning.' The converted and believing soul goes forth out of darkness into light, out of bondage into liberty, out of death into life. 'Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.' Believers are children of the light and of the day. Not of the night nor of the darkness. Possess of the day-star in their hearts. (3) Of the Church at the Resurrection. All comparatively night with the Church till Jesus comes. Her chief beauty and blessedness connected with His glorious appearing, when she looks forth from the night of tribulation and the darkness of the grave. 'In the beauty of holiness, from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth.' 'He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe' (2 Thess. i. 10).

2. *Cheerfulness and confidence.* The face not now hidden or cast down from sorrow, shame, or fear. From Mount Olivet the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy. After Pentecost they 'did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.' The council marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John, and saw the face of Stephen as the face of an angel.

Believers having peace with God through Jesus Christ, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, glory in tribulation, and have joy in God Himself (Rom. v. 1, &c.). Conscious enjoyment of God's favour the health of a man's countenance. In Christ we receive at conversion, 'not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father!' Confidence towards God a fruit of faith in His Son. He hath given us, 'not the spirit of fear, but of love, power, and of a sound mind.' The promise connected with the Lord's appearing: 'For their shame they shall have double; and for their confusion they shall rejoice in their portion' (Isa. lxi. 7).

3. *Interest in others.* The law of Christ's kingdom: 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' Believers after Pentecost looked forth with pity and concern on a world lying in wickedness. Their calling: 'Ye shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.' Preach 'repentance and the forgiveness of sins in My name to all nations.' 'Freely ye have received; freely give.' The Gospel committed to the Church for the world's salvation. Believers to hold forth to others the Word of life. To look forth on the multitudes with the bowels of Christ. To go, in the spirit and steps of their Master, to 'seek and save that which is lost.' The world to be won for Christ.

II. *Their* APPEARANCE. A threefold comparison—

1. '*Fair as the moon.*' The moon, with her borrowed light, an object of beauty for the whole earth she looks upon. Beautiful when rolling on with unclouded grandeur. So Homer—

——The moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light.
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene.
——The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vaults and bless the useful light.

Still more beautiful when her path is through dark masses or patches of clouds—

The moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length,
Apparent queen! unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Still more so, perhaps, in her virgin crescent. So the Church of Christ, faithfully reflecting to a world still in darkness the light she receives from the Sun of Righteousness, an object of beauty to men and angels. All the more beautiful when her path is through dark clouds of trial and adversity—her usual course in this world. The proper character of believers to be 'fair' in their doings, dealings, and general demeanour. To cultivate and exhibit 'whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good report.' The Church's fair face to be soiled with tears, but not with sin. Her character after Pentecost (Acts ii. 42—47; Heb. x. 32—34).

2. '*Clear as the sun.*' The Church's path progressive. A refulgence belonging to the sun above that of the moon. The New Testament Church clothed with the sun, while the moon is under her feet (Rev. xii. 1). The Lord Himself, the Sun of Righteousness, her everlasting light. Believers partakers of His glory. Even now the prayer of Deborah in part fulfilled: 'Let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might' (Jud. v. 31). Fully hereafter. 'The righteoun shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father' (Matt. xiii. 43). We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory (1 John iii. 2; Col. iii. 4). Believers to be clear in their character, their conscience, and their creed. Christ's Church to be like Cesar's wife—above suspicion.

3. '*Terrible as an army with banners.*' The comparison to a bannered host already made. The allusion here not unlikely to the *celestial* host, the stars, as they appear marshalled in the midnight sky, when 'He bringeth out their host by number.' The third comparison probably taken from the same class of objects as the first and second. The stars, as seen in Syria, especially resplendent. Something overpowering and awe-inspiring in the countless starry worlds, varying in magnitude, brilliancy, and colour, as they throng the deep blue vault of heaven. The Church not only fair and clear but terrible; and terrible as she is fair and clear. Attractive yet terrible. Burning yet unconsumed. The Church's faithful ministers especially, as stars in the Saviour's right hand. They that turn many to righteousness to shine as the stars for ever and ever (Dan. xii. 3). The whole regenerate Church to be seen one day by an astonished world as a countless starry host, of which 'one star differeth from another star in glory.' The description of the Church in this verse, and the kindred one in verse fourth, among the most magnificent passages in the Song. The distinction between the two, that the former takes its comparisons from terrestrial, the latter from celestial objects. Perhaps pointing to the distinction between the

Church while militant on earth, and the same Church when triumphant in heaven; the former description concluding with the simile of an army marshalled for battle under its banner, the latter with that of glittering stars peacefully shining in the midnighty sky. Conflict first, then rest. First the fight, then the feast.

"There they who with their Leader,
Have conquer'd in the fight,
For ever and for ever,
Shall shine as stars of light."

## PART FIFTH.

# Married Life and its Incidents.

CHAPTER VI. 6, 10—8, 14.

SCENE FIRST. **Place:** *The Royal Palace.* **Speakers:** *Solomon and Shulamite.*

THE KING'S HAPPINESS IN HIS BRIDE.

Verses 11, 12.

SOLOMON.

I went down to the garden of nuts,
To see the fruits of the valley;
To see whether the vine flourished
And the pomegranate budded.
Or ever I was aware,
My soul made me like the chariots of
Amminadib.

The concluding part of the Song appears to exhibit the mutual happiness enjoyed by the married pair. In the words before us the King apparently presented as expressing the joy he experienced in the possession and society of his Bride. Exhibits, spiritually, the delight which the Lord Jesus finds in His Church as the Bride whom He has betrothed and united to Himself. Husbands taught to love their wives from the example of Christ in His love to His blood-bought Church (Eph. v. 25).

The present section given in the form of narrative. As the Bride in the preceding part of the Song related her experience, so in this the Bridegroom appears to relate his. 'I went down,' &c. Not clear what particular incident is referred to, whether connected with the King's first acquaintance with Shulamite, or his withdrawal, as related by the Bride, or a visit to the Bride in her own apartment at a time subsequent to the marriage. The last the most probable. The narrative possibly given, like the Bride's, in a song at the Marriage Feast. In seeking spiritual profit from the passage, may we receive 'the mind that hath wisdom!' The privilege of believers, in searching the Scriptures, to plough with the Spirit's heifer. (Jud. xiv. 18). Observe in regard to—

### The King's Visit.

I. *The* PLACE *of the visit.* 'I went down to the garden of nuts.' The walnut probably intended. Fruit with a bitter husk, hard shell, and sweet kernel. Formerly common and luxuriant around the lake of Genesaret. Probably the 'garden' to be here viewed, as in chap. vi. 16 and vi. 2, as a figurative expression for the Bride. Now a 'garden' of nuts, as indicating a state of maturity, or the Bride as a married wife. Perhaps exhibits 'the Bride's graces ripened by her earnest search after Jesus.' The privilege of believers to attain to a maturity in grace. 'Be no more children.' 'Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.' (Heb. v. 12—14; Eph. iv. 13, 14). The Church of the New Testament thus distinguished, as a whole, from that of the Old Legal Dispensation. So the Millennial Church in relation to the present. 'The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days.' The Church and individual believers a

### Garden of Nuts,

as—(1) *The fruit is preserved safe in a hard shell.* The Church in the world, but preserved from its pollution and its injury. 'I, the Lord, do keep it; lest any hurt it, I do keep it night and day.' 'I will be a wall of fire round about her.' 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.' 'His truth shall be thy shield and buckler' (Ps. cxi. 4—6; Isa. xxvii. 2). 'I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil' (John xvii. 15). (2) *The kernel hidden within the shell.* Believers God's 'hidden

ones.' Their 'life hid with Christ in God.' 'The world knoweth us not, even as it knew Him not.' 'The Lord knoweth them that that are His.' (3) *The fruit only reached when the shell is broken.* Trouble and affliction often the means of discovering grace. Persecution often the occasion of bringing forth God's hidden ones. (4). *A rough exterior and a bitter husk, but a sweet kernel.* 'God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.' Believers, while in this world, often like their Master. (Isa. liii. 2, 3). 'Judge not according to the appearance.' 'The Lord looketh not on the outward appearance, but upon the heart.' 'If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together.' (5) *Nuts composed of shell and kernel: the former however to perish; the latter to be used as food, or to propagate as seed.* Believers while in this world possessed of a twofold nature—the flesh and the spirit; the former, however hard to overcome, to perish at death, or the Lord's appearing; the latter preserved for Christ's enjoyment and service in the new heavens and the new earth. (6). *Nuts require much time for ripening.* Believers ordinarily kept many years in the world for their maturity and perfection in grace. The maturity of the Church as a whole has, in the wisdom of God, required many centuries, and is not yet attained. (7) *Nuts ordinarily the last fruit in the garden.* The Church of Christ to outlive the world, and grace to survive nature. 'The righteous is an everlasting foundation.' The earth and the things therein to be burned up. To be followed by a new earth, 'wherein dwelleth righteousness' (2 Peter iii. 10—13). 'The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it; but the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it' (Prov. ii. 21, 22).

Observe further in regard to the king's visit to the garden—

1. *Christ seeks pleasure in His Church as a man in his garden.* 'This is my rest for ever, for I have desired it.' The Church named by Himself—Hephzibah,—'My delight is in her.' If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with Me' (Rev. iii. 20).

2. *Unspeakable condescension in Christ's visits to His Church.* 'I went down.' His visits a coming down from the heights of glory to a sinful world. The Lord of glory visiting a worm. He humbles Himself even to 'behold the things that are in heaven;' yet comes down to earth to raise up the poor out of the dust, and to lift the needy out of the dung-hill (Ps. cxiii. 6, 7).

3. *Mature believers Christ's especial pleasure.* 'I went down to the garden of nuts.' The promise—'I will dwell in them and walk in them,' connected with the precept—'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing' (2 Cor. vi. 16, 17). 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy. He will beautify the meek with salvation' (Ps. cxlvii. 11; cxlix. 4; xxxvii. 23).

II. *The* OBJECT *of the visit.* 'To see the fruits of the valley,' &c. A valley low in situation and generally fertilized by a stream of water; hence suitable for a garden. Christ's Church lowly in her condition in respect to this world. 'Not many mighty,' &c. Lowliness of spirit the proper character of His people. 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' Christ's Church well watered. 'I will water it every moment.' Sheltered as well as watered. 'The city shall be low in a low place.' Observe—(1) *Christ's delight to see the spiritual fruits of His Church.* 'Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples.' 'My soul desired the first ripe fruits.' (2) *Christ careful in observing the spiritual condition and progress of His Church.* 'To see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded.' Fruit expected. 'I looked that it should bring forth grapes.' 'These three years I come seeking fruit.' The first declaration in each of Christ's letters to the Seven Churches: 'I know Thy works.' This followed by a description of their condition. The spiritual condition of congregations and individual believers carefully noted. Growth and progress looked for. The Church and the believer's soul to be like Aaron's rod that 'budded, and blossomed, and bare almonds.' (3) *Grace found in different stages*—the bud, the blossom, and the fruit. 'First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear.' The 'bud' precious in Christ's eyes as well as the fruit. 'Feed my lambs,' His first charge to Peter. The day of small things not despised. (4) *Different kinds of fruit in Christ's garden.* Nuts, grapes, and pomegranates. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Passive as well as active virtues. The child's docility, the maiden's purity, the confessor's boldness, and the martyr's patience. (6) *Different characteristics and types among believers. Nut-trees, vines, and pomegranates,* 'Sons of consolation' and 'sons of thunder.' Varieties found in the Church which are due not to the degree of grace, but to the natural character. Constitutional differences of individual character not extinguished or suppressed by

grace, but hallowed and employed for different purposes in the Kingdom of God. Marthas as well as Marys, Jameses as well as Johns required in the Church of Christ.

III. *The* RESULT *of the visit.* 'Or ever I was aware,' &c. Apparently expressive of speedy, sudden, and unexpected delight. The king's expectation quickly, suddenly, and more than gratified. Christ's desire for fruit and enjoyment in His blood-bought Church fully and speedily realized on and after the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 1, 2, 41—47; iv. 31—37; v. 12, 14, 41, 42). The glorious change wrought on the New Testament Church the immediate result of the outpoured Spirit who, ten days after Christ's ascension, came suddenly as a 'mighty rushing wind' that 'filled all the house where they were sitting.' The 'chariots of Amminadib' probably distinguished for the speed at which they were driven. 'Amminadib' possibly the name of a well-known charioteer. The meaning of the name—My willing, liberal, noble, or princely people. May point to the love and devotedness of the Pentecostal Church, when none of them said 'that ought of the things which he professed was his own;' and when, in the ardour of their love to one another, and their consecration to the Saviour's cause, they 'sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need' (Acts ii. 45; iv. 32). A fulfilment of the text also possibly in the boldness and zeal of the Apostles and primitive Church, in testifying for Christ and preaching His Gospel in the world according to His last and great commission: 'Go ye unto all the world,' &c. From the text we may observe—

1. *Christ's affections moved by the contemplation of His people's graces.* More especially —(1) Their earnestness in seeking Him when absent, as Shulamite had previously sought her absent Bridegroom. (2) Their penitence for past indifference and unfaithfulness. (3) Their love in commending Him to others. (4) Their zeal in carrying out His wishes in regard to the world. Christ's joy for a time at least fulfilled in the New Testament Church, in their love to one another, their obedience to His word, and their devotedness to His service. Christ glorified in His saints. Moved with an intensity of feeling towards His people. 'As the Bridegroom rejoiceth over the Bride, so will the Lord thy God rejoice over thee' (Isa. lxii. 5). His joy over them in proportion as they show themselves His 'willing people.' This their proper character (Ps. cx. 3; 2 Cor. viii. 5).

2. *Christ's people to be His chariot in conveying the Gospel, and in winning others to His side.* The Gospel the chariot in which Christ goes forth with His bow in His hand, 'conquering and to conquer' (Rev. vi. 2). His people in general, and preachers in particular, the bearers of that Gospel, both at home and abroad. Hence His 'battle-axe and weapons of war' for breaking in pieces the nations (Jer. li. 20—25).

3. *The cause of Christ's joy in His people from and within Himself.* 'My soul made me like (or simply 'made me') the chariots,' &c. His own 'soul' rather than anything really in *them.* 'The believer has a notable friend in Christ's own bosom.—*Durham.* 'Of Me is thy fruit found.' 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit' (John xv. 16).

4. *The privilege and happiness of Christ's faithful and willing people that they are made His joy.* 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full' (John xv. 11).

THE CALL TO SHULAMITE.

Verse 13.

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

Probably the language of the King, speaking in the plural as in chap. i. 11, perhaps as being attended by companions. Expressive of admiration of Shulamite's beauty, and ardent desire for her presence and society. Shulamite, though entreated to return, supposed to be near enough to answer the call. 'What will ye see in the Shulamite?' Her attempted flight from the King, from whatever cause, supposed in the call. Probably from conscious unworthiness, as indicated in her answer, 'What will ye see?' &c. The reference in the words, and their connection with the preceding, obscure. Clearer on the supposition of the king relating his first meeting with his future Bride. Perhaps the allusion to the Bride's own narrative. The spiritual application of the words little affected by the obscurity of the reference. The allegorical meaning, the principal matter, sufficiently obvious. Similar language too frequently addressed through the prophets by the heavenly Bridegroom to His ancient Church. The text in harmony with such passages as Jer. iii. 1, 12—14, 20—22; iv. 1: v. 23; xxxi. 22. Hos. xii. 6; xiv. 1. Joel ii. 13; Zech. i. 3. May be viewed therefore as a prophetic intimation—(1) of Israel's departure from the Lord in the time of the kings, as well as in that of the Saviour;

and of the earnestness with which the Lord, first by His prophets, then by Himself personally in the flesh, and subsequently by His Apostles and servants, sought to bring back His backslidden people. The Gospel to be first preached in Jerusalem and to the Jewish nation. Christ's personal call and that of His forerunner: 'Repent.' 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!' The Apostles' call to the same people: 'Repent and be converted.' (2) Of the same tendency in the New Testament Church. A similiar call on the part of the Bridegroom heard in most of the Epistles to the Seven Churches. Because iniquity should abound, the love of many should wax cold. The caution as necessary for the New Testament Church as for the Old: 'Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.' The Epistle to the Hebrews written especially to guard the Hebrew Christians from backsliding and apostacy. Paul's Epistle to the Churches of Galatia indicative of a similar danger: 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?' 'Be not again entangled in the yoke of bondage.' 'I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.' 'Ye did run well: who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth.' Practical as well as doctrinal departures even then to be mourned over. 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' Observe in regard to the

### Call to Return.

I. *The* PARTY *called.* 'O Shulamite.' Different significations assigned to the name. (1) *Bride of Solomon;* the name viewed as the feminine form of Solomon. The Bride thus named from her husband. So Christ's new name to be written upon His faithful people (Rev. iii. 12). Disciples called 'Christians' or 'Christ's people.' The same name given to both the heavenly Bridegroom and the Bride: 'The Lord our righteousness' (Jer. xxiii. 6; xxxiii. 16). (2) *One who has been reconciled, or has obtained peace.* As Solomon is 'The Peaceful,' or 'The Peace-giver;' so Shulamite, 'The Pacified,' or 'The Peace-receiver.' 'Justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'He is our peace,' 'having made peace through the blood of His cross; and you hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death' Rom. v. 1; Eph. ii. 14; Col. i. 20, 22). (3) *The perfect One.* So chap. iv. 7; vi, 9. Israel's beauty said to have been 'perfect' through Jehovah's comeliness put upon her (Ezek. xvi. 14). Believers complete in Christ. Called to be perfect as God is perfect; to be 'perfect and entire, wanting nothing;' to 'stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.' (4) *An inhabitant of Salem or Jerusalem* (Ps. lxxvi. 2). The Bride made such by her union with Solomon. Believers, through union with Christ, made citizens of the new and heavenly Jerusalem—the Jerusalem which is above. Their citizenship in heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour (Phil iii. 19: Heb. xii. 22; Rev. iii. 12; Gal. iv. 23). Jerusalem also literally the birthplace of the New Testament Church, which had its first meetings in that city, and began from thence to publish the glad tidings of salvation and peace to the world (Luke xxiv. 47; Isa. xl. 9). (5) *Equivalent to Shulamite,* or an inhabitant of Shunem, early known as Sulem, and corresponding with the present *Solam,* a village about three miles north of Jezreel. The Bride thus apparently identified with Abishag (1 Kings i. 3), and reminded of her native home and humble origin. Believers not to forget the 'hole of the pit' from whence they were taken, and the dust and dunghill from which rich and sovereign grace stooped to lift them, in order to 'set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory' (1 Sam. ii. 8; Ps. cxiii. 7, 8; Isa. li. 1). The text, viewed as Christ's call to His timid, down-cast and backslidden people, thus given in the greatest tenderness and love, as to those whom He has already espoused to Himself. Reminds them of their abiding union with and interest in Him. Like that to Israel: 'Turn O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married to you' (Jer. iii. 14). The bond that unites Christ's people to Himself indissoluble. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee.' 'I will betroth thee unto Me for ever' (Jer. xxxi. 3; Hos. ii. 19).

II. *The* CALL *itself.* 'Return.' The call, as addressed to Shulamite, not merely applicable to Solomon's first meeting with her. Her own narrative indicative of its subsequent appropriateness. Man's return to God the aim of all Divine revelation and the economy of redemption. Sin and the fall a departure from God. The first act of our fallen parents symbolical of the moral state into which the fall brought mankind — a fleeing from our Maker. The tendency in man's fallen nature continually to do the same. Man now by nature actually in a state of departure and apostasy from God. The Bible a continuous call to men to return to

Him from whom they have revolted. Christ's redeemed Church naturally in this state of apostasy from God in common with others. The object of Christ to bring her back from her wandering. 'I came not call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' Hence the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Prodigal Son. Every converted soul an example of obedience to the call in the text. The Gospel call: 'Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?' 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him.' 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.' Same proneness to depart from God in the carnal nature still remaining in the believer. Constant tendency to backslide. The tendency too often yielded to. Believers not unfrequently in a backslidden state. The first of the Seven Epistles of the ascended Saviour a reproof for having left 'first love,' and a call to 'repent and do the first works.' The last of them a similar call to 'be zealous and repent.' Cowper's lament too frequently to be made by Christ's Bride: 'Where is the blessedness I knew, when first I saw the Lord?' Believers, like Peter, often requiring a second conversion. As addressed to believers, the call in the text to—(1) The ardour of first love. So the call to the Church at Ephesus (Rev. ii. 4, 5). (2) Renewed zeal in His service. 'Do the first works' (Rev. ii. 5). (3) To a holy and Christlike life. (4) To closeness of walk with God and with Jesus Christ. The nature of sin to cause coolness and distance between the soul and God. (5) To the peace and comfort formerly enjoyed. David's sin cost him broken bones and sleepless nights. The joy of God's salvation lost through backsliding, though the salvation itself is not (Ps. li. 8, 12).

III. *The* MANNER *of the Call.* Indicated in the fourfold repetition of the same word: 'Return.' Intimates—

1. Its *earnestness.* Like the Call in Ezekiel: 'Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?' Yet even that double call here repeated. Shows the earnestness of Christ both for the return of a sinner, and of a backslidden believer. 'Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together!' Corresponds with all that He has done and suffered for the salvation of men. So He stands at the door and knocks, as if unwilling to depart.

2. Its *continuousness.* Not once or twice, but four times. 'All day long have I stretched out my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people.' 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?' The patience of God with His backslidden people, and the continuousness of His call to sinners to repent, something wonderful.

3. Its *kindness.* Each successive 'Return' a declaration of His loving heart. One such call to a sinner or backslider a token of love. What when it is repeated four times over?

4. The *difficulty of compliance.* Great the unwillingness to return, or the difficulty of doing so, that requires a four times repeated call to overcome it. Much easier to stray and backslide than to return. Departure from God a downward motion. The return an ascent. Impossible to renew a certain once favoured class to repentance. Yet nothing impossible with God. Christ's fourfold call, entering the ear and heart, the means of overcoming the natural reluctance and fear, as well of a sinner as a backsliding saint. The longer the Prodigal's absence, the more difficult his return.

5. The *seriousness of the case.* No slight cause the occasion of a fourfold call. Awful condition of the soul away from Christ. Mournful, as well as hazardous, state of a backslider. Such a thing as a 'drawing back unto perdition.' Sad loss both to himself and others when a believer keeps at a distance from God.

6. The *duty and necessity of immediate compliance.* When Christ calls earnestly to return, hazardous as well as sinful to sit still. Such a Call to be at once followed by the Prodigal's resolution: 'I will arise and go to my Father.'

IV. *The* OBJECT *of the Call.* 'That we may look upon Thee'—admire and enjoy Thy beauty. The language of the king, either for himself alone, or for others with him. Christ speaks to His people both in His own name and the Father's. 'My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him' (John xiv. 23). The object of the Call to sinners and backsliders, to return that Christ the Father may rejoice in their spiritual beauty as restored, renewed, and saved souls. The pleasure and glory of God necessarily the object of all His dealings with His creatures. 'He hath made all things for Himself.' 'For Thy pleasure they are and were created. So with believers: 'This people have I formed for Myself, that they may show forth My praise' (Isa. iii. 2 ). Believers chosen by God in Christ to be 'holy and without blame before Him in love' (Eph. i. 4). God's greatest glory and joy in looking on lost sinners restored, renewed, and saved by the obedience of His Son, and the grace of His Spirit. Saved souls the Saviour's reward,

and the subject of His joy (Isa. liii. 10, 11; Luke xv. 5). His love to sinners indicated in the joy He feels in their salvation. His love to His people shown in the pleasure He has in their spirituality, beauty, and prosperity. His joy especially in beholding them returning from their wanderings, and giving up all for His sake. His delight in their beauty an argument for their entire consecration. 'Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty' (Ps. xlv. 10, 11). The sinner exhorted to return for his own sake; the saint for his Saviour's. Yet a powerful argument with the sinner that God has pleasure in his salvation, not in his destruction. 'Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die? I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn unto Me and live' (Ezek. xviii. 18, 23; xxxiii. 11). An irresistible motive in the hands of the Spirit both with the sinner and the saint, that a Three-One God is glorified and rejoices in his return.

SHULAMITE'S DIFFIDENCE.

Verse 13.

**What will ye see in the Shulamite?**

The question the reply to the Call. Shulamite little conscious of any such beauty and attractiveness. Acknowledges herself Solomon's wife; or perhaps confesses to her humble origin. 'What am I, and what is my father's house?' So Gideon when called to be Israel's deliverer: 'My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house' (Jud. vi. 14, 15). One effort of grace to make us conscious of our unworthiness. Moses, on coming down from the Mount, wist not that his face shone. Isaiah in the Temple: 'I am a man of unclean lips.' Peter in the presence of a divine Saviour: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' Job: 'Now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The more light, the more defects seen. Company with Christ discovers our shortcomings. Formerly, before the marriage, Shulamite defended her beauty before the daughters of Jerusalem. After being for a little with her Beloved, she hangs her head: 'I am but a common wildflower of the plain—a lily of the valley.' Now, as the King's married wife: 'What will ye see in the Shulamite?' So Paul, righteous in his own eyes before he had seen the Lord; then, 'less than the least of all saints;' last of all, 'the chief of sinners.' Sight of Christ shows us our own deformity. John Wesley's dying testimony: 'I the chief of sinners am; But Jesus died for me.' That of William Wilberforce: 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' Humility, in God's estimation the greatest beauty. 'To that man will I look who is humble.' The great Exemplar meek and lowly in heart. Humility the first lesson He teaches. The 'poor in spirit' the heirs of the kingdom. Humility to be the believer's clothing. A believer puts on humility as he puts on Christ. The believer's twofold testimony: 'I am nothing; Christ is all.' The glow-worm hides itself in the light which clothes it. The question of the Shulamite that of Peter and John after Pentecost: 'Why look ye so earnestly upon us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?' (Acts iii. 12).

Yet, notwithstanding unworthiness, believers still Christ's spouse. That relation to Christ to be maintained in the face of all shortcomings. Believers not to deny the grace of God in them and towards them. Sense of sin and unworthiness quite compatible with consciousness of acceptance in the Beloved and the joy of faith.

THE KING'S ANSWER.

Verse 13.

**As it were the company of two armies.**

The King's answer intended to dispel the diffidence of the Bride. Expressive of her grace and attractiveness in his sight. The 'company' properly a 'dance,' or a 'company of dancers.' Dances anciently a part of religious worship. Especially practised in connection with religious festivals, the celebration of victories, and other solemn and festive occasions. Performed by several companies at once, and by ranks moving in opposite directions. Always an expression of joy, whether in God or otherwise (Exod. xv. 20, 21; xxxii. 19; Judges xxi. 19, 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7; Jer. xxxi. 4, 13; Ps. cxlix. 3, doubtful; Luke xv. 25; Matt. xi. 11, 17). Religious dances still common in the East. Their introduction into the West an idea of Savanarola. The 'armies, or camps' either literally armies of men who, in celebration of a victory, engaged in such dances; or the angelic hosts; the word here used being the name given by Jacob to the place where the angels of God met him: Mahanaim, or, as in margin, 'Two hosts or camps' (Gen xxxii. 12). The dual form of the word, though not necessarily implying two, perhaps indicating two divisions or semi-choruses, as of the women of Israel (1 Sam. xviii. 7), or, of the Levites at the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. xii. 12, 31,

38, 40), the companies of Levites being also called 'camps' (1 Chron. ix. 18, 19). The comparison expressive of—

1. *Grace and beauty.* The Bride from her beauty already compared to an army with banners, whether as marshalled for battle, on the march, or under review. The beauty, perhaps, still greater of military companies engaged in a martial or festive dance, or in performing their orderly evolutions. Even this much short of the beauty of a company, or, rather of two responsive bands of angels engaged in holy dance, as expressive of their joy and praise. Such the beauty and grace of the Bride in the eyes of her Beloved. Such the beauty of the Church in the eyes of Christ amid all her blemishes and defects. The mind of Christ Himself expressed by the Apostle when he wrote to the Church at Colosse: 'Joying and beholding your order.' What the beauty of the Church when she shall be presented to her Bridegroom, 'a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing?' Beautiful and glorious indeed when the Lord of glory Himself shall, on the day of His glorious appearing, 'be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe' (2 Thess. i. 10). 'We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' Our vile bodies changed and 'fashioned like His own glorious body.'

2. *Grandeur and terribleness.* The Bride already said to be 'terrible as an army with banners.' Something in great personal beauty that awes while it charms you. 'Terror in beauty.' So with spiritual beauty. 'He perceived how awful goodness is.' So with the Church after Pentecost. 'Of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them' (Acts ii. 13). All that sat in the Council looking steadfastly at Stephen, 'saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.' A beauty in Christian meekness and patience that awes even persecutors.

3. *Joy and adoration.* The comparison, whether referring to things celestial or terrestrial, suggestive of joy and praise. The dance, like music in general, expressive of festive joy, and, like sacred song, employed, as already noticed, in connection with divine worship (Jud. xi. 34; xxi. 21). God to be worshipped with holy gladness. Joy especially becoming in the service and worship of Him who is love itself and the fountain of every blessing. 'O come let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.' 'Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.' 'Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp and the voice of a Psalm; with trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord the King.' 'Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing.' 'Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and organs' (Ps. xcv. 1; xcviii. 4—6; c. 2, ; cl. 4). To rejoice in the Lord a repeatedly enjoined duty. That joy, however, far removed from levity and carnal mirth. Mingled with reverence and godly fear. A holy awe in the true worship of God, which deepens instead of damping the joy. Joy, as well as love and peace, a fruit of the Spirit, (Gal. v. 22). Joy in divine worship probably only hindered by the corruption of the heart and its coldness in respect to God, from expressing itself, at certain times, in dance as well as song. The beauty and attractiveness of grace heightened by the deep and holy joy which it produces.

4. *Boldness and courage.* A characteristic of 'armies,' whether human or angelic. Holy courage a grace of the Spirit. 'Add to your faith virtue,' or courage. Believers called to quit themselves like men, and be strong. The fearful classed with the unbelieving. Courage the child of faith. By faith men 'out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, put to flight the armies of the aliens.' Verified in the Primitive Church, and in times of persecution. The noble army of martyrs. 'They loved not their lives unto the death.' True courage, to fear God and have no other fear. Such courage a part of the Christian character. The Church while on earth necessarily militant. The believer's adversaries the world, the flesh, and the devil. Carries in himself two contending armies, the flesh and the spirit (Rom. vii. 23; Gal. v. 17; 1 Pet. ii. 7). The life of a believer a warfare, but a blessed one (1 Tim. i. 18; vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7). The Church enlisted under Christ as 'the sacramental host of God's elect,' to do battle against its spiritual foes. Not less beautiful in the Bridegroom's eyes because returning, like himself, with scars and wounds. A penitent and believing soul courageously fighting in the Saviour's strength, against sin, Satan, and an evil world, more beautiful in Christ's eyes than armies of Seraphim (Luke xv. 6, 7, 10).

The whole redeemed Church of Christ known as two armies — the Church militant on earth, and the Church triumphant in heaven. With the latter the battle is fought, and the victory won; with the former, the fight still continues, but the victory certain. In the eye of the glorious Leader, both but 'one army of the living God.' The day at hand when they shall be visibly one, as 'the armies which are in heaven,' following their victorious Commander, who, as the Rider on the White Horse, 'with righteousness doth judge and make war' (Rev. xix. 11—14).

## SHULAMITE'S BEAUTY CONTEMPLATED AND ADMIRED.

Chap. vii. Verse 1—7.

How beautiful are thy feet with shoes,
O Prince's daughter!
The joints of thy thighs are like jewels,
The work of the hands of a cunning workman.
Thy navel is like a round goblet,
That wanteth not liquor.
Thy belly is like a heap of wheat,
Set about with lilies.
Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.
Thy neck is as a tower of ivory.
Thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon,
By the gate of Bathrabbim.
Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon,
That looketh towards Damascus.
Thy head upon thee is like Carmel,
And the hair of thy head like purple;
The King is held in the galleries.
How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!
This thy stature is like to a palm tree,
And thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

Shulamite, encouraged by his gracious call, now appears in the presence of the King. The King, probably accompanied by his female attendants, contemplates and admires with them her sweetness and beauty. The eye surveys her whole figure, including her ornaments and attire, which, as in the case of the shoes, can alone meet the view. These latter, however, admired and mentioned as tending to set off her beauty.

The title here given to Shulamite observable—'Prince's daughter.' Probably not so originally, but—(1) Through union with Solomon. (2) As worthy to be such—her beauty, dignity and grace, such as to become a prince's daughter, while her spirit and disposition were such as to suggest a royal extraction. The Church of Christ, and believers individually, fitly so called, as—(1) Born of God, the King eternal (John i. 12; 2 Cor. vi. 18; 1 John iii. 1). (2). United to Christ, the 'Prince of the Kings of the earth,' as His Bride (Rev. xix. 7; xxi. 9). (3) Princely in their rank and possessions—kings and priests unto God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, to inherit all things (Rev. i. 6; xxi. 7; Rom. viii. 17). (4). Endowed with a princely spirit, disposition, and bearing (Is. xxxii. 5—8; Ps. xxxvii. 21; 2 Sam. xxiv. 22, 23; 2 Cor. viii. 1—4). Believers raised by sovereign grace as beggars from the dung-hill to sit with princes, and to inherit the throne of glory (1 Sam. ii. 8; Ps. cxiii. 7).

In the contemplation of Shulamite by the the king and his attendants, and in the description of her loveliness and grace, her 'feet,' or rather *steps*, and the 'shoes' she wore, the first object noticed. Perhaps the attention first struck by her graceful and becoming gait as she 'returned' and approached the king. The shoes of Oriental females of rank always beautifully and richly ornamented. The feet thus adorned indicative of a princely condition. The 'feet,' or steps, suggestive of the believer's walk and daily life. Practical holiness and devotion to the Lord's service a great part of spiritual beauty. This especially noticed by the Lord Jesus. 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' Indolence and sloth no part of a believer's character. The 'shoes' of the believer the 'preparation' given him by 'the Gospel of peace,' for holy active service or patient enduring of the Master's will. The feet to be 'beautiful with shoes,' in imitating the Bridegroom who 'went about doing good,' and, according to ability, publishing the glad tidings of peace (Is. lii. 7; Rom. x. 15). Carrying the tidings of salvation to a perishing world, the work peculiarly committed to the Bride of Christ, and that in which great part of her beauty is seen. The distinction of the Pentecostal Church—they 'went every where preaching the Lord Jesus' (Acts viii. 4; xi. 19, 20; 2 John vii.). The New Testament Church to be not merely evangelical, but evangelistic. Called not merely to *hold*, but to *hold forth* the Word of Life (Phil. ii. 16). Her beauty not merely in holy walking, but in lowly working. The Church essentially a missionary institution, established by her Lord before He went up to heaven, and fitted for her work by the promised gift of the Holy Ghost (Matt. xxviii. 20; Luke xxiv. 46—49).

The order in the former descriptions of the Bride's beauty here reversed. Commencing with the 'feet,' advances upwards. Perhaps the Church here especially exhibited as seen by *men*. The world can see the believer's walk and judge of that. Men mark how 'the Christian *lives*. His *inward* life 'hid with Christ in God.' The outward *walk* suggested also by the next object mentioned in the description. 'The joints (or roundings) of thy thighs are like jewels,' &c. The gait as well as appearance of the Bride's figure still probably in view. The comparison to 'jewels' perhaps suggested by the eye falling on the Bride's jewelled girdle. The descrip-

tion, as expressive of the life of the New Testament Church, verified in Acts ii. 42—47; iv. 32—37; Heb. x. 32—36. That life the production of a Divine workman (Eph. ii. 10; Gal. v. 22). The Divine life of believers the result of the renewing of the Holy Ghost (Tit. iii. 5).

In the description of this and the parts next named, as in the case of the *feet*, the dress that clothed them only visible, and the subjects only of the comparisons, namely: 'the navel' or girdle-clasp which covered it, and the belly or body with the breasts, described by the light coloured dress of golden tissue embroidered wth white flowers—the 'garments of wrought gold' and the 'raiment of needlework' worn by the Bride (Ps. xlv. 13, 14). The comparisons, like the mention of the parts themselves, more according to the style of Oriental than of modern European poetry. The parts now mentioned more especially connected with maternity, always highly esteemed in the East; and the comparisons chosen accordingly. The navel, or girdle-clasp, compared to a round goblet, replenished with wine; the breasts to two young beautiful gazelles — the emblems of love and beauty (Prov. v. 19); and the body, or the robe which clothed it, to a heap of wheat surrounded, as is said to have been the custom at a harvest festivity, with lilies or other flowers. The Church, like Shulamite, to be 'not only a beautiful Bride, but a fruitful mother.' The New Testament or Gentile Church, the 'barren woman made to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children' (Ps. cxiii. 9). To the free Jerusalem, which is above, and which is the mother of all believers, the Prophet, followed by the Apostle, cries: 'Rejoice, O barren, thou that didst not bear; for more are the children of the desolate than of her which hath an husband' (Isa. liv. 1: Gal. iv. 26, 27). That Church represented by such as Paul himself, when he says: 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.' 'We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children' (Gal. iv. 19; 1 Thess. ii. 7). The bodily parts, and the comparisons in the text, suggestive of a mother, not only bearing, but nourishing, her children. The goblet of wine, the lily-girdled heap of wheat, and the two fawn-like breasts, not unsuitable emblems of the nourishment which the Church, as a spiritual mother, extends to her children in the word and sacraments: the cup of blessing which she blesses, the bread which she breaks, and the pure milk of the Word, which she administers. A 'heap of wheat set about with lilies,' a suggestive emblem of what should be the character of

**Ministerial Discourses.**

1. *A 'heap of wheat.'* Solid spiritual food, consisting of pure Scripture truth, the food God feeds His people with. 'I should have fed thee with the finest of the wheat' (Ps. lxxxi. 16). The spiritual 'corn,' which, under the New Testament, should 'make the young men cheerful' (Zech. ix. 17). The 'truth as it is in Jesus' the 'bread that strengtheneth man's heart,' and makes it glad. 'Thy words were found unto me, and I did eat them; and Thy word was the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' The Word of God that by which the 'young men' are made strong, and are enabled to 'overcome the wicked One' (1 John ii. 14). That 'wheat' Christ Himself in His person, offices, and work. Christ the 'grain of wheat' which, falling into the ground and dying, brings forth much fruit (John xii. 24). The bread of life which came down from heaven, 'of which if a man eat he shall live for ever.' A discourse to feed the souls of the hearers, to be, not merely *truth*, but 'the truth as it is in Jesus.' To be a heap of *wheat*. Therefore to be well winnowed. The chaff of mere human fancies, speculations, or traditions, to be carefully excluded. 'What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces' (Jer. xxiii. 28, 29). The most useful discourses those that have most of Bible truth in Bible language. No words, for power and efficacy, 'like the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth' (1 Cor. 2, 13). Discourses not only to have the truth, but to have it in *abundance*. Not a handful, but a *heap* of wheat. Ministers to preach a full Christ—a Christ who is both Prophet, Priest, and King. Discourses to contain both doctrine, promise, and precept; the things to be believed, and the things to be done; the things done on God's side, and the things to be done on ours. A fulness in Christ and the truth concerning Him that is inexhaustible. Discourses also to exhibit the truth in a connected, orderly, and methodical manner. A *heap* of wheat—compact and orderly, not mere loose and scattered grains. Divine evangelical truth a compact whole, with order, connection, and mutual dependence in its parts. Both law and Gospel, doctrine and duty, to have their proper place and proportion. Christ taught the people as they were able to hear it. The foundation to be laid in first principles, and so 'to go on to perfection' or higher truths (Heb. v. 11—14; vi. 1). A natural and orderly arrangement in a discourse necessary as well to its retention as its apprehension.

2. *'Set about with lilies.'* The heap of

wheat surrounded with lilies in the way of ornament. The heap thus made more attractive. 'Apples of gold' to be served up in baskets of silver (Prov. xxv. 11.) The wise preacher to 'find out *acceptable* words,' while 'words of truth.' Faithful discourses not necessarily devoid of ornament. Solidity in the matter to be connected with sweetness in the manner of delivering it. The 'heap of wheat' beautified and commended by the 'lilies' that surrounded it. Style as well as staple to be attended to. The lilies not to be eaten with the wheat, yet not therefore without their purpose. The wheat of solid and saving truth advantageously set forth with the lilies of metaphor and simile. Such lilies culled from the fields of God's works as well as God's Word. Gathered also from the words and works of men. Truth both commended and conveyed by apt illustration. Comparisons and illustrations often the window that admits the light. Illustrations drawn from all quarters—history, science, biography, external nature, common life. The discourses of the great Teacher full of them. The better able the preacher is to introduce them, the more likely he is to be useful. Yet the 'lilies' only to *surround* the wheat. To be 'set about' the heap, not mixed up with it. Truth, not metaphor or simile to be the staple. The garnishing not to be confounded with the food with which it is served. 'Very fine, sir, very fine; but people cannot live upon flowers.'—*Robert Hall.* The truth to be the prominent and commanding object. Illustration and ornament to be only so far employed as may render the truth more attractive and effective. 'Lilies' not to take the place of the 'wheat.'

The neck, eyes, and nose of the Bride next commended. The neck for its whiteness and erectness compared to a 'tower of ivory.' The eyes for their largeness and lustre, softness and serenity, compared to the two ponds in Heshbon, the Amorite capital, situated on each side of the gate of Bathrabbim. The nose, for its prominence and majesty, compared to 'the tower of Lebanon that looketh towards Damascus,' the active enemy of Israel, that had been taken by David, but recovered its liberty under Solomon (2 Sam. viii. 6; 1 Kings xi. 23—25). Without straining the allegory and the comparisons, we may view this part of the description as suggestive in relation to the New Testament Church of—

1. *The believer's purity of life and liberty of spirit,* as indicated by Shulamite's fair and erect 'neck' rising like a 'tower of ivory.' White unspotted ivory, a fit emblem of the life of one whom the grace of God teaches 'to deny Himself to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world' (Tit. ii. 11, 12). A neck like an ivory tower sufficiently suggestive of that 'liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free'—a liberty from the yoke of bondage both in regard to sin and self-righteousness—a liberty not abused as a cloak of maliciousness, but proving itself by a self-denying love.

2. The believer's *calmness, intelligence, and heavenly-mindedness,* in the presence of a noisy, anxious, and bustling world; as symbolized by Shulamite's soft bright eyes, suggesting the placid pool, with its smooth, deep, transparent waters, reflecting the heavens and heavenly bodies on their unruffled bosom, on each side of the principal gate of Heshbon, with its hum of court and market, and its constant tramp of passengers. Believers taught of God not to be 'conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their mind'; to 'look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at those which are unseen and eternal'; to be 'without carefulness,' and to have their 'conversation in heaven'; to learn of Him who was 'meek and lowly in heart,' and to be, at once, 'wise as serpents and harmless as doves.'

3. *The believer's boldness, vigilance, and decision,* in the presence of a world that either persecutes or ensnares, and of the great adversary that goes about 'like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.' Symbolized by a 'nose' that suggested the tower of Lebanon, boldly confronting and keeping a vigilant watch upon the hostile city of Damascus. So the Council at Jerusalem marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John in their presence. Believers taught to watch and be steadfast in the faith; to be strong and to quit themselves like men; to be sober and vigilant, and not ignorant of Satan's devices; to obey God rather than men, and to 'esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.'

The description ends with the head, as it began with the feet. 'Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,' &c. Shulamite had commended her Beloved's head as 'being like the most fine gold.' Hers, perhaps still wearing the marriage chaplet, now commended in turn, as resembling the majestic Carmel, towering up from the sea and the plain, and crowned with foliage and flowers. Her hair admired as resembling the richest purple, as well from its lustre as its deep, dark colour. Her Carmel-like head suggestive of the dignity of Christ's Church, and the authority with which He invested her when He said: 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in

heaven. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained.' The power of Christ exercised in His Church when acting in His name; and an authority given unto her by Him for edification, but not for destruction (1 Cor. v. 3—5; 2 Cor. x. 8; xiii. 10). The 'hair,' given to the woman for a covering, and serving as her ornament and glory (1 Cor. xi. 15), suggestive of the precious fruits of the Spirit proceeding from Christ, and forming the true adornment of His Church—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c., the 'fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise of God' (Gal. v. 22; Phil. i. 11). The believer's adorning not 'the plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel; but that of the hidden man of the heart, which is not corruptible, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit' (1 Peter iii. 4).

The last clause in verse fifth apparently a parenthesis, expressing the admiration of the observer and the attractive power of Shulamite's beauty. 'The (or a) king is held [bound or captive] in the galleries' (or 'by the tresses'). No higher commendation of her charms than that a King—and such a King as Solomon!—was held captive by them. Suggestive of the spiritual beauty put upon the believer, in contemplating which the King of kings finds His delight. 'Forget thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the King desire thy beauty' (Ps. xlv. 10, 11). 'He shall rejoice over thee with joy; He shall rest in His love.' That beauty as great as a Three-One God can put upon a creature in order to fit that creature for a Bride to the incarnate Son, 'who loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing' (Eph. v. 28). The clause equally expressive of the love of Christ, as of the Church's beauty which He imparts to her. Infinite condescension and love on the part of Him who 'humbleth Himself to behold the things that are done in heaven,' that He is held bound, not by the beauty and dazzling glory of the Seraphim that never sinned, but by the imparted beauty of those whom He raised from the dunghill of degradation and sin, 'to set them among princes, even the princes of His people' (Ps. cxiii. 5). Wonderful power of the believing sinner over the loving Saviour. 'Drawn by His Church's prayers, He is held by the Church's praises.'

The contemplation of Shulamite's beauty followed by an exclamation of admiration and delight. 'How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for (or in) delights!' The character of 'fair and pleasant' already ascribed by Shulamite to her Beloved (chap. i. 16). This twofold character now applied by the King to herself. A mutual admiration and delight between Christ and His people. What He is in their eyes they are in His. Christ not only 'fair' in Himself,' but 'pleasant' to His people. Believers not only made 'fair' in themselves, but 'pleasant' to Christ, Exhibited still further in the expression 'for (or in) delights.' An amazing fact, and expressive of inconceivable grace on the part of Christ,—that the Son of God and Lord of glory can and does find delight in His blood-bought Church, consisting of sinners raised from the dust and dunghill of spiritual filthiness and corruption. Yet such the case: 'The King shall greatly desire thy beauty.' 'He shall rejoice over thee with joy: He shall rest in His love; He shall joy over thee with singing.' 'Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in thee. As a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy Lord rejoice over thee' (Isa. lxii. 4, 5; Zeph. iii. 17; Ps. xlv. 11). That delight in His saved people as—(1) Made what they are by the Holy Spirit's grace,—conformed to Christ's own image; (2) His own Bride, the gift of His Father, and espoused by Himself; (3) His *redeemed* Bride, for whom He has paid the price of His own humiliation, agony, shame, blood, and death. His delight in them *now*, in the midst of all their imperfections; what when they shall be presented to Himself hereafter, 'a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing?' Hence the duty of believers: (1) To aim at perfect holiness. The holier a believer is, the greater is Christ's delight in him. (2) To be much in fellowship with Jesus. That fellowship the Saviour's joy. (3) To seek the conversion of others. Every converted soul an addition to the Bridegroom's delight. The Bride composed of such souls. (4) To endeavour to promote the sanctification of believers. Christ's joy enhanced as their sanctification advances. An increase in their holiness is an increase in His joy.

As if unable sufficiently to admire the grace and beauty of his Bride, the king resumes his description with the comparison of her whole figure to a noble and beautiful palm tree, with its rich clusters of dates and its evergreen and elegant branches. This thy stature is like a palm tree, and thy breasts like clusters of grapes' (or rather 'dates'). The palm one of the most beautiful of trees. From its erectness and the general beauty of its aspect, its Hebrew name (Thamar), often given to women (Gen. xxxviii. 6;

2 Sam. xiii. 1; xiv. 27). The figure of a palm tree frequent in the decoration of Solomon's temple. At one time abundant in Palestine, and chosen as the emblem of the country. Now rarely to be met with. Judah sits desolate under her solitary palm tree. The palm tree, both from its beauty, its fruitfulness, and its character as an evergreen, an emblem of the righteous (Ps. xcii. 12). The comparison of Shulamite's stature to a palm tree natural; the Bride being regarded—(1) As a tall and elegant female. (2) As the Church of Christ consisting of those who are both justified and sanctified in Christ Himself. Points suggested in the comparison of the Church and the individual believer to a

**Palm Tree.**

1. Its *erectness*. The palm straight and upright. Believers upright in their principles and conduct. Straightforward, as opposed to the wicked, whose ways are 'crooked' (Ps. cxxv. 5; Prov. ii. 15). Free and joyous, as distinguished from the spirit of bondage and fear that causes the back to be 'bowed down alway' (Ps. lxix. 23; Rom. xi. 10).

2. Its *regularity*. The palm regular in its growth and figure, both in respect to stem and branches. The Apostle's joy in beholding the Church's order. The believer's behaviour orderly. His spiritual growth regular. His piety to be symmetrical. Attention to be given to *all* the will of God, and to all the pattern shown in Christ himself.

3. Its *fruitfuluess*. The fruit of the palm tree both abundant and nutritious, growing in very large clusters near the stem. Believers, united to Christ as the Life, bear in greater or less abundance the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, &c. To be filled with the fruits of righteousness. To abound in every good word and work. Their fruit glorifying to God and profitable to men. Continues to be borne at all times and in all circumstances, even unto old age (Ps. xcii. 13, 14).

4. Its *perpetual greenness*. The palm an evergreen. Always crowned with beautiful green feathery branches. True grace an evergreen. Inward spiritual life, which is Christ Himself, abiding. Discovers its beauty and freshness alike in prosperity and adversity; in health and sickness; in youth and old age.

5. Its *elasticity and invincibleness*. The fibre of the palm so elastic that no imposed weights can hinder its upward growth. Hence probably its brances used as tokens of victory and triumph. Nothing able to separate the believer from Christ, who is his life, or to prevent his spiritual growth and final perfection. In all things made more than a conqueror through Him who has loved him. All things made to work together for his spiritual and eternal good. The Church, like its type in Egypt,—'the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew' (Ex. i. 12). The blood of the martyrs the seed of the Church.

6. Its *general beauty*. The palm tree one of the most beautiful objects in the vegetable world. The highest beauty seen in true religion and those exhibiting it. Witnessed in its perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ. Seen, more or less, in all His members who are to be conformed to His image. A loving and consistent Christian the admiration of men.

The breasts of the Bride compared to clusters of dates, the fruit of the palm tree. The comparison natural from the dates growing in large clusters near the stem of the tree. The fruits of the Spirit found in believers sweet and refreshing to Christ. Of these fruits, love, symbolized by the breasts, the first in the inspired list (Gal. v. 22), and the most precious to the Saviour. The love of Mary, as shown by her anointing His feet with costly perfume, the subject of the highest encomium ever passed by the Saviour on any individual act: 'Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. Verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her' (Matt. xxvi. 10—13). A similar act, done from similar feelings by another woman, as the expression of her love to Him who had so graciously forgiven her, rewarded with similar praise (Luke vii. 37—46). No perfume so sweet, and no fruit so precious to the Saviour, as the ardent love of a forgiven sinner.

THE KING'S RESOLUTION AND ANTICIPATION.

Verses 8, 9.

I said, I will go up to the palm tree:
I will take hold of the boughs thereof;
Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,
And the smell of thy nose like apples;
And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine,
(For my beloved),
That goeth down sweetly,
Causing the lips of them that are asleep to speak.

'I said,' indicative of the king's purpose,

whether secret or expressed, in regard to Shulamite. The purpose—first, to make her his Bride and then to enjoy her fellowship as such (Prov. v. 18, 19). Christ's doings in regard to His Church the result of a Divine purpose. His delights, prospectively, with the children of men, before the foundation of the world (Prov. viii. 31). His purpose to give Himself for sinners, to unite them to Himself as His Bride, and then throughout eternity to rejoice in their fellowship and love. 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me' (John xvii. 24). 'He loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church.' 'He gave Himself for us that redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people.' 'This people have I formed for Myself' (Eph. v. 26; Tit. ii. 14; Isa. xliii. 21). Having loved and given Himself for His Church, He will 'rest' and have delight 'in His love' (Zeph. iii. 17). Christ said, I will go up to the palm tree—(1) In the everlasting covenant when He engaged to be the Redeemer of the world. (2) When in the fulness of time He gave Himself for His Church, and 'for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross despising the shame.' (3) When He, according to His loving purpose, arrests the wanderer in his sins, and, as the good shepherd, lays the lost one 'on his shoulders, and returns with it rejoicing.' (4) When from time to time He lovingly manifests Himself to His saved one, comes in and sups with him and he with Him (Rev. iii. 20). (5) When at death He receives the believer to Himself, that where He is he may be also (John xiv. 2). Christ's resolution that of enjoying the fruit of the travail of His soul, and of putting His people also in possession of it. In His love He provided the feast, and with His people He sits down to it. Planted the tree when He ascended the cross, and eats the fruit of it now that He has ascended the throne. The happiness of the believing soul to yield itself to Christ as the palm tree, for His enjoyment of the fruits of it.

Anticipation connected with resolution. 'Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,' &c. The loving fellowship of his beloved bride should be sweet and refreshing to him as the clusters of the vine, the fragrance of citrons, and the richest wine. A similar anticipation and desire already expressed on the part of the Bride in reference to her Beloved (chap. ii. 5). A mutual 'comfort of love' between Christ and His people. 'My soul desired the first ripe fruit.' 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.' 'I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness' (Hos. ix. 10; Jer. iii. 2; Mic. vii. 1). This joy experienced by Christ in the first love of the New Testament, as well as that of the Old Testament, Church. His delight found in His people in proportion as He finds in them the graces of His Spirit (Ps. cxlix. 4; Jer. ix. 24). In the finished work of the first creation, God 'rested and was refreshed;' much more in that of the second. The redeemed Church to be to Him 'for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.'—The spiritual breath of the regenerate soul sweet and fragrant to Christ. 'The smell (or fragrance) of thy nose (or breath) like apples (or citrons)'. Such breath the love and longing, the aspirations and expressions, the penitence and gratitude, the confessions and thanksgivings, the sighs and groans, the prayers and praises, of the new and spirit-born nature. 'To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word.' 'I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones' (Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2). Marked contrast between the wholesome breath of a living soul and the noxious effluvium of a dead one. The fragrance of a humble and holy love breathed by a believer in proportion as he walks with Christ and posseses His spirit. The love and spiritual-mindedness of a pardoned soul the Saviour's sweetest refreshment. Powerful motive to the cultivation of a holy, loving, and spiritual life.

The loving self-surrender of the Bride apparently indicated in the words, 'for my beloved' (verse 9). Probably the words of the Bride interjected while the Bridegroom was speaking and comparing her love, and the expression of it, to the best wine. The Bride hastens to assure him that that wine should be entirely for himself. He who was so worthy of her love, and who possessed such claims to it, should alone possess it. As his happy and favoured Bride she would love him with an undivided love. The warm and devoted affection of our heart the best gift we can offer; and, through grace, freely given to Him who is most worthy of it, and has the best right to it. That affection desired and prized by Him whom angels delight to honour. Our highest happiness to be permitted and enabled to render it. 'O, what am I, to love such a One, or to be loved by that high and lofty one! I think the angels may blush to look upon Him. Hell (as I now think), and all the pains in

it, laid on me alone, would not put me from loving. Woe, woe is me; I have a lover, Christ, and yet I want love for Him. I have a lovely and desirable Lord, who is love-worthy, and who beggeth my love and heart, and I have nothing to give Him.'—*S. Rutherford.* 'For my Beloved,' the appropriate motto of a loving believer's life. To be inscribed on all we are and have.

Perhaps an intimation, in the conclusion of the verse, of the effects of the believer's love to Christ on others as well as himself. The wine to which the Bride's love, and the expression of it ('the roof of thy mouth') is compared, said, according to our English version, to cause the lips of them that are asleep (*Margin*, 'the ancient') to speak. The language obscure, though indicating *some* property or effect of the wine spoken of, and so of that which is compared to it. Perhaps the reference to its stimulating as well as refreshing virtue. The influence which Christ condescends to allow His people's love to have upon Himself already stated (chap. iv. 9; vi. 5). Its influence on the world, asleep in the snare of Satan and under the power of sin, to be found, indirectly, in the success attending the efforts, prompted by love to Christ and love to souls for His sake, to reclaim the wanderer and rescue the perishing, by conveying to them the glad tidings of His love. Love to Christ the highest and strongest motive impelling believers to self-denying endeavours on behalf of a perishing world. 'Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee,' naturally followed by—'Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.' 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' Silent lips constantly being opened, from devotedness to Jesus, in the praise of redeeming love.

SHULAMITE'S JOYFUL SELF-SURRENDER.

Verse 10.

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

With her love, Shulamite's whole self is given to her Beloved. The heart given, all is given. The Believer's language to Jesus: 'I am thine; save me.' 'They gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to us.' 'The Bride's language—(1) That of *joy*. The believer's surrender of himself to Jesus a *joyful* one. 'O Lord, I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant; Thou hast loosed my bonds.' 'Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.' The Apostles departed from the Council 'rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame' for the name of Jesus. (2) *Certainty*. No mere hope or supposition. The matter placed beyond a doubt. Satan's object, to lead the believer to question the reality of his surrender of himself to Jesus. Such self-surrender to be made certain by frequent repetition. This the third time Shulamite has made the declaration (Chron. ii. 16; vi. 3). So Peter declared a third time his love to Jesus. A matter of such importance not to be left in doubt. Desirable to be constantly renewing our self-dedication to the Lord. Much of our comfort and growth in grace connected with the assurance that we have truly surrendered ourselves to Jesus, and are His. Observe in regard to such—

**Self-Surrender.**

I. *Its* OBJECT. (1) For his *sole possession*. One shall say: 'I am the Lord's.' 'Ye are not your own.' (2) For His *pleasure and enjoyment*. 'For Thy pleasure all things are.' Much more the Church whom He has redeemed to Himself. Christ's unspeakable condescension that He finds His enjoyment in His Church. (3) For His *service*. 'I am Thy servant.' Abigail, when consenting to be David's wife, gave herself to be his handmaid to wash the feet of his servants. Mary's language that of the believer: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.' Eve given to Adam to be an 'help meet for him.' Christ's Church at once His Bride and His servants. Our honour to be made 'fellow workers with Him' in the salvation of others. (4) For His *free disposal*. 'Be it unto me according to Thy Word.' 'Let Him do with me as seemeth good in His sight.' 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' Such self-surrender the soul of true religion. 'Religion' a binding ourselves over to the Lord. No man can serve two masters. Every man and woman either for Christ or for His adversary.

II. *Its* CHARACTER. Such surrender—(1) A *willing and cheerful* one. 'The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.' 'Not by constraint, but willingly.' Christ's people willing in the 'day of His power.' (2) A *whole and entire* one. No part kept back. Body, soul, and spirit given up. All we are and all we have. 'Holiness to the Lord' written on the bells of the horse-bridle. Every 'pot' holiness unto the Lord. 'Not a hoof left behind' for the enemy. (3) A *present and eternal* one. Made *now*. Not put off till to-morrow. No deferring till a more convenient season. The surrender required now. Not to make it now is a refusal. Made now, it is made for ever. No taking back the gift. The sacri-

fice bound with the cords of a divine and undying love to the horns of the altar.

III. *The* GROUND *of it.* 'His desire is towards me.' The desire that of a husband to the wife of his choice. Similar language used of Eve in regard to her husband (Gen. iii. 16). A man's wife the desire of his eyes (Ezek. xxiv. 16, 18). The desire of Christ towards a sinner that of a Saviour and a Husband. His desire towards us the ground of ours towards Him. We love Him because He first loved us. 'I am Thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds.' His desire towards the Church composed of perishing sinners, a desire—(1) To *save and bless* it. 'He loved the Church and gave Himself for it.' His desire towards sinners brought Him from heaven, and then nailed Him to the Cross for their sake. His desire towards His redeemed such that He can withhold no good thing for them. His care and concern for His Church that of a husband for his wife. Bears with her infirmities, sympathizes with her sorrows, protects her from danger, comforts her in trouble, provides for her wants, prepares for her a home. (2) To *possess it as His own.* 'He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people.' His desire, that they may both be 'brought to Him, and kept in Him' (John x. 16; xvii. 11). (3) To *have it with Himself for ever.* Is gone to heaven to prepare a place for them, that where He is, there they may be also. Hence His intercessory prayer: 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am' (John xiv. 3; xvii. 24). Rises from His Throne of glory to meet and welcome the liberated spirit of His faithful servant (Acts vii. 55).

Observe the *individuality* of the desire. 'His desire is towards *me.*' Faith's triumph, and the soul's comfort in that little word *me.* Every sinner that accepts of Jesus as a Saviour warranted to employ the language. True even of the sinner before he accepts the Saviour. His desire also towards the unsaved one; for, did He not come 'to seek and to save that which was lost?

THE BRIDE'S PROPOSAL.

Verse 11—13.

Come, my beloved,
Let us go forth into the field;
Let us lodge in the villages.
Let us get up early to the vineyards;
Let us see if the vine flourish,
If the tender grapes appear,
And the pomegranates bud forth:
There will I give thee my loves.
The mandrakes give a smell,
And at our gates
Are all manner of pleasant fruits,
New and old,
Which I have laid up
For thee, O my beloved.

Shulamite speaks, in reply to the King, as having her heart on her native fields and vineyards—the rural scenes and employments in which she had been brought up. These more attractive to her pure and simple mind, with its genuine love of nature, than the splendour and ceremony of a court. Probably the wish also present, that her native locality might enjoy the benefit of her exaltation. But for all this, or whatever might be the object of her proposal, her Beloved must go along with her. Painful now any thought of separation from him. His presence and society her only earthly happiness and joy.

The Church of Christ and believers individually, happy as the Bride of the Son of God, look out in pity and in the bowels of their Lord, on the lands of the heathen, and a world lying in wickedness, to which they had themselves belonged. Thus the Church of Pentecost soon 'went everywhere preaching the Word.' This according to the will and commission of her Lord. 'Go ye into all the world,' &c. 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Judea and Samaria, even unto the uttermost ends of the earth.' The apostles and disciples were to *begin* at Jerusalem, but not to stop there. Strictly, the resolution of the Church at Antioch, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, the first full verification of the text (Acts xiii. 1, &c). Subsequently, a second made by the apostles, to visit the places among the heathen where they had preached the Gospel, and 'to see how they did' (Acts xv. 36). Shulamite's 'come' an echo of her Beloved's (Chron. ii. 10—13). The Church, in time, responds to Christ's Call, and pleads the fulfilment of His promise. The text suggestive of

**The Church's Calling.**

That calling a Missionary one. The Church called to carry out the Mission of Christ into all the world. To be no longer the spring shut up, but streams flowing forth. Made the bearer of the glad tidings of a Saviour intended for all people. Christ is to be set up as an ensign in every land. That ensign to be carried and displayed by the Church (Isa. xi. 12; Ps. lx. 4). The 'day of good tidings' to be shared in by a perishing world. The King's commission to

his servants, to go out into the hedges and highways, the streets and lanes of the city, to invite in the poor and needy, and even to compel them to come to the marriage feast. The Gospel to be preached in the 'villages,' as well as the large centres of population. But observe—

1. *The Lord's presence with the Church necessary for success in her efforts for the evangelization of the world.* Shulamite's language to the King that of the evangelistic Church pleading with Christ for His presence. 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth,' &c. Moses' pleading with God to be that of the minister and missionary before going forth to deliver his message: 'If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.' Preparation important; but Christ's presence and power essential. Christ's word to the faithful and thoughtful preacher that to Gideon as the Lord looked on him: 'Go in this thy might; have not I sent thee?' Christ's promise to His sent servants: 'Lo I am with you alway.' The promise, however, to be pleaded in prayer, and laid hold of by faith. The resolve of the Apostles: 'We will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.'

2. *Christ's presence necessary also for His servants' strength and refreshment in the midst of their labours.* Christ wont at times to take His disciples apart (Mark vi. 31; John xviii. 2). Himself whole nights in prayer. The Gospel-fishermen's nets to be mended in private, as well as managed in public. To teach others successfully, we need to be taught successively ourselves. The wheels of the Gospel chariot the better for frequent oiling. To be 'endued with fresh power from on high,' the preacher needs to 'tarry' awhile with the Master. The lamp shines more brightly in the pulpit after being trimmed in the closet. Christ's presence lightens the preacher's labour, and carries him over every difficulty. In labour or rest, the Master's presence the faithful servant's Paradise. Nature only lovely and delightful, when the Lord of Nature is with him.

3. *Love to Christ to characterize every preacher of the Gospel.* Shulamite's language to the King: 'Come, *my Beloved.*' Love to Christ the source of ministerial devotedness, and the secret of ministerial success. The motto of the prince of preachers: 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' The charge: 'Feed my lambs; feed my sheep,' only given to Peter after the thrice-repeated declaration of his love to the Master. The preacher to labour as a portion of the Bride of Him whom he preaches, and as therefore having a personal interest in the work. 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.'

4. *Promptness and diligence necessary in the Church's discharge of her calling.* 'Let us get up early to the vineyards.' The text of John Wesley's last sermon, preached after a laborious ministry of above half a century,—'The King's business requireth haste.' His own practice was to rise at four o'clock. The New Testament Church early and zealous in its labours for the evangelization of the world. The Apostle, some time before his death, speaks of the Gospel as having been preached 'in all the world,' and 'to every creature under heaven' (1 Col. i. 6, 23). Need for promptness. Men dying at the rate of one every second. Thousands dying daily without Christ, and without even the knowledge of Him. Vast 'fields' open, and 'white to the harvest.'

5. *The Church to inquire carefully into the success of the Gospel and the spiritual state of the world, both at home and abroad.* Ministers and missionaries not merely to preach and labour, but to look for results. The work the servant's, and the success the Master's. True, but success promised, and to be expected. God's promise that His Word shall not return to him 'void.' Generally the faithful and prayerful labourer who expects most, the most successful. Fulfilment of divine promises in regard to the Church and the world to be believingly and earnestly looked for. All flesh to see the salvation of God. The knowledge of the Lord to cover the earth. Men to be blessed in Christ, and all nations to call Him blessed. Christ to inherit all nations. The people to be gathered to Shiloh. The idols to be utterly abolished.

6. *The believer's love to Christ to be displayed in his diligently carrying out the Saviour's wish in regard to the evangelization of the world, and the conversion of sinners to himself.* 'There will I give thee my loves.' The Church and believer's warmest love to Christ found in connection with their most self-denying labours in making Him known to others. The believer *then* most acceptable to Christ, when caring most for the souls whom He bought with His blood. His 'loves' given best to his Lord when going in His bowels and in His steps after the sheep that was lost. 'There,'—not on the couch of selfish care and indulgence, but in the place of labour and sacrifice, in the spirit and work of His Master, does He give Him his 'loves.'

7. *The Church's aim to bring forth spiritual children to Christ.* 'The mandrakes give a smell.' The mandrake a very strong-smelling plant' growing in Palestine. The fruit, gathered in wheat harvest or the month of May, and perhaps other parts of the plant,

thought by the Orientals to favour conception (Gen. xxx. 14—16). The Church to be 'a joyful mother of children.' 'Married' to Christ that 'she may bring forth fruit unto God' (Rom. vii. 4). The part of faithful ministers and others to 'travail in birth until Christ be formed' in the souls of others. When Zion, in her ministers and members, travails, she brings forth her children (Isa. lxvi. 28). The preaching of the Gospel, accompanied by faith, love, and prayer, on the part both of preacher and people, the true means of the Church's spiritual conception.

8. *The result of the Church's labours an abundance of spiritual fruit.* 'At (or over) our gates (or door, according to the practice in Eastern houses) are all manner of pleasant fruits.' Such fruits the sample and foretaste of what was to come. The Church's fruits an acceptable gift to Christ. 'My soul desired the first ripe fruit.' 'I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.' The minister's true ambition to have many souls to present to Jesus at His coming. 'Here am I and the children whom thou hast given me.' The most 'pleasant fruits' to Christ, the souls whom He has redeemed with His blood, sought out and brought to Him by His loving people. These fruits both 'new and old.' The Church's converts from both Jews and Gentiles, those of the Old Covenant as well as the New, those that were 'nigh,' as well as those who had been 'afar off.' In the New Testament Church the graces of the age of the Law increased by those of that of the Gospel. 'Instead of the fathers shall be the children.' Believers not to be satisfied with first principles, but to go on unto perfection (Heb. vi. 1).

9. *All the Church's works to be begun and carried on for Christ.* 'Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.' Believers to do what they do 'heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.' Love to Christ to be the mainspring of the believer's labours. The salvation of a soul to be dear, but the glory of Christ still dearer. The salvation of souls to be dearest because Christ's glory is bound up with it. The strongest motive with a faithful and loving labourer, that Christ shall 'see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.' Love considers *that* best bestowed which is bestowed on its object. Mary's precious ointment best employed in anointing her Saviour's feet. All services now lovingly done for Christ to be one day called for, acknowledged, and rewarded. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

## Shulamite's Wish.

Chap. viii. 1—4.

O that thou wert as my brother,
That sucked the breasts of my mother!
When I should find thee without,
I would kiss thee,
Yea, I should not be despised.
I would lead thee,
And would bring thee unto my mother's house,
Who would (or thou wouldst) instruct me.
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine,
Of the juice of my pomegranate.
His left hand should be under my head,
And his right hand should embrace me.
I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
That ye stir not up,
Nor awaken my love,
Until he please.

Shulamite still addresses her Beloved, perhaps now already on the way to the fields, towards her mother's house. Expresses the wish that she could be as familiar with him even outside, as if he were her brother. She had desired his kisses; and now wishes she could becomingly repay them with her own. She could wish to have him with her in her mother's house, and be her instructor there; where on her side she would present him with the best of the beverages she possessed, as the fruit of her own labour in the vineyard. In language already employed in relation to the enjoyment of his fellowship and love (chap. ii. 6, 7), she pictures to herself the joy she should thus experience, and the care she would take that nothing should disturb it. The whole the language of a loving wife, expressed according to Oriental manners, and in the style of Oriental poetry. Observe—

1. *The renewed soul, brought to the realization of Christ's preciousness and love, and to the experience of the blessedness of being united to Him as His Bride, cannot be satisfied without the closest intimacy and unrestrained enjoyment of His fellowship.* An intense longing after more of His fellowship and love, a mark of the heaven-born soul, and of the Bride of Christ. Unable to enjoy in this world as much of that communion with Christ as he desires, he looks forward with wistfulness to a better. 'I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' In heaven, believers see Him as He is; are fed by

Him as His sheep, and led by Him to 'fountains of living waters.' 'Follow Him whithersoever He goeth.' Their happiness there not merely to enjoy Christ fully, but to express, without restraint of fear or shame, the ardour of their love and affection. 'I would kiss thee.' Believers hindered in the present world, by causes both internal and external, from letting out their love on Christ as they would. The holy delight and satisfaction in doing so reserved for a better state. In reality, however, the language of the Bride realized in relation to Christ. The Bridegroom of the Church no longer as in the time of Old Testament saints, the mere infinite and absolute God—'the King eternal, immortal, and invincible, dwelling in that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see.' The longing of the Old Testament Church fulfilled in the New. The Divine Bridegroom now our very 'Brother'—seen with our eyes, looked upon and handled with our hands (1 John i. 1). John leaned on His bosom. Mary held Him by His feet. The woman that had been a sinner kissed His feet while she washed them with her tears. Probably the disciples were in the habit of kissing His cheek according to the custom of the time; though the only such kiss recorded, alas! is that of the man that betrayed Him. His message after His resurrection—'Go and tell My brethren.' 'Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise took part of the same' (Heb. ii. 11—14).

2. *Christ still to be found 'without.'* Believers have still to go forth unto Him 'without the camp.' Christ still to the world at large 'a root out of a dry ground.' The world no nearer knowing Him now than when He sojourned on earth. The 'reproach of Christ' to be experienced till He shall come again. Danger of being 'ashamed' of Him 'in this sinful and adulterous generation.' Christ also found 'without' in His cause, and in the persons of those who are to be gathered to Him out of the world, both at home and abroad. 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me.' Christ, in the person of His redeemed, found by the Bride after Pentecost in Judea, Samaria, and the lands of the heathen, and brought by her unto her mother's house, the Church.

3. *The desire of believers to have Christ brought into their mother's house.* (1) Into the *Church* at large, and especially that portion of it with which they are more immediately connected. 'Christ to be taken by the believer from the closet into the sanctuary.' Well when believers not only find Christ in the Church, but take him there. Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all: yet to every believer, in a narrower sense, some section of the visible Church, and some particular congregation or mission, his 'mother's house,' in which he found Christ and was born again. 'Of Zion it shall be said, This man and that man was born there.' (2) The circle of their own *kindred and relations.* So Andrew found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus. Christ's direction to the restored Demoniac: 'Go home to thy friends, and show them what great things God hath done for thee.' Salvation and blessing promised not only to believers themselves, but, conditionally, to their family (Ps. cxv. 14; Acts. ii. 39). Hence households baptized with their believing head. Individual conversion to be followed by the conversion of the household. 'The religion of the closet and of the sanctuary tried and confirmed by that of the family.' Parents saved for the sake of their children as well as for themselves. On the other hand, the salvation of the children often followed by that of the parents. Noah was not only to enter the ark, but his family with him. Rahab was not only to be saved in the destruction of Jericho, but her father and mother, brother and sisters, along with her. The happiest family that in which Christ is made an inmate. 'No resting place to the Son of man sweeter than the bosom of a pious family.' Such the family at Bethany (Luke x. 38—42; John xi. 1, 2).

4. *The privilege of believers to be under the continued teaching of Christ and His Church.* 'Who would (or thou wouldst) instruct me.' All needful instruction in the possession of Christ. Christ the prophet, as well as the Priest and King of His Church. The Great Teacher. Hid in Him are 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' Natural that He should be the teacher of His Bride. Divine teaching promised to all the children of the true Jerusalem. 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.' Christ, 'the wisdom of God,' made 'wisdom' to those who are in Him. Believers to grow in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour. Much always to be learned. Here we know but in part. Our privilege to have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, that we may know all things. Eye-salve given by Christ, that we may anoint our eyes and see. Spiritual instruction to be found in the Church, our 'mother's house.' The Church furnished by her Head with the means for such instruction. Gifts of the Spirit bestowed for that purpose (Eph. iv. 7; Rom. xii. 7). True pastors and teachers Christ's gift. Believers to teach and admonish one another. Our privilege always, with Mary, to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his words. The Scriptures

given for our learning, that the man of God may be perfect. The great commission, not only to preach the Gospel, but to 'teach' the Church's members (Matt. xxviii. 20). The Bridegroom's voice to His Bride: 'Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart' (Matt. xii. 29). The most advanced believers the most earnest and humble learners. Believers never to be above ordinances, yet always to look above them to Christ. To be taught not by special revelation, but in connection with instituted means in their 'mother's house.' Must find the truth in ordinances, or cease to attend them (Prov. xix. 27). Will not hear the voice of strangers, but 'flee from them.' Believers after Pentecost 'continued steadfastly in the doctrine of the Apostles,' who 'daily in the temple and in every house, ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ' (Acts ii. 42; x. 42.

5. *The believer's duty and delight, to make a return for Christ's love with whatever he has or is.* 'I would cause thee to drink,' &c. The inquiry natural: 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?' Believers constrained by the mercies of God in Christ to present their bodies to Him as a living sacrifice (Rom. xii. 1). The love of Christ constraineth us, to live not to ourselves but 'to Him who died for us' (2 Cor. v. 10). Our love desired in return for His. 'My son, give me thine heart.' Our love, manifested by obedience and self-denying service, His greatest refreshment and delight. 'I have meat to eat which ye know not of.' Christ refreshed and fed in His members. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren,' &c. 'He that is taught in the word, to communicate unto Him that teacheth in all good things.' What is given to His servants who teach in His name, regarded as given to Himself. 'He that receiveth you, receiveth Me' (Matt. x. 40—42). Believers after Pentecost 'sold their possessions, and brought the price and laid it down at the Apostle's feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need' (Acts ii. 45; iv. 34—37).

6. *Believers walking faithfully with Christ, warranted to expect the repetition of former enjoyment in His fellowship and love.* 'His left hand should be under my head,' &c. This happiness already, on a former occasion, enjoyed and recorded (chap. ii. 6). The delight once experienced in special communion with Christ, and the enjoyment of His manifested love, to be desired and expected by the believer in the course of his pilgrimage. That experience usually found in proportion to the desire after it, and in connection with faithfulness in following Christ, confessing Him before men, and seeking after the lost. Special communication of His love often Christ's loving reward for faithful, self-denying service. Yet an open door, and a hearty welcome will bring Him in to sup with us (Rev. iii. 20).

7. *Care always needed by the believer to guard against disturbing influences while in the enjoyment of Christ's presence and love.* 'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,' &c. The charge already given on two former occasions (chap. xxvii. 3, 5). Always needful so long as the believer is in this world. Seasons of spiritual rest and enjoyment to be cherished and improved to the utmost (Acts ix. 31). Care to be taken not to grieve or quench the Spirit (Eph. iv. 20; 1 Thess. v. 19). Disturbing influences both within and without. Believers to keep the heart tender and watchful in entertaining a found Christ. No absolute freedom from interruption in the enjoyment of Christ till we see Him as He is.

SCENE SECOND. **Place:** *The Country in the neighbourhood of Shulamite's native home.* **Speakers:** *The King, Shulamite, and Country People.*

## CHAPTER VIII. VERSES 5—7.

### SHULAMITE ADMIRED BY THE COUNTRY PEOPLE.

Verse 5.

COUNTRY PEOPLE.

Who is this
That cometh up out of the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?

Shulamite's proposal to go forth into the country lovingly accepted by the King. The journey commenced, and now nearly completed. The happy pair now arrived at the neighbourhood of Shulamite's native home. Seen approaching, as she leans on her husband's arm. The Bride an object of admiration to the rustic inhabitants, who exclaim: 'Who is this?' &c. Beautiful and instructive picture of the believer while in this world. True always; especially true in the Pentecostal or primitive age of the Church. Notice in regard to

### The Believer's Posture.

I. *The* POSTURE *itself.* Two features—

1. '*Coming up out of the wilderness.*' (1) '*Coming.*' The life of believers a *journey*, Like Moses to Hobab: 'We are journeying to the place,' &c. Sinners not pardoned to sit still. Brought up out of the horrible pit, and our feet set upon the rock, our 'goings' are established. The healed and pardoned paralytic takes up his couch and goes to his house. Believers have a home, and they *go* to it. (2) Coming '*up.*' The journey of believers an *upward* one, Their home on high. The 'heavenly Jerusalem;' the house with 'many mansions;' the 'better country, that is, an heavenly.' Their affections set on things above. Their journey an *ascent*. Their motto, Excelsior. Higher and higher. Progress heavenward characteristic of the believer. On the ladder, and ascending by it. Ascent often difficult and laborious. *Descent* easy, and requiring little effort. Salvation to be wrought out with fear and trembling. All diligence required to add to our faith, virtue, &c. (3) Coming up '*out of the wilderness.*' The world in which the believer finds himself, a wilderness. So Israel's journey to Canaan lay through a desert. A wilderness is—(i.) A place of *hunger and thirst*. (ii.) A place of *thorns and briars*. (iii.) A place of *danger both for man and beast*. The world unable to satisfy the wants and cravings of the soul. Full of trials and temptations. The place of the roaring lion, who seeks whom he may devour. An enemy's country. Believers, like others, once abiding in the wilderness. Willing to remain in it, though finding neither rest nor satisfaction. Aroused by a gracious voice: 'Arise and depart ye; this is not your rest.' Made to *see* it to be a wilderness. Like the prodigal son, they see their misery, and think of a home. Taking Jesus as their Saviour, they set out for it. Their back now to the wilderness, and their face to heaven. *In* the world, but no longer *of* it.

2. '*Leaning on her Beloved.*' Implies—(1) The *company* of her Beloved. Christ's presence promised to His people in their journey through the wilderness. 'Fear not, for I am with thee.' 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' 'I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Hence their fearlessness. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me' (Ps. ii. 3, 4). (2) The *support* of her Beloved. Christ the 'strength,' as well as 'righteousness,' of His people. His promise: 'My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Believers taught the 'happy art' of depending on Christ for all things. 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' Believers 'lean' on Christ—(i.) for *acceptance* with God, through His perfect obedience. (ii.) For *holiness* and victory over sin, through the grace of His Spirit; (iii.) For *protection* and preservation, by His Almighty power. (iv.) For *strength* and grace for the performance of every duty, and the endurance of every trial. Constant supplies of grace needed and received out of Christ's fulness for the wilderness journey. Great part of heavenly wisdom to lean on Christ at every step, and at every turn of the road. The life of believers a life of faith and dependence on Christ. The part of faith to lay the whole weight of our salvation, and the burden of every duty and difficulty on the Beloved. Believers only go upward as they lean on Christ. Resting on Christ essential to progress in holiness. Spiritual growth marked by conscious weakness leaning on perfect strength. Hence Milton's paradox: 'The omnipotence of human weakness.' Christ honoured and pleased by such dependence. To further it, He often removes from us every other support. Hence Paul's 'thorn in the flesh.'

The believer's life therefore—(1) A *laborious* one. An upward journey through a wilderness. (2) A *pleasant* one. The company of the Beloved. Pleasant company makes pleasant travel. (3) A *safe* one. An Almighty arm to lean upon.

II. *The* ENQUIRY. 'Who is this?' The sight—(1) A *rare* one. Far from common to see an individual going up from the wilderness, with his back to the world and his face to heaven, and especially as leaning on Jesus as his Beloved. The opposite of the character of the world. The sight everywhere met with is, worldliness, pride, and self-dependence. (2) A *beautiful and engaging* one. Beautiful in itself, and beautiful in the eyes of God, angels, and all right-minded persons, to see an individual giving up sin and the world, and with Jesus as his Beloved and only trust, earnestly proceeding on his way to heaven. Believers most amiable when seen going up out of the wilderness leaning on their Beloved. Worldliness and pride the blight and bane of the Church. A proud and worldly-minded professor a stumbling-block to the world. A humble and heavenly walk attractive even in the eyes of ungodly men. (3) An *open and conspicuous* one. Believers. going up from the wilderness leaning on Jesus, not able to be hid. A city set on a hill. The Master's will that they should be seen. 'Let your light so shine before men,' &c. The object not that they should be admired, but that God their Father should be glorified. Believers to be 'living Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men.' 'He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they

are wrought in God.' Believers to be God's witnesses in a sinful world. Their holy and heavenly life to be His constant testimony. Men to take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. Made a 'spectacle to the world' for God's glory and the world's good. The heathen's testimony to the early Church: 'See how these Christians love one another.' Men to be drawn to Christ not merely by the preacher's lips, but by the believer's life.

THE REMINISCENCE.

Verse 5.

THE KING,

*To Shulamite, who enters with him, leaning on his arm.*

I raised thee up under the apple tree:
There thy mother brought thee forth,
There she brought thee forth that bare thee.

One of the obscurest passages in the poem. Apart from Jewish pointing, nothing in the form of the words to indicate who is the speaker. That pointing, comparatively modern, makes the words to be addressed to the King, and thus to be spoken by Shulamite. More reason, however, with all the Greek Fathers, and many of the Latin ones, to regard the King himself as the speaker, and Shulamite the party addressed. Moved, perhaps, by the sight of a familiar object as they approach her mother's dwelling, he reminds his beloved of what took place there at an early period of their connection; points her to the apple or citron-tree growing near the house, which had witnessed his endeavours, under its pleasant shade, to gain her affections, and his subsequent happiness when he there received her as his betrothed at her mother's hand. 'I raised thee up (or 'excited thee' to love) under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth (rather 'pledged thee' to me), there she brought thee forth (pledged thee) that 'bare thee.' Observe—

1. *First love and espousals between Christ and the believer never to be forgotten.* Never forgotten on Christ's side. 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals' (Jer. ii. 2). Believer's first love greatly prized and fondly looked back upon by the Saviour. 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love' (Rev. ii. 4). Believers, on their part, to cherish the remembrance of Christ's early gracious dealings with their soul, and of their early affection and surrender of themselves to Him.

2. *Christ the first mover in the saving connection between a soul and Himself.* 'I raised thee up'—excited thee to love. 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.' The first spark of love to Christ in the soul kindled by Christ Himself. 'We love Him because He first loved us.' 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.' 'I will betroth thee unto Me in lovingkindness and in mercies' (Hos. ii. 19; Jer. xxxi. 3). The soul espoused by Christ first 'raised up' by Him from spiritual death. 'Raised up' from a state of degradation and misery. Raised as a 'beggar from the dunghill, to inherit the throne of glory' (1 Sam. ii. 8). 'Raised up' from the deep spiritual sleep into which sin has cast mankind' (Eph. v. 14). 'Raised up,' finally, from the dejection and despondency common upon conviction of sin' (Acts ii. 37, 38; xvi. 30, 31).

3. *Those places precious and memorable to the believer that are associated with his early love and espousals to Christ.* The place of the altar where the Lord first appeared to Abraham in Canaan fondly remembered by him. Jacob reminded by the Lord Himself of the place where He first appeared to him as his covenant God. Those places of early love and communion afterwards gratefully visited. Their frequent remembrance profitable to the reviving and stimulating of love and devotedness to the Saviour.

4. *Spiritual ordinances,* in which Christ meets and espouses souls to Himself, *fitly compared to an*

**Apple Tree.**

(1) Because *full of Christ,* the True Apple Tree (chap. ii. 3). (2) From the *sweet refreshment* afforded in them to quickened souls. The apple or citron tree distinguished for its refreshing fragrance. (3) From the *rich and reviving fruit* enjoyed in connection with them. 'Thy words were found unto me, and I did eat them; and Thy words were the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' 'My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' (4) From the *comfort and strength* afforded in them in times of temptation and trial. The citron-tree remarkable for its shade. The Psalmist's experience: 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple: for in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion. Mine head shall be lifted up above mine enemies round about me' (Ps. xxvii. 4—6).

5. *The part of the Church of Christ not only to 'bring forth,' but to 'pledge' souls to Him as His Bride.* The Church to be a mother of children, who, with herself and through her instrumentality, shall be espoused to Christ. Paul, as a minister of Christ, a representative of the Church when he says: 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth, until Christ be formed in you.' 'I have espoused you to one husband.' The Church never to forget her high calling, and never to be satisfied unless 'pledging' souls to Christ as His Bride.

6. *The divinely instituted ordinances of the Church, the means by which souls are ordinarily 'brought forth' to a spiritual life and pledged to Christ as His Bride.* 'There thy mother brought thee forth' (pledged thee). The ordinances of the Church instituted by Christ Himself for this purpose (Eph. iv. 8—12). 'In Christ Jesus have I begotten you by the Gospel.' Paul and Barnabas at Iconium 'so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed' (Acts xiv. 1).

### The Bride's Request.

Verses 6, 7.

Shulamite, *to the King.*

Set me as a seal upon thy heart,
As a seal upon thine arm:
For love is strong as death,
Jealousy is cruel as the grave:
The coals thereof are coals of fire,
Which hath a most vehement flame.
Many waters cannot quench love;
Neither can the floods drown it.
If a man would give all the substance
of his house for love,
It would utterly be contemned.

Shulamite, still leaning on her Beloved, and taking occasion from the tender recollection he had just uttered, expresses on her side a desire indicative of the ardour and steadfastness of her affection. 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart,' &c. As a plea for her request, she urges the nature of true love. 'For love is strong as death, &c. Observe—

I. *The* Request. 'Set me as a seal,' &c. Seals well-known to have been used, as they still are, for ratifying and confirming covenants (Neh. ix. 38; Jer. xxxii. 10, 44; Rom. iv. 11). Used also for security (Deut. xxxii. 34; Job xiv. 17; Matt. xxvii. 66; Rom. xv. 28). May here allude to the practice of impressing marks upon the person with henna dye, or other material (Rev. vii. 3; xiv. 1; xx. 3). Shulamite's desire to have her name or likeness stamped upon her Beloved's heart and arm; on his heart or breast as the seat of affection, and on his arm, where it might be constantly in view. The desire of every loving heart to be kept in affectionate remembrance by one who is the object of its love. Love must have love in return. A fear, however, that love might be diminished by distance, especially where it may have rivals. Love trembles at the thought of the proverb proving true: 'Out of sight, out of mind.' The believer's strongest desire to be loved and affectionately remembered by his Saviour. 'Lord, remember me,' a prayer both in the Old and New Testament (Ps. cvi. 8; Luke xxiii. 42). The believer conscious how unworthy he is of Christ's love, yet cannot live without an assurance of it. That assurance granted in the words of the inspired prophet: 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget; yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have *graven thee upon the palms of my hands;* thy walls are *continually before me*' (Isa. xlix. 14—16). Typical of this fact, the names of the twelve tribes were engraved on the High Priest's breast-plate and shoulder-pieces, and carried with him into the Holy of Holies before the Lord (Exod. xxviii. 6—30). The import of the request—(1) *Preciousness and dearness* in the sight of the Beloved (Jer. xxii. 24; Haggai ii. 23). (2) *Nearness* to, or rather *oneness* with, Him. (3) An *unchanging and permanent place in His affection.* (4) A *constant remembrance* by Him. Observe—

1. Present communion to be improved by importunate pleading.

2. Love evinces its reality and ardour by seeking greater nearness and unchanging steadfastness.

3. The believer's earnest desire and distinguished privilege to be cherished by Christ's heart, and supported by Christ's arm.

II. *The* Plea. 'For love is strong as death,' &c. The ardour and strength of Shulamite's affection, the reason of the desire to have an abiding place in that of her Beloved. Ardent love can only live on love. Conscious of the ardour and steadfastness of her own affection, she desires it to be reciprocal. Love which is not ardent and steadfast unworthy of the name. Hence Shulamite's descant on the

### Nature of True Love.

1. Its *strength and irresistibleness* in the subject of it. 'Strong as death.' Love no

more to be resisted in its approaches than death. Shulamite under the power of it in regard to her Beloved. Unable to resist it, she must love and be loved in return, or die. Like death, love must have its object. So Christ gave up His own life in order to have the Church whom He loved (John xv. 13; Eph. v. 25). Believers must have Christ, or die.

2. Its *tenacity*. 'Jealousy is cruel as the grave.' Jealousy an intense, vehement love, that cannot brook a rival (Prov. vi. 34). Same word rendered 'zeal.' Is 'cruel'—severe, unyielding, and tenacious, 'as the grave.' Like the grave, love will not quit its hold but at the command of Omnipotence. Jealousy implies—(1) Ardent affection; (2) Fervent desire of enjoyment; (3) Impatience of anything coming between love and its object; (4) Grief for any apparent want of return. Such the case with Christ's love and the believer's. Jealousy of Christ's love a proof of the strength of our own. Love to Christ makes us jealous of all that would come betwixt Him and us. Christ's love to His people can endure no rival in theirs to Him. 'I would thou wert either cold or hot.' Believers too apt unjustly to suspect Christ's love to them, while Christ has too much cause to be jealous of their love to Him.

3. Its *ardour and intensity*. The coals (or rather 'flames') thereof are coals (flames) of fire, which hath a most vehement flame' (or, 'a flame of Jah,' or Jehovah,—expressive either of its greatness, or its origin). The comparison common to all countries. The Song itself an exemplification of the text. True love not only intense, but painful and consuming, unless able to obtain its object. Believers not to be satisfied with a lukewarm love to Christ. Everything in Him to beget a fervent, burning love. Such a love sought by Him (John xxi. 15—17; Rev. iii. 15). Christ infinitely lovely and infinitely loving. Conjugal love to be ardent, intense, and self-sacrificing: love to Christ to be still more so. Christ's own love of that nature. 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up' 'He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.' True, holy love, a 'flame of Jehovah,' from its origin as well as its ardour. Especially true of love to Christ. No true love to Christ which has not been kindled by the Holy Ghost. A divine flame of love to Christ kindled in the breast of every believer.

> 'There let it to Thy glory burn,
> With inextinguishable blaze;
> And, trembling to its source return,
> In ardent love and fervent praise.'

The text the only passage in the Song apparently containing the divine name: 'a flame of Jah.' This, if the correct translation, perhaps intended to afford the key to the whole book. The Song of Solomon not only a 'Song of Loves,' but a Song of *divine* loves—of the love of Jehovah-Jesus to His Church, and the Church's love to Him, as kindled by the Holy Ghost.

4. Its *unquenchableness*. 'Many waters cannot quench love,' &c. True love survives all discouragements, and even coolness on the part of its object. Superior to all suffering endured on account of it. The love of Shulamite and the King had stood both tests. To exhibit, under an allegory, the unquenchableness of the love between Christ and His Church, probably one great object of the poem. A leading feature in love or charity, as described by Paul, that it 'suffereth long, beareth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth' (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 7, 8). The unquenchableness of the believer's love to Christ exhibited by 'the noble army of martyrs' (Rom. viii. 35—37; Rev. xii. 11). By Paul himself (Acts xx. 24; xxi. 13). By many among the Jews, in the persecutions by Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. xi. 32, 33). Love's unquenchableness exhibited in its perfection by the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. v. 25; John xiii. 1). His love not drowned by the floods of suffering that men, or devils, or God Himself, as the righteous Judge dealing with the sinner's Surety, could pour upon it (Ps. lxix. 1, 2).

5. *Its unpurchaseableness and preciousness*. 'If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.' Three ideas—(1) *Love cannot be purchased by money or external gifts*. Too precious to be bought. Love will beget love, but money cannot buy it. 'Money answereth all things;' but cannot purchase love. The poorest peasant possessed of a treasure which the wealth of a millionaire cannot buy. A man's body and labour may be purchased, but not his love. Kind words and acts may generate it. Self-denying devotedness may give a claim to it, and may win it. But no money can be accepted as its price. Riches may gain the hand, but not the heart. Shulamite's love, though that of a humble peasant, not won by Solomon's crown and kingdom, but by his excellence and love. Believer's love Christ not for what He has, but for what He is. God is loved not because He is the greatest, but because He is the *best* of beings. Christ's goodness rather than His gifts, wins the sinner's heart. His cross the 'apple-tree' under which He gains the believer's love. Sinners drawn by the cords of a man and the bands of love (Hos. xi. 4). 'We love Him, because He first loved us.' Christ gave for the sinner's love, not the 'substance of His house,' but

the blood of His heart (Rev. i. 5; v. 9). (2) *Nothing can be given or accepted as a substitute for love.* Solomon's whole kingdom despised by Shulamite if offered in the place of his love. The riches of the universe contemptible to a quickened soul as a substitute for Christ's love. Heaven itself, with all its glory, were it possible, without the love of heaven's King, but a poor gift to the soul that loves Him. Hell made heaven with the enjoyed love of Christ, and heaven no heaven without it. 'In His favour is life.' 'Thy loving kindness is better than life.' On the part of man, all his gifts, without love, contemptible. (1 Cor. xiii. 3). Love the pearl in the oyster-shell. The shell without the pearl contemptible. (3) *Love not to be detached by the gifts of another.* True love superior to flattering promises as well as threatened penalties. Satan's bait only successful where love to Christ is nominal. The world able to withdraw Demas from his profession, but not John from his love. The believer not to be separated from the love of Christ by the height of prosperity, any more than by the depth of adversity. The believer's love, like Christ's own, superior to all enticements. His language, even at the stake, with a pardon offered for apostasy: 'If you love my soul, away with it.' 'None but Christ, none but Christ!' Love rejects with disdain the most flattering temptations to withdraw the soul from Christ. Esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches that the treasures of Egypt. Prefers a dungeon with Christ to a palace without Him.

This brief didactic discourse on the nature of true love, remarkable as here introduced into the Song. Apparently intended to give the key to the whole book. Remarkable also for its resemblance to Paul's discourse on the same subject in 1 Corinthians xiii. The passage probably a prophetic intimation of that exhibition of Divine love to be made in the fulness of time, in the incarnation, suffering, and death of the Son of God, as the Bridegroom of His Church, and the Saviour of the world.

# The Bride's Intercession for Her Little Sister.

CHAPTER VIII. 8—14.

SCENE THIRD. **Place:** *Shulamite's Mother's House in the Country.* **Speakers:** *The King and Shulamite.*

Verse 8.

SHULAMITE.

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

Now reposing with her beloved in her mother's house, Shulamite seeks lovingly to turn the visit to the advantage of a younger sister. The family being poor, she asks of her royal husband what they should do for her in the event of her being sought in marriage. 'What shall we do for our sister?' &c. Observe—

1. *Union and communion with the Saviour to be improved by the believer to the advantage of others, especially of his relations and friends.* So Esther with Ahasuerus at the banquet of wine (Esther vii. 3.) Communion seasons, especially, to be improved as times of intercession.

2. *The duty of believers to interest themselves in the welfare of others, and especially of those with whom they are more immediately connected.* Believers not to be satisfied to enjoy Christ and heaven alone. One individual saved for the benefit of others as well as himself. The privilege and duty of believers to save others (James v. 19, 20; Jude 23). Souls saved and blessing bestowed on others, in answer to believer's prayers. 'O that Ishmael may live before thee!' 'I have given thee all them that sail with thee.' The nature of grace to desire that others may share our happiness. The effect of sin to render men selfish and indifferent to the welfare of their neighbour. Godlike and Christlike not only to *be* good but to *do* good and to communicate.' Believers possessed of the Divine nature; and therefore, 'look not on their own things, but on the things of others.' All men our brethren. A brother or a sister seen in every child of Adam, however poor and degraded. The 'little sister' ever at our doors. Also found in China and Japan, in central Africa and New South Wales. More especially within the circle of our nearer kindred. Grace not to cancel, but to consecrate earthly relation-

ships. Men 'set in families' that one may take more special interest in the welfare of another. The happiness of one member to be made the happiness of the rest. Andrew 'findeth his own brother Simon,' and 'brought him to Jesus.' Noah was to enter the ark and bring his family with him. Lot was to take his kindred with him out of Sodom. Rahab's relatives to be saved with herself in the destruction of Jericho. A promise given to the believer concerning his house as well as himself. Hence whole households baptized at once. The language of Moses to his father-in-law to be that of believers to their kindred and fellow-men: 'Come thou with us and we will do thee good' (Num. x. 29). The new Testament Church to be Christ's witnesses and the bearers of His salvation to 'Judæa and Samaria, and the uttermost ends of the earth' The picture in the text verified in the Church's intercessions for a perishing world, begun in the upper room at Jerusalem and continued to this day.

3. *In caring and interceding for others, we do it for Christ's brethren as well as our own.* '*We* have a little sister.' Marriage makes community of kindred. United to Christ, what is ours becomes His, as what is His becomes ours. Our brethren His brethren also, by virtue of His incarnation and a common nature. The poorest and most degraded, a 'little sister' of Christ as well as of His people.

4. *The young to have a special place in the care and intercession of the Church.* The 'little sister' not to be overlooked because little. None too little to be saved, or to need salvation. Children cared for by Christ, and to be cared for by His people. 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.' The lambs gathered with His arm, and carried in His bosom. His first charge to the penitent Apostle: 'Feed My lambs;' His second: 'Feed My sheep.' The most healthy, prosperous, and useful Church, that where the shepherd looks well to the lambs. The Church's wisdom, as well as duty, to remember the 'little sister' in her prayers and ministrations.

5. *Times when, in the providence of God, nations and individuals are favoured with the gracious offers of a Saviour.* 'The day when she shall be spoken for,' or sued in marriage. Such a time contemplated by Shulamite as likely to occur, sooner or later, to her still 'little' sister. The faithfully preached Gospel an offer of Christ as the sinner's Saviour and Husband. A demand made in it for the sinner's heart on the part of the heavenly Suitor. Every Gospel hearer wooed by the King of Glory to become His Bride. Every faithful minister, like John the Baptist, the friend of the Bridegroom, seeking to bring about a match between Christ and His hearers. The Gospel offer is the question put to Rebekah: Wilt thou go with this man? Paul's language to his converts: 'I have espoused you to one husband' (2 Cor. xi. 2). This offer made to all who hear the Gospel. The Gospel itself intended to be preached to all. Yet, in the providence of God, only reaches some. Time required for its promulgation. The harvest great; the labourers few. Labourers to be sent forth. Doors to be opened by Him who rules among men. The Church's duty to enter those doors as they are opened. That duty too slowly performed. The preacher directed in his mission by the Holy Ghost (Acts viii. 26—29; xiii. 2; xvi. 6, 7). The Gospel preached with power is an 'accepted time,' and 'day of salvation' (2 Cor. vi. 2). Blessed when men know the day of their merciful visitation.

6. *The Church not only to intercede with God on behalf of their fellow-men, but also to act as his fellow-workers for their salvation.* 'What shall we *do* for our sister in the day,' &c.? Shulamite's duty in relation to her 'little sister' not completed when she had interceded for her; something to be *done* for her. Praying for others to be followed by *doing* for them. The Gospel not only to be taken or sent to them, but something to be done while it is so. The Gospel, when preached, to be accompanied with earnest, believing prayer for its success. The hearers of it, as opportunity is afforded, to be counselled to accept of its gracious offer. Believers to be on the watch for souls when the Gospel is pressed home on men's hearts. The value of the Inquiry Room. Believers to help the preacher by endeavouring lovingly to bring the hearer to decision. Impressions to be fostered. Young converts to be carefully and tenderly watched over by the Church. All, however, to be done only along with Jesus. 'What shall *we* do?' &c. Poor work when even the believer goes to it alone.

### The Royal Response.

### Verse 9.

### The King.

If she be a wall,
We will build upon her a palace of silver;
If she be a door,
We will enclose her with boards of cedar.

The King graciously receives Shulamite's suit, and promises that, with her co-operation, he will take proper care of, and amply provide for her little sister, according as her circumstances and conduct may appear to require. 'If she be a wall,' steadfastly resisting temptation, 'we will build upon her a palace (or tower) of silver'—endow her with a rich and ample dowry. 'If,' on the contrary, 'she be a door'—open to all comers—'we will enclose her with boards of cedar'—impose upon her due restraints, or bestow on her a dowry of much less value. Observe—

1. *The Saviour never regardless of His people's intercessions on behalf of others, especially of their own kindred.* 'Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons; and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me.' As for Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold, I have blessed him (Gen. xvii. 20; Isa. xlv. 11).

2. *Christ associates His people with Himself in blessing and saving those for whom they intercede.* '*We* will build upon her,' &c. Believers to be ready to employ means, as well as to offer prayers. Abraham commended for 'commanding his children and his household after him,' that the Lord might bring upon him that which He had 'spoken of him'—the blessing He had promised (Gen. xviii. 19).

3. *Prayer for others not answered in all cases alike.* The answer given according to the circumstances of the case. Regard had to the requirements and behaviour of the party prayed for. Our comfort to know that prayer will be answered according to the judgment of infinite wisdom and goodness. Ishmael blessed in answer to Abraham's prayer, but not with the blessing of Isaac.

4. *A principle in the Divine procedure, 'to him that hath shall more be given, and he shall have abundance.'* Gifts increased or withdrawn according to their improvement. 'If she be a wall,' &c. A firm and steadfast 'wall,' to be adorned with a 'tower of silver': an open and yielding 'door,' to be nailed up with 'boards of cedar.'

5. *Christ a liberal giver.* 'We will build upon her'—not any ordinary dwelling, but —a 'palace;' not a palace of stone, but one of 'silver.' 'Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.' 'Able to make all grace abound toward us.' And as willing as He is able. Giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not. 'Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?' 'Ye are not straitened in us: but ye are straitened in your own bowels' (2 Cor. vi. 12; Mic. ii. 7). No limit to the grace of Christ. Our privilege to receive 'out of His fulness, and grace for grace,' and to be 'filled with all the fulness of God.'

6. *Prayer sometimes answered by affliction and chastening.* 'We will enclose her,' or nail her up. To be nailed up, though with 'boards of cedar,' rather like a blow than a blessing. Yet, in the circumstances, the greatest boon. 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us.' Restraints of divine Providence often our greatest blessing. Often a special mercy when the Lord 'hedges up our way,' so that we 'may not find our paths' (Hos. ii. 6).

7. *The work of grace in the heart, a 'building.'* 'We will build upon her.' 'Ye are God's building.' The foundation of that building Christ Himself, accepted and trusted in as the only and all-sufficient Saviour. Christ also, by His Holy Spirit, the Great Master-builder. 'On this rock I will build My church.' Faithful ministers, and believers in general, according to their several gifts, subordinate builders and labourers. The building the joint work of Christ and His people: '*We* will build.' The building a glorious one—a palace of silver! rich, pure, and resplendent in glory. The residence of the King of Kings. 'An habitation of God through the Spirit' (Eph. ii. 19—22; 1 Pet. ii. 5; Col. ii. 7; Jude 20.).

8. *The duty of each, both before and after conversion, to seek grace to keep the heart and to resist temptation.* Our interest in being a 'wall' to resist, rather than a 'door' to admit, the tempter. 'Your adversary, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith.' Joseph a 'wall,' and becomes governor of Egypt, to 'save much people alive.' Dinah a 'door,' and after filling a town with bloodshed and misery, goes down into forgetfulness, leaving behind her only a dishonoured name (Gen. xxxiv. 1). Steadfast adherence to Christ's truth in the face of persecution, kindly noticed and graciously rewarded by the Master (Rev. iii. 10).

9. *The text realized in the Pentecostal Church.* That Church a *wall*—(1) *Against the attacks and threatening of their adversaries* (Acts iv. 13—20; v. 27—33, 41, 42; vi. 9—15; vii. 54—60). 'Overcame by the word of their testimony, not loving their lives unto the death.' Enriched, in consequence, with all grace and spiritual gifts (Acts ii. 41—47; iv. 33—37; Rom. xv. 14; 1 Cor. i. 4—7; 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2; Heb. x. 32—34). (2) *Against the attempts of Judaizers to bring the Church under the bondage of the Mosaic law* (Acts xv. 1—29). Paul a 'wall' throughout; Peter, at one time, in danger of becoming a 'door' (Gal. ii. 4, 5, 11—14). A world of evil, introduced when

afterwards the Church became a 'door,' admitting corruptions from Judaism, Gentile Philosophy, and Pagan superstition. Attempts, however, made by faithful men from time to time to enclose and nail up the door. Notably in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, by Luther, Calvin, Knox, and others.

### Shulamite's Thankfulness.

Verse 10.

Shulamite.

I am a wall,
And my breasts like towers:
Then was I in his eyes
As one that found favour.

The Bride reminded by the King's words of her own happiness in the preservation of her purity and the enjoyment of his love. Arrived at a chaste womanhood, she had been honoured, notwithstanding her poverty and obscurity, to become the spouse of the King. Observe—

1. *An unspeakable mercy to be preserved, especially in the time of youth, from the allurements and temptations of an evil world.* That mercy to be thankfully acknowledged.

2. *The believer's duty to recognize the Lord's mercy in his preservation and spiritual growth.* A mercy to be in a state of grace; an additional mercy to know that we are. A divine injunction to know ourselves. 'Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobate?' The grace of assurance, however, commonly the result of faithful adherence to Christ, resistance to temptation, and growth in grace. 'Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience (or proof); and experience, hope.'

3. *Grace, a thing of progress and increase.* 'My breast like towers.' Not always so. Shulamite once like her 'little sister,' with 'no breasts.' The breasts also considerably grown since she began to have them. A world of difference between a man who is a true Christian and one who is not. But a great difference also between one true Christian and another. Some Christians only 'babes in Christ;' others 'full grown men.' Believers not to be satisfied with a low state of grace, but to go on to perfection. 'Be no longer children, but men.' 'Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

4. *The part of believers to be helpful to others.* Breasts given not for the use of the mother, but her infant. The Church to be a joyful mother of children. Each believer to be helpful in nourishing these children. 'Able to admonish one another.' 'Edify one another, even also ye do.' 'Exhort one another daily while it is called to-day.' 'Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.' 'Feed my lambs,' an injunction not confined to Peter or to ministers. The body strengthened by 'that which every joint supplieth.' 'Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification' (Rom. xv. 2, 14; Col. iii. 16; Heb. iii. 13).

5. *Christ's pleasure in His faithful people.* The soul most pleasing in Christ's eyes that has, in His strength, resisted and overcome temptation. 'Then,' when I appeared as a wall, 'I was in his eyes as one that found favour.' 'Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee,' &c. (Rev. iii. 10).

6. *A man's greatest happiness to find favour in Christ's eyes.* Recorded by Shulamite in relation to Solomon as her great happiness: 'I was in his eyes as one that found favour' (or peace). If the favour of an earthly monarch may count for so much, what of the favour of the King of Kings? 'In His favour is life.' Thy 'loving-kindness is better than life.' 'Many will entreat the favour of the prince' (Prov. xix. 6). Alas! that so few should entreat the favour of Him who is the 'Prince of the kings of the earth.' The day approaching when all men will see how little it matters in whose eyes we may find favour, if we have not the favour of Him who shall sit upon the 'great white throne.' Happy for us that the poorest, humblest, and vilest may find favour in His eyes, not through any merits of our own, but by believing His Word, and heartily accepting the offer He makes of Himself in the Gospel. 'Justified by faith, we have peace with God through Our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have access into this grace, wherein we stand' (Rom. v. 1). True 'peace' found in finding and accepting Christ, who is 'our peace.' 'Whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord' (Prov. viii. 35).

### Shulamite's Self-Dedication.

Verses 11, 12.

Shulamite.

Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon:
He let out the vineyard unto keepers:
Every one for the fruit thereof
Was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.
My vineyard, which is mine,
Is before me;

Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand,
And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

Shulamite, intensely happy in the possession of her Beloved, gladly consecrates to him and to his service herself and her little all. She should be to him as his choice vineyard at Baalhamon,—perhaps a fictitious or poetical name, suited for the allegory, and denoting the 'lord of noise,' or 'possessor of a multitude.' As Solomon for his vineyard received a thousand pieces of silver as its rental, he should receive no less for what *she* brought him, while the keepers of the fruit should also receive suitable remuneration. She speaks of what she devoted to him as her own vineyard: 'My vineyard which is mine.' The language peculiar and emphatic. Probably intended to indicate no mere piece of landed property which she possessed, and which she now made over to her husband; but rather that which, both in itself and to Solomon, was worth more than the widest domains that could have been presented to him,—HERSELF. The same figure already apparently employed by her in the beginning of the Song, when she confessed to the ladies of the Court: 'They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept' (Ch. i. 6). This vineyard of her own person, she seems to say, she will no longer, as before, neglect; but would, for her husband's sake, cultivate it with all due attention, that she might be to him all that she *could* be, and, if possible, all that he could desire. 'My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; (present to my thoughts, and the object of my attention and care); thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand' (or rather, 'the thousand'—the full and ample revenue, as of the vineyard at Baalhamon). Those who should aid her in this self-cultivation should also receive a liberal remuneration: 'The keepers thereof two hundred'—a fifth of the revenue.

In Solomon's 'vineyard at Baalhamon' we may have a picture of the 'Kingdom of God,' with its privileges and blessings, as committed originally to the favoured descendants of Abraham. The parallel to the passage may probably be found in the parable of the Vineyard (Matt. xxi. 33—43; Isa. v. 1, &c.). The vineyard, in the Prophet, is ascribed to the 'Beloved' ('My Beloved,' namely, the Messiah), as here to Solomon, his type. Christ the Head of the Theocratic Kingdom in the Old Testament, as truly as He is head of the Church in the New. In His incarnation, 'He came unto His own,' literally, 'His own things,' His own kingdom or vineyard; 'and His own (his own *people*, the form of the word being altered), received Him not' (John i. 11). The 'vineyard' or kingdom, Christ's; as—(1) It has been given Him by the Father. (2) He has been constituted its Head and King. (3) He has purchased its blessings with His blood. This vineyard at 'Baalhamon;' the 'Kingdom of God' being set busy up in the midst of the world with its multitudes, its noise and unrest. The kingdom at first set up among the descendants of Abraham thus separated from the nations for a special purpose, afterwards extended to all the nations of the earth (Matt. xxviii. 19). The extension indicated in the change of Abraham's name, the added syllable being a modified form of the second part of the name in the text Baal-hamon. The transference of the kingdom or the 'vineyard' from the Jews to the nations of the world probably indicated in this part of the allegory, in which Shulamite becomes the vineyard of Solomon instead of that at Baalhamon. From the whole, observe—

1. *The part of a believer to consecrate himself and his all to Christ and His service.* Such dedication on the part of the bride to her husband, understood in the case of earthly espousals. No less real in the case of the heavenly ones.

2. *The believer himself individually, as well as the Church collectively, a 'vineyard;'* as reclaimed from the wilderness of the world, hedged in, cared for, cultivated by the Divine husbandman, and bringing forth precious fruit for its owner (John xv. 1—8; Isa. v. 1, &c.).

3. *Believers to make their own souls and those of their brethren the object of their special care and attention.* 'My vineyar which is mine, is before me.' Each has naturally his own soul to care for and attend to. But only a Cain asks: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Our own vineyard to be carefully looked after: 'Keep thy heart with all diligence.' 'Keep yourselves in the love of God.' 'He that is of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.' Great part of 'pure and undefiled religion,' to keep ourselves 'unspotted from the world.' Believers to work out their own salvation 'with fear and trembling.' Each to interest himself in the welfare of his brethren and of the Church at large (1 Cor. xii. 26). 'Look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others.' 'Seek not every man his own wealth,' or welfare. 'Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.' 'Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.' 'Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.' 'Let every one of us please his

neighbour for his good unto edification' (Rom. xv. 2). The care required for our own and our neighbour's soul indicated in the expression—'Is before me.' Denotes—(1) Thoughtfulness. (2) Attention. (3) Watchfulness. (4) Diligence.

4. *The aim of the believer's care over His own soul and that of others to be that Christ may be glorified, and God in Him, in an abundance of fruit.* 'Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand.' 'Herein is My Father glorified,' that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.' 'I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain' (John xv. 8, 16). The fruit brought forth by believers the reward of Christ's suffering for their salvation (Isa. liii. 11). The 'joy that was set before Him' in enduring 'the cross.' That fruit the 'fruits of the Spirit, being produced through His inward and spiritual agency. These fruits: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, or self-control (Gal. v. 22). The spiritual benefit received through us by others, put down as 'fruit' to our account (Rom i. 13).

5. *Special keepers of the fruit of the vineyard appointed and to be recognized.* 'The keepers of the fruit thereof.' The care of these something over and above that which Shulamite herself should exercise over her vineyard. These appointed by her in conjnnction with her husband, as her servants and helpers. The charge belonging to each believer in reference to his own soul and the souls of his brethren, neither to supersede nor be superseded by the special charge of others appointed for that specific purpose. These special 'keepers' given and appointed by Christ Himself for the benefit of His Church. 'He ascended up on high, and gave gifts: some, apostles; some prophets; some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints' (Eph. iv. 5). The general title of these in the New Testament, elders or Presbyters; called also, from the nature of their charge, bishops or overseers, and deacons with a temporal charge (Acts xiv. 23; xx. 17, 28; 1 Peter v. 14; Phil. i. 1). These given by Christ, but chosen by the believing people, guided by their knowledge of the gifts bestowed, and formally appointed by those already in office (Acts vi. 2, 6; xiv. 23 (Greek); 1 Tim. iv. 4, 14). All these the Church's servants for Jesus's sake (2 Cor. 4, 5; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22). The spiritual charge of these 'keepers' indicated in such admonitions as these; 'Take heed unto yourselves and unto the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.' 'Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.' 'Remember them which have the rule (*Margin,* are the guides) over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.' 'Obey them that have the rule over (*Margin,* guide) you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account' (Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 2, 3; Heb. xiii. 7, 17).

6. *Those occupied in the special charge of Christ's Church, or Vineyard, to receive suitable remuneration.* 'The keepers thereof, two hundred.' A portion of that remuneration *here,* in—(1) The esteem and love of those to whom they minister (1 Thess. v. 12, 13; 1 Tim. v. 17). (2) A sufficient maintenance (1 Cor. ix. 7—14; 1 Tim. xvii. 18). Their principal remuneration, if faithful, *hereafter* (1 Pet. v. 4; 2 Tim. iv. 8; Dan. xii. 3). Christ a liberal paymaster. To work faithfully for Him is to do the best thing for ourselves, though not done with that object. When Christ receives *His* due among a people, His servants will not come short of theirs. Where the Master gets his 'thousand,' the 'keepers' will receive their 'two hundred.'

### The Bridegroom's Request.

Verse 13.

### The King.

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

Business arrangements over, the Bridegroom appears to desire his Bride to gratify the expectant friends as well as himself, with one of her songs. A similar request had on another occasion been made and complied with (chap. ii. 14—17). Then only the Betrothed of Solomon; now, his married wife. Then, dwellIng alone in the clefts of the rocks; now, a happy resident 'of the gardens.' Observe—

1. *The characteristic of New Testament believers, that they 'dwell in the gardens.'* 'Gardens' indicative of separate congregations. The Church, as a whole, one large garden—the Church Catholic, as found scattered over the habitable globe. 'One body, one faith, one baptism.' But this one garden of the Church universal divided into numerous lesser 'gardens.' These also called Churches or congregations—a

larger or smaller number of believers living in the same locality, and united together as the professed followers of Jesus for Divine worship, personal edification, and the furtherance of His kingdom. Believers dwell together in unity. Jerusalem a city compact together. Such assemblies, *gardens;* as—(1) Separated from the wilderness of a world lying in wickedness. (2) Under spiritual and Divine cultivation. (3). Productive of the fruits of righteousness. (4) Pleasant to God, angels, and renewed men. The part of believers to have their place in these assemblies, not as mere visitors, but as regular members. Believers introduced outwardly into these 'gardens' by baptism; spiritually by regeneration and faith in Jesus. The visible bond and expression of their fellowship, the Lord's Supper, or 'breaking of bread' in commemoration of His death. The delight as well as outward place of believers is in these 'gardens.' 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.' 'How amiable are Thy tabernacles!' 'All my springs are in thee' (Ps. xxvi. 8; lxxxiv. 1; lxxxvii. 7). These 'gardens' especially the place where the voice of the Bride is heard in praise, prayer, and public testimony. 'Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee' (Ps. lxxxiv. 4; lxv. 1, 2). The Pentecostal Church exhibited as 'dwelling in the gardens.' 'They continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread, and in prayers. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God' (Acts ii. 42, 46, 47). Hence, *the happiness of a believer's life.* To 'dwell in the gardens' a picture of enjoyment. Believers not always dwelling alone 'in the clefts of the rock.' A new song put into their mouth, praise unto their God (Ps. xl. 3). These gardens, 'Paradise Regained,' and a picture of the 'Paradise of God.' Wisdom's ways pleasantness even in this life. Her children not dwellers in the desert, but 'in the gardens.' 'Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the briar, the myrtle tree.' Believers blessed with a double heaven, one in the hand, and another in the hope. 'The rebellious dwell in a dry land' (Ps. lxviii. 6).

2. *The part of believers to 'hearken' to the voice of the Bride. The companions* hearken to Thy 'voice.' The voice of the Church heard both in its members and its ministers. To be 'hearkened to,' as uttered —(1) In testimony and teaching. (2) In counsel and admonition. (3) In warning and reproof (Matt. xviii. 15, 17). To be hearkened to with—(1) With attention. (2) With deference. (3) With submission (1 Pet. v. 5). Yet not with blindness and bondage. The voice of the Church to be distinguished from that of her Head. The Bride may err, but not the Bridegroom. Infallibility in the Bible but not elsewhere. 'To the law and to the testimony.' The Bereans commended for 'searching the Scriptures daily whether' the things spoken by the Apostles 'were so' (Acts xvii. 11). Even councils may err and have erred (Article XXI). Believers to try the spirits. To 'prove all things.' Believers themselves, as part of the Bride, possessed of the anointing whereby to know all things. 'Judge ye what I say.' 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things' (1 Cor. ii. 15; x. 15; 1 Thess. v. 21; 1 John ii. 20; iv. 1). Even Peter at one time to be blamed in his acting, and withstood by Paul to the face. 'Subjection' not to be given to false teachers and corrupters of the truth, 'no not for an hour.' 'God accepteth no man's person' (Gal. ii. 6, 11).

3. *Believers to praise and pray in fellowship with each other.* 'The companions hearken to Thy voice.' Believers the 'companions' both of Christ and one another. David's testimony: 'My goodness extendeth not unto thee, but unto the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.' 'I am a companion of all them that fear Thee' (Ps. xvi. 2; cxix 63). 'They that feared the Lord spake often one to another' (Mal. iii. 16). Praise comely every where; especially in 'the congregation of saints' (Ps. cxlix. 1). A special promise made to united prayer (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). Believers not to forsake the assembling of themselves together for these purposes. An ill sign with a man when he 'separates himself' from the brethren (Jude 19; Heb. x. 25).

4. *The will of Christ that His people, amid all their occupations, should frequently address themselves to Him and to the Father in the language of praise and prayer.* His repeated wish at the Last Supper, that His disciples should, after His departure, continually address Him or the Father in His name, in

**Prayer.**

His will revealed through the apostles: 'Pray without ceasing: in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you' (1 Thess. v. 17, 18). The first business in which the disciples engaged after Christ's ascension accompanied with prayer, apparently addressed to Christ Himself (Acts 24, 25). Prayer seen to occupy a large place in the life of the Pentecostal

Church, and of the Apostles themselves (Acts ii. 42; vi. 4). The last utterance of the Bible, a prayer on the part of the Bride addressed to Jesus Himself (Rev. xxii. 20). Blessed to speak of Christ; more blessed still to speak to Him. The voice of the Bride, however, to be heard not only in prayer, but in

**Praise.**

The Sacrifice of praise to be offered to God through Christ continually, 'the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name' (Heb. xiii. 15). Praise and thanksgiving to form a large portion of a believer's life. 'In everything give thanks.' If so in the Old Testament, properly still more so in the New. David's life: 'Seven times a day do I praise thee.' 'At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee' (Ps. cxix. 62, 164). The New Song of the Redeemed in heaven learned and begun on earth. Believers have 'harps' for their praises as well as 'vials' for their prayers (Rev. v. 8). The 'praises of Israel' God's chosen dwelling place (Ps. xxii. 3). Believer's fellowship with each other to consist largely in songs of praise (Eph. v. 19). 'One word of Christ before we part.'—*Archbishop Usher.* Praise to be connected with our warfare and service in the Lord's cause. Jehoshaphat's army sang praise before the battle, as certain of victory (2 Chron. xx. 21, 23). Paul and Silas not only 'prayed,' but 'sang praises' in the prison at Philippi. The ransomed of the Lord to return to Zion with songs (Is. xxxv. 10). Christ our example in praise and thanksgiving (Luke x. 21). Sang a hymn with the disciples before going to Gethsemane. Sings praises in the midst of the Church (Heb. ii. 12).

SHULAMITE'S SONG.

Verse 14.

SHULAMITE.

Make haste, my beloved!
And be thou like to a roe,
Or to a young hart
Upon the mountains of spices!

At the request of her Beloved, Shulamite lifts up her voice in song. Her song resembling a former one (chapter ii. 17). Expressive of her delight in her beloved, and her desire for his constant society. 'Make haste (or flee), my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart (in swiftness as in loveliness and love), upon the mountains of spices.' The sweetness of his presence and the joy of his coming transferred to the mountains over which he was to pass. The very mountains which his feet should touch made 'mountains of spices.' His abode, wherever it might be, made fragrant by his presence. Observe—

1. *The believer's song to have Christ for its subject as well as its object.* Isaiah's prelude to his song: 'Now will I sing into my well beloved a song of my beloved' (Isa. v. 1). David's: 'My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King' (Ps. xlv. 1). The Psalms full of Christ. 'Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs' (Col. iii. 16). The testimony of a heathen that the early Christians met together in the morning of the first day of the week and 'sang a hymn to Christ as to God.' The Church's hymns naturally full of the Bridegroom.

2. *The part of the believer to long for the presence of Christ.* 'Make haste, my beloved.' His spiritual and unseen presence desired *here.* Ordinances themselves barren and insipid if Christ be not in them. No pleasure to the loving believer if his 'Beloved' be not there. 'Thy presence makes my paradise.' His visible presence desired *hereafter.* Paul's desire to 'depart and be with Christ.' Absent from the body, present with the Lord. Hence 'to die is gain.' More especially His presence at His *second appearing.* That event the Church's 'blessed hope.' The Bride expects not merely to go *to* heaven *to Jesus,* but for Jesus to come *from* heaven *to her.* 'Our conversation is in heaven from whence we look for the Saviour' (Phil. iii. 20). His bodily return promised by the angels as He ascended into heaven. 'This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go up into heaven' (Acts ii. 10, 11). Preached by Peter after Pentecost: 'God shall send again Jesus' (Acts iii. 20). Promised by Jesus Himself after His ascension: 'Behold I come quickly' (Rev. xxii. 20). The subject of the Church's last recorded and inspired prayer: Even so come Lord Jesus.' This prayer of the beloved Disciple in the name of the Church apparently an echo of that of the Bride in the text. The same prayer concludes the Song of Solomon, and the Book of Revelation. Believers characterized as those who 'look for' Christ, and who 'love His appearing.' Old Testament saints looked and longed for His *first* Advent; those of the New for His *second.* Natural to long for the presence and return of those whom we love. To love Christ is to 'love His appearing.' Christ's highest glory and the deliverance of creation bound up with it (2 Thess. i. 10; 2 Tim. iv: 1; Rom. viii. 17—21). His

appearing the full redemption of His saints (Luke xxi. 28; Eph. i. 14).

3. *Christ's presence sweetens all.* 'Upon the mountain of spices.' His presence makes heaven, whether above or below the skies. Even rugged mountains converted by it into 'mountains of spices.' Samuel Rutherford, in his banishment, dated his letters from 'Christ's palace in Aberdeen.' The 'Mount Zion' in heaven, all that it is to the redeemed, because Christ, the Lamb slain, is upon it (Rev. xiv. 1). His presence *here*, the first fruits; yonder, the full harvest. His presence hereafter to be followed by no parting. His coming, therefore, the sweetest and most joyous event to His waiting Church, who shall then, as a whole, 'be for ever with the Lord.'

Blessed to conclude all our works and services, and to end each day of our lives and life itself, as Solomon concludes his Song, and John his Revelation, with the earnest and loving prayer, 'Make haste, my beloved, and be like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.' 'Even so come, Lord Jesus! Amen.'

# Notes.

## CHAPTER I.

VERSE 1: *The Song of Songs which is Solomon's.* 'The Song of Songs,' שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (*shir hashshirim*). שִׁיר (*shir*), a song or poem, as opposed to prose: but distinguished from מִזְמוֹר (*mizmor*), a song with musical accompaniment, a psalm. EWALD, ZOCKLER *in* LANGE. According to some, a *series*. KLEUK: AUGUSTI. שִׁירָה in its original acceptation, a string or chain; Arab poets speaking of stringing their verses as pearls. GOOD. 'Song of Songs,' a Hebrew reduplication denoting excellency. An instance of the Hebrew superlative, like Ezek. xvi. 7; Dan. ix. 24; the finest or most beautiful of songs, the comparison however probably not with other poetry of Solomon. NOYES. Not, as GESENIUS, a song consisting of many songs. Nor, as KIMCHI and others, a song out of many Songs of Solomon. The High Song (das Hohelied). LUTHER. The excellent song. GENEVA BIBLE. Indicates emphatically the most excellent of its kind. EWALD. The noblest and sweetest song. SANCTIUS. The most excellent song, and made up many songs; or, comprehending all the songs, not only of Solomon but of the Prophets: the sum, kernel, and marrow of all sacred songs. COCCEIUS, MERCER. The most beautiful song. DE WETTE. A song consisting of many songs, or excelling other songs; indicating also the unity of its contents. DELITZSCH. So called either from the excellence of the composition or the subject. LOWTH. Most excellent song of all in the sacred books; in elegance of structure, fulness of mystery, and sublimity of meaning. CARPZOV. Most important, excellent and precious of songs; reference to the *subject* of it; to prophets and apostles, a reservoir of the treasures of Divine love existing between the Creator and His saved and sanctified creatures; the title claimed not by Solomon, but by the Holy Spirit. WEISS. Other songs celebrate the King's victory and the deliverance wrought for His Church; this His marriage with her and His love to the Bride. THEODORET. Ten songs have been sung; but this excels them all. TARGUM. The song which is above all songs. RASHI. All the Scriptures are holy; the Song of songs, the Holy of holies. AKIBA. All the songs of Scripture are the Holy place; the Song of songs, the most holy. R. JOSHUA.

'Which is Solomon's' (אֲשֶׁר לִשְׁלֹמֹה *asher li-Shelomoh*). The relative probably not, as GESENIUS thinks, added here on account of the article in הַשִּׁירִים as if—'the songs which are Solomon's. The antecedent either שִׁיר or הַשִּׁירִים; most likely שִׁיר, הַשִּׁירִים being added as a Hebrew form of the superlative. EWALD, HITZIG, BLEEK. So the SEPTUAGINT, ὅ ἐστι, 'which is.' לִשְׁלֹמֹה to or of Solomon.' שְׁלֹמֹה (*Shelomo*) from שָׁלֵם (*shalom*) peace, with the termination ה or ו, identical with ן, and forming the concrete from the abstract. Meaning alluded to in 1 Chronicles xxii. 2. GESENIUS. DAVIDSON fancifully suggests ה as the representative of הוּא 'he'; as if, 'He is the peace' like Micah v. 5 and Ephesians ii. 14. The ALEX. SEPTUAGINT has—to, for, or of Solomon (τῷ Σ.). The VULGATE: Solomon's. As referring to Solomon or ascribed to him. VATABLUS. Both by and concerning Solomon, *i.e.*, Christ. COCCEIUS. Solomon as a type of Christ, both the author and the subject. AINSWORTH. Words so contrived as to mean either. PATRICK. Concerning Solomon, that is, the Messiah. MIDRASH. ל not used here merely to indicate the authorship: = 'devoted or delivered to;' as Psalm vii. 2; Jeremiah xv. 2; 1 Chronicles xxix. 2. WEISS. Of Solomon as the author. MERCER, &c. As the author inspired by the Holy Ghost. CARPZOV. Belonging to Solomon, and so placed among the sacred books. ABEN EZRA. Solomon as the author: Amplifies what David his father had begun in the 45th and 68th Psalms: the Bridegroom in the song called Solomon, either from the dignity of the name (Peaceful), or as suiting the circumstances, or because Solomon was a type of Christ, which was probably known to Solomon himself. SANCTIUS. According to EWALD, the title ascribes the poem to Solomon, but was given at a later period, pro-

bably after the exile. DELITZSCH: Indicates unity of authorship. ZÖCKLER: Which is by Solomon. His title of 'King,' assumed in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, here laid aside in contemplating the celestial person of whom he speaks. PATRICK. Also, lest Solomon should be thought the King here intended, the book being a 'Song of Loves.' GILL. Concerning Solomon: hence not a book of King Solomon's, but of some other inspired author. HARMER. Concerning Solomon—the true Solomon, the Lord Jesus Christ; no reference being made to King Solomon in any part of the book. HAWKER. Solomon the inspired author, yet not speaking in his own person. FRY.

VERSE 6. *Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept.* 'Look not upon me' אַל תִּרְאוּנִי *al tiruni.* Look not at me. ZOCKLER. Gaze not on me. WILLIAMS. With surprise and doubt, as if wondering at her presumption. NOYES. In admiration of her beauty. HITZIG. With scorn or disdain. WITHINGTON, GINSBURG. With too much scrutiny. TAYLOR. With indignation. DURHAM. With delight at my affliction, as Obadiah 12. AINSWORTH. With an evil eye. MERCER. Do not survey me in my vile dress, but consider how I have it. DEL RIO. *Allegorically*; TARGUM: Spoken by the Congregation of Israel to the nations: Do not despise me because I am more sorrowful than you, having done according to your deeds in worshipping your false gods, and having brought upon myself the Divine displeasure. FOLIOT: Do not look so much at my sufferings, as at the reason why I endure them, and the fruit which I shall receive from them. WEISS: Addressed by Israel to the nations wondering at their boldness after the sin of the golden calf, or astonished that they could commit so great a sin.

'Because the sun hath looked upon me.' שְׁשָׁזָפַתְנִי *sheshzaphathni;* from שָׁזַר *shazaph*; to burn or scorch; to blacken; hence also to look upon, as Job. xx. 9; xxviii 1. From שָׁדַר by the change of ד into ז. VULGATE: Hath discoloured me. AQUILA: Hath blackened me. WICKLIFF: Has scorched me. COVERDALE: Has shined on me. LUTHER: Has so burned me. DIODATI: Has touched me with his rays. MARTIN: Has looked on me. VATABLUS: Has fixed his rays on me. TIGURINE VERSION: Striking me with his beams. PARKHURST: Has looked down on me, or has shined on me. WILLIAMS: Has beamed upon me. FRY: Properly, looked with penetrating rigour. WEISS: Has glanced or gazed on me. BURROUGHS and GINSBURG: Has browned me. THRUPP: Fiercely scanned me. ZÖCKLER: Scorched me. MERCER: The blackness not natural but accidental. RASHI: Not natural, and therefore may be removed. A. CLARKE observes that the brown complexion of the Egyptians is attributed to the influence of the sun or climate. But probably no Egyptian in the text. *Allegorically*; TARGUM: Israel made black by the worship of the sun. FAUSSET: Scorched with God's anger, executed on her through the world-powers, because of her unfaithfulness before Messiah's coming. GREGORY, &c.: The sun of righteousness blackens the soul by the sufferings endured on his account, or by showing it its own blackness in his presence. PHILO CARPATHIUS: Do not despise me for my sins; since Christ the sun of righteousness has shone upon me. AINSWORTH, GILL, &c.: The Church blackened by the sun of persecution. ROSENMÜLLER: By miseries and calamities.

'My mother's children were angry with me.' נִחֲרוּ־בִי (*nikharu bhi*); from חָרָה to burn, or Piel of נָחַר EWALD. SEPTUAGINT, VULGATE, &c.: Fought against me. COVERDALE: Had evil will. LUTHER, DIODATI, MARTIN: Were angry with me. So EWALD, DELITZSCH, and GESENIUS. Acted severely against me. A. CLARKE. Were severe with me. PERCY, GOOD, BOOTHROYD. Despised me; literally snorted at me: expresses the ill-treatment she received from her relations in exposing her to servile employments, which caused her dark complexion. Hence the Bride of low extraction compared with her royal Bridegroom. FRY. 'My mother's children' synonymous with brothers: her father probably no longer living at the time of this transaction. ZOCKLER. The children those of her mother by a former husband. HOUBIGANT, UMBREIT, EWALD, &c. Her countrymen. HARMER. Allegorically; TARGUM: False prophets and teachers, the cause of God's anger against Israel. RASHI: The children of Egypt, among whom I was brought up, and who came up from Egypt with me; and the the offspring of my mother in the wilderness. KEIL: Israel experienced, in consequence of their sin, the anger of the nations, and lost their beauty and glory. WEISS: The Egyptians were incensed against Israel on account of Noah's curse on Ham, and his blessing on Shem, and so treated them cruelly. COCCEIUS, &c.: Persecuting Jews. MUNSTER, &c.: False prophets and kings. SANCTIUS: The Gentiles. MERCER: Nominal members of the Church. DUTCH ANNOTATORS: False brethren. PISCATOR: Affec-

tions of carnal corrupt nature. MENOCHIUS: All enemies, external or internal.

'They made me Keeper of the vineyards.' הַכְּרָמִים *hak-keramim*, plural of כֶּרֶם *kerem*, a vineyard; from the unused root כָּרַם = כָּרָה, to be of a noble disposition; hence noble, fruitful; כֶּרֶם, land planted with noble plants (Jud. xv. 5; Job. xxiv. 18). GESENIUS. A vineyard, possession, estate. EWALD. The noblest, most valued possession. ZÖCKLER. Ground cultivated like a garden; used generally of vineyards, gardens, and plantations. SIMON. 'Made me keeper,' &c.; made her a drudge in their service, to her own personal injury; keeping vineyards, a servile work. PERCY, COBBIN. BOSSUET, on the supposition of the bride being an Egyptian princess, observes: 'The princess, by one of those family intrigues common at Eastern Courts, had perhaps been banished to some southern part of Egypt, where she had been employed on secular labour, till by a counter intrigue and revolution equally common, she was recalled from her banishment.' *Allegorically*; TARGUM: Taught me to worship their idols and to walk in their statutes. MERCER: Forced me to observe rites not prescribed by God. DU VEIL: Made me a zealous observer of their human traditious. SANCTIUS: Forced me to follow sinful pleasures and practices. COCCEIUS: Excommunicating me from their synagogues. AINSWORTH: To fall in with their corrupt worship and vain traditions. SCOTT: Drawn by original sin to evil things against my will. THEODORET, however, takes another view of the words, applying them to the Apostles: They gave me (the Gentile Church) the divine ordinances to keep. ORIGEN views them as spoken by the Apostles and others, who anxious about the salvation of men, suffered outwardly themselves. LYRA applies them to the drudgery of Israel in Egypt. DEL RIO thinks the vineyards were in the first instance the synagogue, then the Churches of the Gentiles. So COCCEIUS also views the vineyards as including the congregations of the faithful. FROMONDI sees the pastoral office indicated: Dispersed me among the Gentiles, and caused me to be made pastors and keepers of the Gentile Churches. DAVIDSON: The Christian Church charged with the care both of Jew and Gentile vineyards, in consequence of the Jews' rejection of God and His laws; or made the depository of the oracles of God with which they are to be fed. HAHN: The brothers, or Hamitic Heathendom, having withdrawn from the service of God and given themselves to the service of Satan, and so made their vineyard or the vineyard of God to become a vineyard of Satan, alienated the weaker sister from the service of God, and drew her into that of Satan, causing her to keep the vineyard, like themselves, in his service.

'But mine own vineyard have I not kept.' כַּרְמִי שֶׁלִּי *carmi shelli*, 'my vineyard which belongs to me.' MERCER: which was committed to me. ZÖCKLER: שֶׁלִּי (*shelli*), not only gives special emphasis to the suffix 'my,' but distinguishes her vineyard as quite distinct and of another kind from what she had been forced to keep, viz., herself, with all she has and is. GESENIUS, EWALD, &c., apply it in like manner to her beauty. SANCTIUS: That with which she was bought as her dowry, according to usual practice (Hos. iii. 2); the same mentioned in chap. viii. 12. *Allegorically*; TARGUM: The Lord who is my God I have not served. The vineyard, according to THEODORET, the traditions received before accepting Christianity; or, her own soul. SANCTIUS: The more noble part of our nature. BERNARD, &c.: The Jewish people (Is. v. 1); or, the primitive Church composed of Jews, to whom Christ and the Apostles were first sent. MENOCHIUS: The charge of all the world's vineyards, and especially that of the synagogue, was committed to me. DEL RIO: I forsook the vineyard, at first committed to me on account of the conduct of the Jewish husbandmen in killing the heir (Matt. xxii.) JUNIUS: I departed from my duty. PISCATOR: Did not adhere steadily to the worship of God. AINSWORTH: The charge not kept either from her own infirmity and negligence, or from the tyranny of others, or from both: persecutions and afflictions often the effect of chastening for sin. PATRICK: I was like one set to keep the vineyard of others, and could not look after his own: picture of the Gentiles seduced by false teachers into idol worship. GILL: Her own vineyard, either the Church or her own soul: not kept, either from fear or infirmity, or both. SCOTT: The treatment she received proved a temptation to neglect her duty and the care of her own soul, and so conduced to mar her loveliness. HAWKER: Neglected her own soul while engaged in the service of others. ROSENMULLER: Her own country's religion and institutions forsaken. DE WETTE: The Jewish vineyard neglected by the Jewish shepherds (Ezek. xxxiv. 7—9; Zech. xi. 8). THRUPP: The religious culture of all Israel. HAHN. The vineyard committed to her in the service of Satan she has not kept; having awoke to the painful feeling of her unrest, and learned to long after the better home with Israel's King.

VERSE 9: *I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.* 'To a company of horses' (לְסַסָתִי *le-susathi*) סוּסָה (*susah*), fem., from סוּס (*sus*), a horse, may be either 'a mare,' or, as a collective noun, 'a stud or company of horses.' In the latter case, the final *yod* paragogic, as in Samuel i. 1; Isaiah. i. 21. GESENIUS inclines to the former view, thinking the comparison of a single loved one to a body of horse not so congruous. The latter favoured by ROSENMÜLLER, DE WETTE, NOYES, and others. The versions divided. SEPTUAGINT: My mare. VULGATE: My cavalry. LUTHER: My spirited team. WICKLIFF: My riding. DIODATI (*Italian*) and DUTCH: The mares. GENEVA: The troops of horses. MARTIN (*French*): The most beautiful pair of horses that I have. MONTANUS: My mare. COCCEIUS: My cavalry. *Yod* redundant. MERCER, VETABLUS. Not superfluous; '*My*,' because, chosen for his own. DEL RIO: 'My mare,' *i.e.*, my most beautiful mare. BOSSUET: My well trained steed. PERCY: One of the steeds; *Yod* paragogic. GOOD, BOOTHROYD. 'My horse;' a favourite mare of the King; a particularly fine and splendidly caparisoned specimen of those good mares which Solomon had for his chariots (1 Kings x. 26). ZÖCKLER. On the other hand, ROSENMULLER thinks there is no case of a beautiful woman praised by comparison to a mare. 'My horse,' a collective noun for all his cavalry (1 Kings x. 26) WEISS. My stud. GINSBURG. My horses. HODGSON. The team of horses. HAHN. PHILO has: 'As a swift horse that wins the prize. An Arab's mare his most valuable possession, and dearer to him than his fortune. GREENFIELD. Theocritus compares the comeliness of Helen to a Thessalian mare in a chariot; mares used in preference to horses both for riding and in chariots in the East, as being swifter and more able to endure hardship, and go longer without food. A. CLARKE.

'In Pharaoh's chariots.' Pharaoh a name common to the Egyptian Kings; denoting in Coptic, and according to Josephus, 'the King.' GESENIUS inclined rather to derive the title, in its Hebrew form at least, from פָּרַע (*phara'*), 'to lead in battle;' hence, פַּרְעֹה (*phera*), 'prince,' with the formative ה (*oh*). "'In the Pharaonic, or Egyptian chariots of Pharaoh;' more exactly, such a stud as was used on state occasions in Solomon's Pharaonic chariots; those costly teams which Solomon had imported from Egypt (1 Kings x. 28, 29.)" 'In Pharaoh's magnificent team.' DELITZSCH, EWALD. Horses of Egypt remarkable for their beauty and stateliness, and eagerly sought for the Kings of Syria. HARMER. Egyptian horses as the very best; and Egyptian horses in Pharaoh's chariots as the very best of all. CLAY. Pharaoh, Solomon's father-in-law, supplied him with most of his chariots. FROMONDI. A reference needlessly supposed by many to the chariots of Pharaoh at the Red Sea. So the TARGUM and the RABBINS, as well as the Roman Catholic and other Christian interpreters. BERNARD and FOLIOT: 'The Lord's cavalry or angelic host who overthrew Pharaoh's chariots in the Red Sea.' SANCTIUS: 'Such as are described in the Psalm concerning the triumph over Pharaoh.' DEL RIO: 'With the chariots of Pharaoh, *i.e.*, when they were drowned.' HAILGRIN: 'In [crushing] the chariots of Ph'. HENRY: 'My company of horses that triumphed over Pharaoh's chariots' (Hab. iii. 15). M. STUART and FAUSSET: 'In the chariots of Pharaoh' at the Red Sea; such being to Israel incomparable for swiftness and splendour.

The points of comparison: Swiftness and spirit: flies to her bridegroom like a horse which is spurred in the course. THEODORET. Drawing equally and elegantly together. SANCTIUS. Power to overcome enemies. DEL RIO, FROMONDI. Grace and beauty. DU VEIL. Beauty and speed. MERCER, PISCATOR. Stateliness, strength, and courage. DURHAM. Comeliness. ASSEMBLY'S ANNOTATIONS. Stateliness and beauty. POOLE. Affection. PERCY. Beauty, courage, stateliness, ahd other excellencies. DAVIDSON. Extends to the sumptuous trappings and ornaments. GOOD. Splendid decoration: these horses led forth on days of State, perhaps in some late procession of a royal marriage. FRY. Glittering ornaments of the head and neck. WEISS. The proud bearing of the horse (Job xxxix. 19). EWALD. Their harmony and usefulness. TRACT SOCIETY'S COMM. Her youthful freshness and unaffected behaviour. DELITZSCH. Ardour and beauty. FAUSSET. The formidable character of Pharaoh's horses at the Red Sea. THRUPP, WORDSWORTH. Their swiftness and splendour. M. STUART. The resemblance founded as much on the Bride's dress and ornaments as on her beauty. NOYES. Orientals spare no expense in ornamenting their horses with the most costly trappings, while the ladies decorate themselves in a similar manner. WILLIAMS.

## CHAPTER II.

VERSE 1: *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.* 'I am,' &c. Opinions divided as to who is the speaker. The Bridegroom. ORIGEN, THEODORET, and the great majority of Latin and Greek Fathers. The Bride. TARGUM, PHILO, PSELLUS, GREGORY OF NYSSA, and the great body of modern commentators. Either the Church, expressing the excellence of her grace and beauty received from Christ; or rather, Christ Himself, setting forth his own excellence. GILL. The Bridegroom, acknowledging the praises given to him by the Bride. PATRICK. More probably the Church, showing her graces received from Christ. AINSWORTH. Spoken by either; but rather by Christ, commending Himself to the notice, love, and acceptance of His people, like Isaiah lxv. 1. HAWKER. By the Bridegroom; the comparison made out of condescension. DURHAM, M. STUART. By Bride; no instance in the Song of either Bride or Bridegroom praising themselves. WEISS. Spoken by Bride with a becoming modesty. PERCY. In self-depreciation. BUSH. Representing her beauty as nothing extraordinary. NOYES. Speaks of herself as an object mean and contemptible amidst the beauties of the surrounding scene. FRY. Asserting she had no claim to such beauty as was ascribed to her. BOOTHROYD. Considering herself almost too mean for the Bridegroom. BARTH (*Bible Manual*). Speaking as well with self-respect as humility. DELITZSCH. As lowly, yet lovely. FAUSSET.

'The rose of Sharon' (חֲבַצֶּלֶת הַשָּׁרוֹן *Khabhattseleth hashsharon*). חֲבַצֶּלֶת here rendered 'rose,' according to ancient interpreters, either the *lily*, as the SEPTUAGINT, VULGATE, and TARGUM of Isaiah xxxv. 1; or the *narcissus*, as the TARGUM *here;* or the *rose*, as the VENETIAN GREEK, KIMCHI, and ABEN EZRA. According to most modern Hebraists, the *rose* to be rejected, as the flower must be one with a bulbous root, from בְּצֶל (*betsel*), a bulb. According to BOCHART, HAHN, and DE WETTE, the *narcissus*. EWALD and GESENIUS: the Meadow Saffron (*Colchicum Autumnale*), a meadow and autumnal flower like the crocus, with a bulbous root. So MICHAELIS, NOYES, WORDSWORTH, &c. EWALD derives the name from בָּצַל and חָמֵץ 'sour.' Means, radically, a plant with a pungent bulb,—inapplicable to the rose. FAUSSET. HITZIG, however, connects the word with חָמֵץ 'red.' PARKHURST, followed by WILLIAMS, derives the word from חבה, to hide, and צל, a shadow; as if a *rosebud*, or rose shaded with the calyx. The SEPTUAGINT, VULGATE, and THEODOTION have here simply, 'a flower.' AQUILA: a 'flower-cup.' The SYRIAC: 'a lily,' as in second clause. WICKLIFF and DOUAI VERSION: a 'flower.' GENEVA BIBLE: a 'rose.' BISHOP'S BIBLE: a 'lily.' So MUNSTER, MERCER, COCCEIUS, RASHI. A flower,—left indefinite. CASTALIO. Flower or rose. J. H. MICHAELIS. The flower, *par excellence*, —the flower of the whole earth. WITHINGTON. The flower; only, however, in a generic sense. GREEN. A wild-flower. GINSBURG. WITHINGTON. The tulip. MAGNUS, VAIHINGER. The daisy. THRUPP. הַשָּׁרוֹן properly, the Plain; from יָשַׁר, to be straight. GESENIUS. Or from שׁוּר, to look forth or around. BOCHART, EWALD. The word used as a proper name, and applied to the plain between Cæsarea and Joppa, fertile and abounding in lilies, roses, and narcissuses. GES., SANCTIUS. That between Mount Tabor and the Lake of Galilee. EWALD. Bride refers to her native place. GOOD. Sharon, the name of a district, then of a city in it (1 Chron. v. 16; Acts ix. 35). MERCER, PISCATOR. שָׁרוֹן, a plain; any considerable portion of level ground, whether fertile or otherwise: more than one in the land of Israel: the great Sharon, that beyond Jordan, in the land of Gilead and Bashan (1 Chron. v. 16): here, that between Tabor and the lake of Tiberias, rich in pastures, but not therefore suitable for roses and lilies. WEISS. SEPTUAGINT: a flower of the plain. VULGATE and WICKLIFF: a flower of the field. BISHOP'S BIBLE: the lily of the field. DIODATI and MARTIN: The rose of Sharon. SANCTIUS: A flower of the field; fenced around with no hedges; set forth to the eyes and for the use of all. FROMONDI: I am a flower of the open field, where you will rather find me than on the green bed. HARMER, PERCY, &c.: A mere rose of the field, where thousands and thousands grow of equal value: the thought suggested by the assemblage of beauty collected at the royal nuptials. WILLIAMS. The spouse compares herself with the more humble natives of the fields and valleys. WITHINGTON. Is disposed to humility by reflecting on her present good fortune as the King's Bride. ZÖCKLER. A

flower of the field; alluding to Christ's humiliation and incarnation. THEODORET. A humble scarlet flower; Christ lowly and red in His own blood. HONORIUS. Christ the flower of the heavenly plain, who far excels all cherubim and seraphim, and gives them all their beauty and excellence. FOLIOT. The flower of this whole world, of which Christ was the glory, inviting all to enjoy His sweetness. ORIGEN, AMBROSE, BEDE, DEL RIO. The Church of Israel with the Shekinah in her midst. TARGUM. The Church lowly, and delightful for odour and beauty (Hos. xiv. 7). AINSWORTH. Gratefully acknowledges the beauty given her by her Lord. DAVIDSON. The humility and faith expressed in Isaiah xlv. 24; Psalm xxxiv. 2. WEISS. Self-humiliation, the effect of a real manifestation of God to the soul. FRY.

'The lily of the valleys.' (שׁוֹשַׁנַּת הָעֲמָקִים *shoshannath ha-'amaqim*), שׁוֹשַׁנָּה *shoshannah* (from שׁוּשׁ *shush*, an unused root, 'to be white or splendid'), a noun of unity, from שׁוֹשָׁן *shoshan*, a lily; a flower growing wild in the fields of Palestine and adjacent countries; of various colours, but especially white and light blue; also apparently red (chap. v. 13). GESENIUS. Pliny speaks of red and purple lilies. Modern Jews, followed by LUTHER, MUNSTER, and CASTALIO, make שׁוֹשָׁן a *rose*, instead of a lily. KIMCHI, a violet. Signifies a lily in Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and Persic; a six-petalled flower, from שֵׁשׁ (*shesh*), six: hence, not the rose, which has only five petals: only it is the *red* lily, familiar in the East. DELITZSCH. Not our Lily of the Valley (*lilium convallium*); but the noblest flower that adorns our gardens, and which in Palestine grows wild in the fields. WILLIAMS. One of the plants in which the number *six* predominates in the distribution of their parts, as the Crocus, Asphodel, Daffodil, Lily, &c. KITTO. Takes its name from its six leaves or petals, and from its vivid silver whiteness: a perfect specimen has seven flowers on the spike—one at the head and six on the sides of the stem. *Threefold Mystery.* MERCER and AINSWORTH think it may be the woodbine, which grows and flourishes in hedges, and is sometimes called the 'lily among thorns.' A common flower that throws itself out on every spot of ground. HARMER. 'The Huleh lily is very large, and the three inner petals meet above and form a gorgeous canopy, such as art has never approached: this incomparable flower delights most in the valleys, but is found also on the mountains. THOMSON'S *Land and the Book.* הָעֲמָקִים from עֵמֶק (*'emeq*), a valley. The name not applied to ravines, but to the long broad sweeps sometimes found between parallel ranges of hills. STANLEY. Low places also fruitful places (1 Chron. xxvii. 29). AINSWORTH. Lily of the 'valleys' more beautiful than those of the mountains, because always watered and less exposed to the heat. RASHI. Indicates a district not far from Sharon, as mentioned with it (1 Chron. xxvii. 29). M. STUART. The expression denotes an isolated and wild lily in the valleys. WEISS. The point of comparison in both cases is both the diminutive size of these plants, compared with cedars, cypresses, &c., and also their beauty and elegance; the Bride, though referring to her lowliness and rural simplicity, yet saying nothing derogatory to herself. ZÖCKLER.

VERSE 4: *His banner over me was love.*

'His banner,' דִּגְלוֹ (*diglo*), from דֶּגֶל (*degel*), a military standard. The SEPTUAGINT and VULGATE read the word as a verb; the former in the imperative: 'Marshal (τάξατε), love against me;' the latter in the indicative: 'He marshalled (*ordinavit*) love against me.' WICKLIFF: He ordained me in charity. LUTHER: Love is his banner over me. DIODATI: The banner which he lifts up to me. MARTIN: Which I carry. THEODORET, expounding from the Septuagint: Teach me the manner of love. RASHI: My band who guide me to him is love. MUNSTER, MONTANUS, and PAGNINUS: His banner over me or about me. The expression, according to MENOCHIUS, equivalent to—'He drew me with the cords of love.' MERCER: He held love before me as a banner to attract me to himself. GROTIUS: 'He carries his love as an ensign before me,'—I serve under his banner, which is love. Similarly GESENIUS: 'I follow the banner of love which my Beloved presents to me, as soldiers follow a military standard and never desert it.' TIRINUS: 'Love,' that is, his love to me, by which he might subdue me to himself; and mine to him, that he might take me and all I have for his own. PISCATOR, JUNIUS, and MERCER: 'Having love towards me for a standard,—by which to call or draw me to himself.' SANCTIUS, expounding from the Vulgate: 'By his numerous kindnesses and sweetest blandishments he drew up all the array of his love against me.' So DU VEIL: He subdued me entirely to himself under the banner of love: he caused that I should cleave to him alone in love, as soldiers follow their standard. PATRICK: I am enlisted under his banner whose motto is love: he has overcome my heart so as to submit entirely to his wonderful love. MICHAELIS: He attacked me under the banner of love. ROSENMÜLLER: His banner for me is

love,—his love to me is conspicuous as a banner in an army. EWALD: Love was as a protecting banner over my head. ZÖCKLER: Love waves as a protecting and comforting banner over my head when I am near him. So DÖPKE, WORDSWORTH, and BURROUGHS. PERCY, and BOOTHROYD, reading the word as a verb in the imperative: 'Spread the banner of love over me.' FRY, following one of Dr. Kennicot's manuscripts: 'They have set up their banner over me.' FAUSSET: The banner inscribed with the name of the Captain who rescued us, Love. Some view the word as denoting the luminous standard carried before marriage processions. So PARKHURST; also HARMER: A cresset, or portable fiery standard. Others, perhaps still more correctly, as a 'flag or pendant, probably displayed on festive occasions.' So WILLIAMS. A banner usually displayed on the festive tent or banqueting house; perhaps having on nuptial occasions the word 'Love' inscribed on it. PERCY. A canopy, such as is carried over a Bride in the East. HUG.

VERSE 12: *The time of the singing of birds is come.*

'The time of the singing,' עֵת הַזָּמִיר (*eth ha-zamir*). Two meanings given to זָמִיר (*zamir*). GESENIUS and others derive it from זָמַר (*zamar*), 'to prune,' as in Leviticus xxv. 3; and so understand the expression as the 'time of pruning the vines,' or spring. So the Septuagint, Vulgate, and the ancients generally. RASHI, KIMCHI, ABEN EZRA, and most of the modern interpreters, understand the word rather as denoting 'singing,' from זָמַר, 'to sing.' So EWALD, who observes that vineyards are not mentioned till verse 13, and that the Greek ψάλλειν (*psallein*), equivalent to זָמַר, is used of the singing of birds. ZÖCKLER understands the word of *singing*, but rather the 'merry songs as of shepherds and country people.' Some understand it of the 'plucking and gathering of flowers.' So GREGORY OF NYSSA, DU VEIL, TIRINUS, and POOLE. HARMER and KITTO think allusion is made to the nightingale, which is heard in Palestine during the greater part of the garden season, singing delightfully in the day time among the pomegranate groves, and from trees of loftier growth in the night season. The time of *singing*, as more agreeing with that of the turtle's cooing. FAUSSET. SANCTIUS observes that vines are not pruned in spring, and prefers—'the time of cutting the cyprus in order to obtain its balsam in the gardens of Egedi.' LUTHER simply translates: The time of spring. Variously allegorized. TARGUM: Time of cutting off the first born in Egypt. RABBINS: Time of Israel's redemption, cutting off of the first born, and rooting up of idolatry. WEISS: Cutting off of the idolatrous nations of Canaan. ORIGEN: Pruning at the end of the world, when the axe of judgment is laid to the root of the trees. GREGORY: Removing the reprobate from the Church, that the end of the world may come. DEL RIO: A spiritual pruning in baptism and repentance for the remission of sins. FOLIOT: In sacred confession. WILLERAMUS: By the preaching of the Word. CASSIODORUS: The pruning of the saints in and by Christ. PHILO: A daily pruning from all sin necessary to those who wish to be Christ's spouse. HONORIUS: Pruning the Church of its rebellious members. FROMONDI: Putting off of the old man and cutting away of the old shoots of vices. WICKLIFF: By the preaching of the Gospel. THREEFOLD MYSTERY: Pruning of the Gentiles after Christ's coming. ABEN EZRA. Time of singing the song by the Red Sea. BROUGHTON: Time of the Jew's return from the Babylonian captivity. FAUSSET: Time of rejoicing at the advent of Jesus.

VERSE 15: *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.* שֻׁעָלִים (*shualim*) foxes. So the old translators. Sometimes also used for *jackals*, as Judges xv. 4; Psalm lxiii. 11. GESENIUS. Probably both these dangerous animals; the word being a general name for animals of the fox and jackal species. EWALD. A term including jackals. FAUSSET. Jackals probably meant wherever the word occurs in the Old Testament. Dr. SMITH. ZÖCKLER, however, inclines to *foxes*, as jackals are always called אִיִּים, or תַּן. But, as Ewald observes, these rather poetically so called. BOCHART: jackals. HARMER: Jackals gregarious, but not foxes; distinguished from the latter as 'little foxes.' HASSELQUIST calls the jackal the 'little Eastern fox.' Jackals roam in troops about the villages at night. Very destructive in Judæa. BOOTHROYD. COBBIN: 'Eastern foxes very unlike ours: small delicate creatures; and while seemingly gentle and harmless, creep quietly into any chink left in the fence of a vineyard, and nibble at the young shoots which are thus injured or destroyed.' 'Little foxes.' ZÖCKLER: Young ones. MERCER: Little; as more hurtful to the vineyard, and more bold in doing damage. SANCTIUS: As more easily taken than when full grown. DEL RIO: Still few and feeble in spring, the time of germinating: the double expression used for a single one; 'the foxes, I say, while still little.' EWALD: In the early part of the year a prudent farmer will expel the foxes, especially the young ones.

'Take us,' &c.; catch us foxes, &c. A little vintage song, or a fragment of one, sung by the Bride. HERDER, ZOCKLER. Sung while she hastens to her Beloved; the song bearing a delicate allusion to their love-relations. DELITZSCH. An intimation that she was not disinclined to his taking part with her in the care of her vineyard. ZÖCKLER. Spoken by the Bride. GOOD, BURROUGHS, NOYES, THRUPP. Words borrowed from a popular song, but receiving a new meaning here from their connection. GREEN. The beloved is conceived by the Bride as commanding the servants and bystanders. EWALD. 'Let thy servants catch,' &c. COBBIN. Addressed by Solomon to his companions. MERCER, BOTHROYD. Sending them on their assigned employ. FRY. Spoken by the virgins to the friends of the Bridegroom. WILLIAMS. By the Bridegroom to Shulamite, directing her to look well to her vineyard. WORDSWORTH. A summons to the chase. TAYLOR, WITHINGTON. Bridegroom's words to his servants reported by the Bride as heard in her sleep. DEL RIO. Spoken to Shulamite by her brothers. GINSBURG. Uncertain whether spoken by Christ, or the Church, or both: more probably by Christ, and chiefly addressed to the ministers of the Church, directing them to discover and refute the errors of false teachers and heretics; and to judge, censure, and cast them out of the Church, or to avoid them if not of it. AINSWORTH, DURHAM, GILL.

## CHAPTER III.

VERSE 7. *Behold his bed which is Solomon's.* 'His bed,' מִטָּתוֹ (*mittatho*) from נָטָה (*natah*), to stretch or recline. Not the same word as in verse first, which properly expresses a place for lying down upon. The word here generally understood to denote a palanquin or litter. A bed of repose, especially used by the rich (Amos vi. 4). Same as the 'chariot' in verse ninth, where it is described as; now before the eyes of spectators. EWALD. A royal bridal chariot or palanquin, afterwards called a 'chariot.' STUART. A travelling litter. FAUSSET. A portable bed. DELITZSCH. For the conveyance of the bride. HARMER. A palanquin of State large enough to convey both the Bride and Bridegroom. WILLIAMS. A common vehicle in which the great are carried throughout the East. COBBIN. The bed in which Solomon rests and is conveyed. HAHN. Only such a bed as the Bride used to be carried in from her father's house to that of her Bridegroom. WILLIAMS. A throne which, in the East, was in the form of a bed or couch. PATRICK. A palanquin, sedan, or portable vehicle, in which Kings in the East used to be carried when on a long journey; also a sort of pleasure couch, or sofa, on which they reposed by day when fatigued with business, or after a repast (Esther vii. 8; Gen. xlvii. 31). Sometimes also used instead of מִשְׁכָּב (*mishcab*), the bed used at night for sleeping on (2 Sam. iv. 5; Ps. cxxxii. 3). WEISS. 'His bed;' as used by him alone. BROUGHTON. As made by him. SANCTIUS. 'Which is Solomon's' (שֶׁלִּשְׁלֹמֹה *shelli-shelomoh.*) The relative שֶׁ, with a suffix, gives an intensive signification. ZÖCKLER. His bed, namely, that of him who is Solomon—the bed of Solomon himself. MERCER. Solomon's own palanquin. WILLIAMS. A form of expression not elsewhere found in the O. T.; but proper here, as used by the common people. EWALD. Of the King whose name is Peace. RABBINS. The name of Solomon in the Song to be taken historically of King Solomon. GENEBRARD. The Bridegroom's palanquin and attendance compared to that of Solomon. SANCTIUS. Describes the pomp of an earthly King, and probably Solomon's own royal state. BRIDE OF CHRIST. Though Solomon be named, a greater than Solomon is here. DR. CHALMERS. Solomon as the type of Messiah. MIDRASH. In the seventy-second Psalm, Solomon viewed as the Messiah. TARGUM, ABEN EZRA, KIMCHI, RASHI. Solomon's bed the Temple built by Solomon. TARGUM. The Tabernacle of the congregation and the Ark, which were carried in the wilderness. RASHI. The Ark of the Covenant brought by David to Jerusalem. WEISS. The Scriptures. THEODORET. Christ Himself in which the soul rests. AMBROSE. The Church in which Christ rests. PHILO, GREGORY, BEDE. The Temple of His body. COTTON, BROUGHTON. His humanity or His Cross. APONIUS. The loving, devoted soul. GREGORY. The hearts of the elect. COCCEIUS, AINSWORTH. Historically, refers to Jesus returning from the wilderness, full of the Holy Ghost. M. STUART. His grave; *His*, as new. DAVIDSON.

VERSE 9. *King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.* 'A chariot' אַפִּרְיוֹן *aphreyon*, a palanquin, or portable

bed; probably from פָּרָה 'to be borne quickly.' GESENIUS. According to the Talmudists, a bed, or nuptial couch, from פָּרָה 'to be fruitful.' EWALD and DELITZSCH derive the word from פרח (Arabic فرج to cleave, labour, elaborate: the chariot elaborately made as a state coach; more so than the bed, or travelling litter, in verse 7. So FAUSSET. COCCEIUS supposes that the Greek word here used (φορεῖον) might have come from the Hebrew through the Phœnician. The Syriac renders the word a throne; WICLIFF, a chair; COVERDALE and MATTHEWS' Bible, a bedstead; CRANMER and BISHOPS', a palace: GENEVA, a chariot; DOUAI, a chariot or bed. PISCATOR: A couch. MONTANUS. A bridal bed. PAGNINUS: An edifice. MUNSTER: A palace. The FIGURINE: A canopy. VATABLUS: A tent. MERCER: A portable couch, in which the Bride was carried for display. BRIGHTMAN: A chariot, showing his Majesty before the multitude. JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS: A throne. PATRICK: An open chariot, with a bed or cushion. GILL: Used in the Mishna for a nuptial bed, or open chariot, in which the Bride was conveyed from her father's house to that of her husband. WILLIAMS: A palanquin of state, probably large enough to carry both the Bride and Bridegroom. GOOD: A bridal couch. M. STUART: A royal bridal chair, or palanquin, borne on men's shoulders. DEL RIO. The Latin name *(ferculum)*, a conveyance used by the Romans for carrying the spoils or tokens of victory before the conqueror in a triumph; here something carried for show. HITZIG: A conveyance distinct from the מִטָּה, or bed, in verse 7; Solomon riding in that, while the Bride rode in this. ZÖCKLER: A portable couch, or litter; identical with the מִטָּה or bed, according to Rabbinical traditions and ancient versions, spacious enough to afford room for Solomon and Shulamite; though the former probably rode in a less showy vehicle by her side. Variously allegorized. TARGUM: The Temple. ABEN EZRA: The Holy of Holies. ALSHECH: The Tabernacle of witness. WEISS: The Throne-chamber, or Holy of Holies, with the Ark and the Cherubim, called 'the chariot' (1 Chron. xviii. 1—18). M. STUART: Account agrees with the Tabernacle, more especially with the Holy of Holies and Ark of the Covenant, borne on the shoulders of the Levites, like an eastern palanquin. FAUSSET: The Temple as compared with the Tabernacle, typical of Christ's body. THEODORET: The Apostles who carried Christ's name to the Gentiles. RUPERT and MERCER: The Word of God. GREGORY, AMBROSE, &c.: The human nature of Christ. WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY and M. STUART: The person of Christ. GREGORY, DEL RIO, DAVIDSON: Christ's Church and people; the renewed believing soul in which He dwells. SANCTIUS, COCCEIUS, DURHAM: The work of the Covenant of Redemption. GILL, SCOTT: The Covenant of Grace. THRUPP: The Cross of Christ. WILLIAMS: The Gospel in its onward progress. HENGSTENBERG: The means by which Christ brings the nations into His kingdom. CHALMERS: May relate to the glories of heaven, and of His own person.

## CHAPTER IV.

VERSE 6: *Until the day dawn, and the shadows flew away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.* 'Until the day dawn' (עַד שֶׁיָּפוּחַ הַיּוֹם, *adh shey-yaphuakh hay-yom*), שֶׁיָּפוּחַ, composed of שֶׁ, for אֲשֶׁר, that, and יָפוּחַ from פּוּחַ, to blow or breathe; literally, till the day breathe. According to some, before the cool of the day; a cooling breeze usually blowing at that time in the East. So EWALD, GESENIUS, ROSENMÜLLER, and most of the moderns. Reference to the easterly gale which frequently accompanies the approach of the sun to the horizon. PARKHURST, PERCY, A. CLARK. PLINY observed that a wind blows fresh both at the rising and setting of the sun. GILL. According to the earlier interpreters, the reference to the morning gale or dawn of day. A local beauty: in those hot countries the dawn of day is attended with a fine refreshing breeze much more grateful than the return of light itself. VATABLUS. Reference to the morning still preferred by some moderns. The refreshing breeze of dawn in the East, or air of life, which distinguishes morning from the death-like stillness of night. M. STUART, FAUSSET. 'Breathe:' a figurative expression for the reviving of the day after its apparent death. GOOD.

Till the day breathe forth, *i.e., light;* may also refer to the blowing of the wind at the break of day. AINSWORTH. PISCATOR has: Till the day respire or refresh himself, *i.e.*, the sun, after the labours of the day. Ancient versions and Fathers connect with the preceding 'until evening,' when having fed, they (*i.e.*, the roes) return home. JUNIUS and DURHAM refer it to the day in which the marriage was to be consummated. According to DELITSCH and ZÖCKLER, the words spoken by Shulamite, as well as in chap. ii., 17. According to the former, the Bride modestly wishes to leave the hall for a more solitary place in the precincts of the palace, till evening shall bring her again into the King's presence. So BARTH (*Bible Manual*): the Bride unable to bear herself so highly commended, and desiring to prepare herself for the Bridegroom. Others, probably more correctly, ascribe the words to the Bridegroom. So EWALD: Till the day declines (*i.e.*, soon) would I enjoy thy beauty. GILL views the words as spoken by him in reply to the request of the Bride in chap. ii. 17. According to the author of the *Threefold Mystery*, he intimates the coming change—his withdrawal for a season—with, however, a word of hope. Allegorically: Till the evening of the world, when I will take thee to myself. PISCATOR. FROMONDI: I will go during the night of this present life. DURHAM: Till the day when the Bride shall be taken into immediate communion with the Bridegroom. FRY: Till the day of Christ's second appearing. FAUSSET: Till the everlasting day: typically, God's taking up his abode in the Temple till the daybreak of Messiah's first appearing. MERCER and others: Day of the Gospel Dispensation, when the shadows of the law should pass away. GILL: The day of grace, and then the day of glory to elect souls.

'I will get me to the mountains of myrrh,' &c. According to some, the reference to certain localities. ZÖCKLER: Localities about the royal palace: solitary shady spots, perhaps beds of balsam (verse 13). UMBREIT: The region of Shulamite's home. HITZIG: Zion, as the seat of the Court. WILLIAMS: The Lebanon: the allusion to the fragrant groves of spices to be found in that country. A. CLARKE: Probably the mountains of Bether. COBBIN: The object to obtain perfumes for the Fair One. Others regard the language as figurative and denoting the Bride herself. GROTIUS: The breasts of the Bride, with allusion to the fragrant substances upon them. PERCY: The Bride compared to an entire heap of perfumes. EWALD: Shulamite's beauty so compared, as inviting from its sweet perfume. Allegorically: The temple on Mount Moriah. TARGUM, RASHI, ABEN EZRA. Mount Moriah, where the oil was made out of pure myrrh: Mount Zion as a figure of the Church. HENGSTENBERG. Where Isaac was offered. *Old Commentators.* Where frankincense was offered on the altar of incense; the Lord promising to dwell in the Temple now dedicated to Him (2 Chron. vii. 12—15). WEISS, FAUSSET. Reference to the Temple and its prayers and services, where Jesus often brought the devotion of holy prayer. DEL RIO. Heaven. PISCATOR. The heavenly Jerusalem. JUNIUS. As the place of special holiness. SANCTIUS. The abode of martyrs and confessors. HONORIUS. The abode of angels, spoken of in the East as having bodies of perfume. HARMER. The mediatorial kingdom of Christ, where He presents to the Father the incense of His finished atonement. HAWKER, and the author of *Threefold Mystery*. Refers to the crucifixion and death of Jesus. GREGORY. Christ went willingly to death: the mountain of myrrh His death, the hill of frankincense His resurrection and ascension. THEODORET. Christ's mountain full of rich gifts, but only available for us by the bitterness of His death. DEL RIO. Historical reference to Calvary, and the embalming of the Lord's body with the myrrh and aloes till His resurrection. M. STUART. The Bride or Church of Christ, even now lovely and precious in His eyes as the mountain of myrrh. PATRICK. The Church, where the graces of His people flow, and where their prayers are as incense. DURHAM. Where Christ takes up His abode till His second coming. GILL. The Church assembled under the Gospel ministry, where the name of Jesus, like frankincense, fills the hearts of His people with the savour of His presence. HAWKER (*Notes*). On the sweetly smelling sacrificial fragrance of the mountain of myrrh (his Bride) he will delight himself from morning till evening. HAHN. Souls whose fleshly lusts are mortified by the myrrh of repentance. FROMONDI. Reference to a life of prayer and contemplation. TIRINUS. As spoken by the Bride. The Church will flee for safety from her persecutors to the place prepared for her in the wilderness (Rev. xii. 14). COCCEIUS. Will wait for the day, retiring for prayer and meditation. HAWKER. To the mountain of sacrifice and the hill of praise. DAVIDSON. The soul in great distress fleeing to Christ for refuge in prayer and meditation. AINSWORTH.

VERSE 8. *Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.*

'Come with me' (תְּבוֹאִי אִתִּי *tabhoi*

*itti*). אִתִּי sometimes read as the imperative of אֲתָה 'to come.' So the SEPTUAGINT and VULGATE, followed by COVERDALE and LUTHER. Viewed by most as from אֵת 'with' and י 'me.' So the TARGUM, DIODATI and MARTIN. By others as denoting 'to me.' Solomon invites the Bride to his arms as a place of safety. PERCY, WILLIAMS, BOOTHROYD. EWALD strangely supposes the words put by Shulamite into her absent lover's mouth. Bridegroom invites the spouse to come into more pleasant and secure places. PATRICK. To make an excursion with him to admire together the grand and beautiful scenery. DÖDERLEIN. To see the mountains mentioned, and to be crowned with their flowers. DEL RIO. Bride, after last meeting, had returned home, and, being a shepherdess, had been feeding her flocks as far as Lebanon, &c. "*Bride of Christ.*" Solomon meets his betrothed on the summits of Lebanon, and invites her to leave it along with him. M. STUART, DELITZSCH. Announces to her that her home should henceforth be with him in the royal palace. ZÖCKLER. 'Lebanon' (לְבָנוֹן from לָבַן *laban*, 'to be white,' the 'white mountain, the Mont Blanc of Palestine'), the magnificent range of mountains, so-called, situated between Phœnicia and Syria, with a double line, called the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. Remarkable for the grandeur of its appearance, its silvery aspect, its fertility and beauty. The abode of wild beasts (2 Kings xiv. 9). A forest or wilderness in comparison with other places (Isa. xxix. 17). Place of the Bride's nativity and upbringing. SANCTIUS. Bride exhorted to leave her paternal abode with the Bridegroom. THEODORET. Solomon recalls her descent from a simple shepherd's family in the mountain region of Northern Palestine. ZÖCKLER. The Bride's seven-fold beauty the ground on which she comes down with the King from Lebanon and its mountain peaks, and from the haunts of lions and panthers, where she had dwelt on the other side of Lebanon. HAHN. Allegorically: The congregation of Israel invited to come to the Temple, and dwell with the Lord there. TARGUM. The divine presence promised to Israel when they should be carried captive from Lebanon, and should return thither. RASHI. From the Temple, or the city and land where it is situated. ROSENMÜLLER. Israel to leave the temporary sanctuary and follow the Bridegroom in the spiritual way of perfection, being assured of His presence with her in the path of suffering. WEISS. Lebanon the Temple from which Christ calls His people to remove (Zech. ii. 1; compare Matt. xxi. 13). M. STUART. The Church called to forsake idols, and to leave all and follow Christ, her Bridegroom; like Psalm xlv. 10. THEODORET, DAVIDSON. Called from the splendour of worldly glory. HONORIUS. From some situation of danger. BUSH. From false Churches and societies of wicked people, to walk with him in newness of life. AINSWORTH. The Church invited to heaven. PISCATOR.

'My spouse.' כַּלָּה *(callah)* a bride; according to GESENIUS, from כָּלַל *calal*, to crown, 'the crowned one;' but according to others, from כָּלַל to perfect; a term of affection and esteem, used to express the relation of a son's wife to his father and mother—a 'perfect one.' PARKHURST, WILLIAMS, SIMON. Never used with *my*. The Bride so called in direct relation to her husband's parents rather than to the husband himself; equivalent to '*daughter-in-law*;' the title being retained as long as her husband's parents were living (Gen. xxxviii. 11, 16, 24; Ruth i. 6—8). FRY. More directly applied in reference to the Bridegroom or husband (1 Sam. iii. 10): the idea of the word being *completion, totality*; a family being only complete upon a son's marriage, and the prospect of issue in the male line; the Bride, or daughter-in-law, being the person through whom the name, honours, and inheritance were to be continued. '*Three-fold mystery.*' Shulamite here, for the first time, called the Bride: hitherto only 'love' or 'friend;' this section immediately following the consummation of the marriage. PERCY. So-called on account of the day being appointed for the marriage. JUNIUS.

'Look from the top of Amana,' &c. תָּשׁוּרִי (*tashuri*) susceptible of two meanings—to 'look' and to set out on a journey.' The latter preferred by ZÖCKLER and others as parallel with תָּבוֹאִי. Thus understood by the SEPTUAGINT (διαλεύῃ.) So LUTHER. The VULGATE: Thou shalt be crowned; either from שׁוּר to rule (SANCTIUS), or from אָשַׁר to be happy (DEL RIO). So CALMET: The Bridegroom promises to deck her with a crown, and make her his Bride. TARGUM: Thou shalt see persons coming, *i.e.*, with presents. So ROSEMÜLLER. GROTIUS: I will conduct thee through the most pleasant parts of my kingdom. COCCEIUS: Come and enter into possession: look forth on the inheritance. PERCY: She may now look down in security amidst

any dangers of which she was apprehensive. FRY: The Bride, in passing from her home to her husband's abode, would obtain from the heights of these mountains a gratifying prospect of the land of promise. DELITZSCH: Solomon would conduct her from one summit of Lebanon to another, and give her to see and enjoy the prospect of his wide dominions. 'Amana' (אֲמָנָה), the name of a mountain in the north of Palestine. RASHI. At present not precisely known: probably belonging to the same range of mountains in Antilibanus as Shenir and Hermon. WEISS. Not likely, as A. CLARKE, the mountains dividing Cilicia and Assyria. WILLIAMS: A mountain in Syria; the valley and the river called by the same name, Amana and Abana (2 Kings v. 12; *Keri* אמנה *Amana*). GESENIUS: The name of a river rising in Antilibanus and watering Damascus, and giving its name to that part of the Lebanon. According to later Jews, only the name of a river. EWALD: Amana, some part of Lebanon not far from Damascus, whence a small river of similar name had its rise, called Abana. MICHAELIS: Abana probably the river now called Fiji. ZÖCKLER: Amana, the peak lying farthest to the east and north-east of the Anlitibanus range. 'Shenir' (שְׂנִיר, better read שְׂנִיר *Senir*), the name of Mount Hermon with the Amonites (Deut. iii. 9); as Sirion (שִׂרְיֹן) was with the Sidonians. In a stricter sense, a part of Hermon or Antilibanus lying to the north, and now called by the Arabs, *Jebel Senir;* Hermon being distinguished from Shenir both here and in 1 Chronicles v. 23. GESENIUS. Shenir the more northern, Hermon the more southern, of the principal peaks in the Hermon or Antilibanus range. ZÖCKLER. Sirion identical with Shenir, meaning a breastplate; referring probably to its glittering breastplate of ice. STANLEY. 'Hermon' (חֶרְמוֹן). A high mountain of Antilibanus covered with snow, now called *Jebel Sheikh.* Sometimes as here, and in 1 Chronicles v. 23, distinguished from Shenir, the common usage apparently fluctuating. Hermon consisted of more mountains than one (Ps. xlii. 7), these mountains being called also Zion (Deut. iii. 9; iv. 48). GESENIUS. The poet here only varies the names, because one meant the same as another to him. HITZIG, ZÖCKLER. Amana, Shenir, and Hermon, all different mountains of the Lebanon chain. COBBIN. The SEPTUAGINT, strangely translating the first name, Amana, has: 'From the beginning of the faith.' In the second clause, however: 'From the top,' &c.; as the VULGATE in both clauses. The passage thus allegorized. THEODORET: Shenir and Hermon the law or legal life. WEISS: Wild mountains of Israel's captivity. DAVIDSON: The whole land of Gentile Esau—the Gentile and estranged wilderness. PATRICK: From the horrid mountains, where thou wast exposed to the rage and cruelty of furious and troublesome men, look down and behold the goodly heritage I have purchased for thee. PISCATOR: Heaven to be beheld by faith. DURHAM: Elevate the heart to heaven; *look,* at least. FRY: The believer, like Moses on Pisgah, obtains a prospect of the promised rest. GILL: The Church called to look down and see how the Gospel was received by the nations: or, Christ's call to His Church to leave the society of the wicked men of the world, and go along with Him (2 Cor. vi. 17; Rev. xviii. 4). 'Lion's dens and mountains of leopards.' A poetical exaggeration of the mountains around Shunem, as if to be compared with Lebanon; alluding, in a general way, to the wild beasts and inhospitable character of the region of Shulamite's home (Zech. ii. 3; Jer. xii. 5; Deut. xxxiii. 22). ZÖCKLER. Allegorically, the inhabitants of strong towns, who are strong as lions. TARGUM. Furious Jews and crafty Gentile philosophers. THEODORET. Malicious, cruel, and hypocritical men. JEROME, GREGORY. Heretics. PHILO, ANSELM. False brethren. HONORIUS. Persecuting tyrants. PISCATOR, DURHAM. Regions of idolatry, of which Egypt whence the Bride came (?) was one of the most remarkable. HARMER. Babylonian lions and Chaldean panthers. WEISS. Savage, beastly, and idolatrous people. AINSWORTH. These mountains, thus beautiful but dangerous, put in contrast with the mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense. BURROUGHS.

Verse 9. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.* 'Thou hast ravished my heart' (לִבַּבְתִּנִי *libbabhtini*, a verb formed from לִבֵּב *libbebh*, from the noun לֵבָב *lebhabh*, a heart); 'thou hast wounded or taken away my heart.' GESENIUS. 'Hast enchanted me, made me wholly thine own.' ZÖCKLER, DELITZSCH. According to this view the Piel form of the verb has a privative signification like סִכֵּל (*sikkel*), to clear away stones; or שִׁרֵּשׁ (*sheresh*), to uproot. According to others, לִבֵּב, like the same in Syriac, denotes to give heart or encourage. So the niphal form of the verb in Job. xi. 12.

לִבַּב, to get a heart or wisdom. So GREGORY. COCCEIUS, EWALD, and others: Thou hast heartened, or emboldened me. WORDSWORTH and some Rabbins: Behearted me—coupled my heart to thine. SEPTUAGINT: Thou hast hearted us. SYMMACHUS: Hast emboldened me. VULGATE, followed by COVERDALE, MATTHEWS, GENEVA and DOUAI versions: Hast wounded my heart. CRANMER and BISHOP'S Bible: Hast bewitched my heart. LUTHER, MONTANUS, PISCATOR, MERCER: Hast taken away my heart. DIODATI and DUTCH Version: Hast robbed me of my heart. MARTIN: Hast ravished my heart. So JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS, PARKHURST, PERCY, GOOD, BOOTHROYD. MUNSTER: Hast fascinated my heart. TIRINUS and TIGURINE version: Hast taken possession of my heart. So PATRICK. ABEN EZRA: Hast taken away my heart. KIMCHI: Hast wounded it with the arrow of thine eyes. RASHI: Hast drawn my heart to thee. TARGUM: Written on the tablet of my heart is thy love. AINSWORTH: Thou hast taken, pierced, wounded my heart, ravishing it with love and delight. DE WETTE: Hast robbed me of my heart. NOYES: Hast taken my heart captive. UMBREIT: Hast robbed me of courage. HAHN: Hast unhearted me. WEISS: Hast cherished, known, esteemed, and loved me. CLAY: The word not found elsewhere in the Bible in this form and sense: Christ's love so unspeakable, new words to be coined to express it.—'With one of thine eyes': (בְּאַחַת מֵעֵינַיִךְ *be-akhadh me-enaik*) 'With one of the glances proceeding from thine eyes.' ZÖCKLER, HENGSTENBERG. So JUNIUS, LE CLERC, PERCY, GOOD, &c.; supposing that something, as רְאִי, has either been dropped out of the text, or is to be understood after בְּאַחַד. Masorites proposed reading באחת instead of באחד, עין being feminine. So the Keri and many MSS. EWALD: With a single one of thy glances. DELITZSCH: With one of thy looks. AINSWORTH: Even a side or profile view of her face charms him. So WILLIAMS. PARKHURST: The least glance I have of thee and of thy beauty. KENNICOTT: At once with thine eyes. So BOOTHROYD, COBBIN, HODGSON. RASHI: I would have loved thee with only one of thy charms. SANCTIUS: Perhaps one eye hidden by the veil or crown. Eastern women ununveiled only one eye in conversation. TERTULLIAN, NIEBUHR, NOYES.—'With one chain of thy neck' (בְּאַחַד עֲנָק מִצַּוְרוֹנַיִךְ, *be-akhadh'anaq mits-tsavronaik*). עֲנָק (*anaq*) a collar, from עָנַק, 'to adorn or clothe the neck' (Ps. lxxiii. 6). GESENIUS. With one chain of thy necklace; Shulamite's neck looking so charmingly in it. ZÖCKLER. Th word however only to be taken figuratively. PERCY. With one stone of thy necklace. EWALD. In Eastern descriptions, the dress and ornaments quite as much praised as the person: so in our own old ballads. "*Bride of Christ.*" PATRICK understands a 'wreath of hair.' So HITZIG: A ringlet or lock of the first hair hanging down on the neck. A. CLARKE thinks the reference to the play of the muscles of the neck. So GOOD and PERCY: With one turn of thy neck. BOOTHROYD: At once with the turning of thy neck. צַוְרוֹן (*tsavron*), a diminutive of endearment, from צָוַאר (*tsavvar*); 'thy tiny neck.' GESENIUS, EWALD. The dual or plural used to indicate the hair hanging on both sides of the neck. AINSWORTH. SEPTUAGINT: With one ornament of thy neck. SYMMACHUS: With one necklace. AQUILA: One lock. VULGATE: One hair or ringlet. LUTHER: One of thy neckchains. DIODATI and MARTIN: One of the necklaces of thy neck. So MERCER, PAGNINUS, &c. MUNSTER: With one fillet.

'My sister, my spouse.' A bride also called 'sister' among the later Arabians: so *soror* applied to a mistress in Tibullus. GESENIUS. The designation of a certain relationship: the spouse now Solomon's lawful wife, and next to him as a sister to a brother. ZÖCKLER. 'My sister,' a word of tenderness and endearment, used by husbands to their wives: so Tobit, vii. 16; viii. 4, 7. PATRICK. Relations and kinspeople called by the Jews brethren and sisters. GILL. The Church Christ's sister by His assumption of our nature; His spouse, by love and marriage-covenant. BEDE. The Church so called out of love, and in respect to regeneration and adoption (Heb. ii. 11). AINSWORTH. The Lord's heart drawn by even one right thought directed towards Him. SANCTIUS. Christ easily and willingly overcome by His own. DURHAM. The Bride's poverty of spirit looking forth behind the veil of her dove-like eyes, one of the two great features of her beauty that won the heart of the King; her humility of spirit the other. HAHN.

## CHAPTER V.

VERSE 2: *I sleep, but my heart waketh.* 'Sleep,' יְשֵׁנָה, *yeshenah*, a participle or adjective, from יָשֵׁן, to sleep. GESENIUS. The connection with what follows gives to יְשֵׁנָה and עֵר the sense of imperfects: 'I was sleeping,' &c. ZÖCKLER, HITZIG. So GOOD, PERCY, BOOTHROYD, &c. DIODATI, MARTIN, and DUTCH: I slept or was asleep. Was sleeping as if inebriated with delights. MICHAELIS, A. CLARKE. Had laid her head down on her couch, waiting for her beloved, and had fallen asleep, and now relates her dream to her companions. GREGORY. Recounts an adventure, or perhaps a dream. PERCY. Most likely the latter. A. CLARKE. A dream, indicating perplexity and unconnectedness, and containing reminiscences of the former one. EWALD. Another part of the poem begins here: in Solomon's absence, the Bride relates a dream to her attendants or the daughters of Jerusalem. DELITZSCH. A dream, indicative of her state of mind some days after the marriage festivities, her longing having been awakened for her native home. ZÖCKLER. The scene transferred to the Bride's lowly cottage in the city, where she refused her husband admittance at night; a scene in accordance with her original position, but most inconsistent with her present rank, and explicable only on the ground of allegory. M. STUART. Second half of the Book begins here, shewing the Bride's original condition, and how her longing for the King was brought about. HAHN. 'My heart waketh.' Rather, was waking or awake. So EWALD, ZÖCKLER, &c. לִבִּי. (*libbi*) 'my heart;' used in the O.T. sense, of the centre and organ of the entire life of the soul. ZÖCKLER. My soul. EWALD. My mind. DAVIDSON. The intellectual faculties or region of thought. HITZIG. Her sleep nearer waking than sleeping. SANCTIUS. Like Balaam, fallen asleep, but with the eyes open (Num. xxiv. 4). PATRICK. Spoken of one asleep, or partly so, being excited by an unexpected call. FRY. Her mind awake and filled with the object of her affection. NOYES. Thus allegorized; TARGUM: Israel, when carried to Babylon, like a man asleep and unable to awake. RABBINS: Asleep as to the commandments, but my heart awake to the duties of piety: asleep as to my redemption, but the Blessed One awake to redeem me. WEISS: Ancient Church relates her experience after the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. xii. 1; Isa. i. 21; v. 7; Jer. ii. 21; Sam. iv. 1); a moral sleep intended; a state of spiritual drowsiness and inactivity. AINSWORTH: The spouse having eaten and drunk largely of the blessings of Christ, begins to remit her zeal, and neglect the works of faith and love: the heart, however, or inner man, the spirit, or the man as he is regenerate, still awake. DEL RIO: Awake in the inward soul, while the external senses were lulled. HAHN: An unnatural sleep; the original condition of the Bride or the Gentile nations living without God; a life without liveliness, as a sleep. ZÖCKLER and HENGSTENBERG: A dark scene: Apostasy of unbelieving mankind from God; especially the rejection of the Saviour. GREGORY and early interpreters: Saved from the billows, the Church falls asleep on the shore. BROUGHTON and COTTON: State of the Church in Constantine's time. DAVIDSON: The disciples before Christ's resurrection.

VERSE 4: *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door.* 'By the hole of the door' (מִן־הַחוֹר, *min ha-khor*; literally 'from the hole'). Through the latticed window. ZÖCKLER. The opening which served for a window. EWALD. At the window or casement. PATRICK. Probably rather a hole in the door. The hole in or near the door. RASHI. Above the lock. HAHN. In the wall. HITZIG. The attempt made to open the lock inside. Oriental houses still made with a hole in the door, or rather door-post, by which the master and domestics open the locks by putting in their hand, while strangers neither dare nor know how to do so, the locks being variously made: at night, additional bolts and bars so fasten the door that it cannot be opened from without. WEISS. When the bolt was too strong for the finger to move, or the hole too small, a key was used: otherwise, the finger inserted into the hole could move the bolt and open the door: at night, a pin was passed before the fore part of the bolt, to prevent its being opened on the outside: the Bridegroom had put in his finger to see if this had been omitted. DEL RIO. A key in the East usually a piece of wood with pegs or pins in it corresponding to small holes in a wooden bolt within, and is inserted through a hole in the door to push back the bolt. FAUSSET. The locks are placed on the *inside* of the doors of gardens and outer courts, and even on those of inner rooms of some places. To enable the owner to open them, a hole is cut in the door, through which he thrusts his arm and inserts the key. THOMSON, *Land and Book*. SEPTUAGINT: Withdrew his hand from, &c. So BURROUGHS and GINSBURG. VULGATE, followed by MARTIN: Put his hand.

LUTHER, DIODATI, WICKLIFF: Through the hole. GENEVA: Through the hole of the door. PISCATOR and MONTANUS: From the hole. JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS: Had put down his hand from, &c. THEODORET: To awaken the Bride. PISCATOR: To effect an opening. SANCTIUS: To remove the bolt. PATRICK: As if attempting to draw her out of her bed, or threatening to punish her. HITZIG: As if intending to climb in by the window. HENGSTENBERG and WORDSWORTH: Forcibly to break a hole through the wall, like Ezekiel viii. 7, 8. Allegorically: His hand, the Divine energy. THEODORET. A secret inspiration on the heart. FROMONDI. Something tending to awaken the Church. BRIGHTMAN. To arouse the lingering and fearful. COCCEIUS. His vengeance in the days of Ahaz. RASHI. Efficacious grace. GILL. Historically, the reference to the incarnation. HONORIUS. To the scene in the judgment-hall of Caiaphas. M. STUART, FAUSSET. To the resurrection of Christ. PHILO. To the inward working of His Spirit, as at Antioch (Acts. ii. 19, 21. AINSWORTH, FAUSSET.

VERSE 5: *My hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling on the handles of the lock.* 'Dropped with myrrh.' נָטְפוּ־מוֹר *natephu mor*, literally 'dropped myrrh.' So SEPTUAGINT, VULGATE, LUTHER, &c. MARTIN: The myrrh dropping from my hand. The myrrh from Solomon's having taken hold of the lock on the outside with profusely anointed hands. ZÖCKLER, WILLIAMS. From the unguent flowing in from the outer lock through the keyhole. HITZIG. Some drops inserted by her lover through the hole or above the door, and trickling down on the inner lock, showing how richly anointed he had come to her. DELITZSCH. Left on purpose by himself. EWALD, THRUPP, ROWE. Proceeding from the moisture of his hand when he introduced his finger to remove the bolt. DEL RIO, NOYES, HAHN. She imagines how her beloved, while calling her, had smeared the lock with perfume for its smell to meet her. EWALD. LUCRETIUS speaks of lovers perfuming the doors of their mistresses. Some, on the other hand, view the perfume as having been brought by the Bride herself. So WORDSWORTH. SANCTIUS: Not having time to perfume her garments, she pours the myrrh on her hand, wishing thus to receive and gratify her Bridegroom. FAUSSET: Anointed herself profusely, as the best proof she could give him of a hearty welcome. WEISS: Just having gone to anoint herself as a delicate lady among the Romans. PATRICK and PERCY: Having taken it to anoint her husband's head with it, she in her haste spilt it on her hands. A. CLARKE: Those who brought the Bride to the Bridegroom's house often anointed the doorposts with fragrant oils, and sometimes the Bride herself anointed them: hence *uxor*, for *unxor*. Allegorized by the Fathers generally as indicating penitence, chastity, and mortification of the flesh. DURHAM: Lively exercise of faith and other graces. AINSWORTH: Godly sorrow, faith, and love; or the sweet alluring odour left by Christ. PATRICK: Most ardent love with which the believer seeks to entertain his Saviour. BRIGHTMAN: Her endeavours as most acceptable to God. DEL RIO: The Bridegroom moving his Church to undertake the work of preaching the Gospel with the desire to endure hardship and even death for His sake. COCCEIUS: The Church's begun labour that she and the brethren might be partakers of Christ. DAVIDSON: The application to the Church of all the efficacy of Christ's atonement and resurrection, symbolized by the myrrh with which His body was embalmed, and which flows from Him as the Head to His members. *Threefold Mystery:* The setting forth anew of the precious doctrines of the atonement and mediation of Christ. M. STUART: Historically, the reference to the disciples with myrrh seeking Jesus in the tomb. FAUSSET: Also, to bitter repentance as the fruit of the Spirit's anointing (2 Cor. i. 21. 22).

VERSE 6. '*My soul failed when He spake.*' 'My soul failed.' נַפְשִׁי יָצְאָה *naphshi yatseah*, literally, 'went forth.' Failed, or fainted; breath forsook me; my soul almost went out of me. ZÖCKLER, EWALD, DELITZSCH. Sunk. BURROUGHS. I swooned away, and was like a dead body (Gen. xxxv. 18). FRY. I was not in my senses. DE WETTE, NOYES, SANCTIUS. My soul melted with anguish. ROWE. With sweet effusion of love. FROMONDI. Left me and flew away to my Bridegroom. DEL RIO. Was in great terror. COCCEIUS, Was in suspense. THEODORET. There remained no more spirit in her. DAVIDSON. VULGATE: My soul was melted. LUTHER: Went out. MARTIN: Fainted. DIODATI: I was out of myself. COVERDALE and MATTHEWS: My heart could not refrain. TIGURINE: My mind was disturbed. 'When he spake.' בְּדַבְּרוֹ *bedhabbero*, 'at his speaking;' from דִּבֵּר *dibber*, to speak. So GESENIUS. When he spoke. EWALD, DELITZSCH. While he yet spoke. WEISS, MERCER, LE CLERC, &c. When he was speaking, *i.e.*, through the window. ZOCKLER. Had failed as he spoke; a supplementary remark. DOPKE. SEPTUAGINT: At his word. VULGATE: When he

spoke. SYMMACHUS: While he spoke. WICKLIFF: As he spake. COVERDALE and MATTHEWS: Now like as aforetime when he spake. LUTHER: After his word. DUTCH: On account of his word. MARTIN: From having heard him speak. RASHI: When he spoke this word. JUNIUS: On account of the word with which he addressed me. *Assembly's Annotations:* My neglect of his speech troubled me when he was gone. BRIGHTMAN, AINSWORTH. BOOTHROYD: On remembering his words. BURROUGHS: In consequence of what he had said. SCOTT: Either remembering his tender and affectionate apeal, or hearing a reproving word as he withdrew. NOYES and DE WETTE: I was not in my senses while he spoke—acted insanely in not admitting my beloved at his request. EWALD proposes to read בְּדָבְרוֹ 'at his going away. HITZIG views the word as equivalent to אַחֲרָיו 'after him.' UMBREIT: 'In order to follow him; from דָּבַר to follow. Some propose בְּדָבָרוֹ 'on his account.'

## CHAPTER VII.

VERSE 12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.*

The speaker in this and the preceding verse differently understood by expositors. According to many, the Bridegroom is the Speaker. Among the moderns, HAHN observes: The King had gone down to enjoy the beauty of spring in his native plains, after the virgin's refusal. KITTO: Had gone down to his garden to admire its beauty. J. H. MICHAELIS: Bridegroom relates his joyful doing and saying. A large portion of interpreters view the *Bride* as the speaker. THEODORET: Bride gives the reason for her not obeying the Bridegroom's call. DELITZSCH: Bride relates where she had been. EWALD: Begins to relate how she had been surprised by the royal *cortége* while in her garden, and what happened to her on her first being brought to the King's Court. ZOCKLER: Describes how she had been occupied before being brought to the royal Court, and how that had taken place. PERCY, GOOD, and BOOTHROYD: Spoken by the Bride, who had gone to meet her spouse. M. STUART: The Bride always the narrator in the Song. Some expositors, however, view the Bridegroom as the Speaker in the preceding verse, and the Bride in this.

'Or ever I was aware,' לֹא יָדַעְתִּי *lo yadha'ti*; literally, I knew not. GESENIUS: I observed or expected not; יָדַע used also of *observing*. ZÖCKLER: 'I knew not;' viz., that her lover was the King. DELITZSCH: That my soul exalted me,' &c. EWALD: 'That my pleasure brought me,' &c., *i.e.*, it happened without my knowing it. 'My soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib' (שָׂמַתְנִי מַרְכְּבוֹת עַמִּי־נָדִיב *samathni markebhoth ammi-nadhibh*). A construction like Psalm cxxxiv. 2, and Ezekiel xvii. 5. Perhaps מַרְכְּבוֹת for בְּמַרְכְּבוֹת, as 1 Samuel viii. 11. Most of the MSS. read עַמִּי נָדִיב as two words (*ammi nadib i.e.*, my willing people); though upwards of twenty read as one, like the Septuagint and Vulgate. According to GESENIUS, עַמִּי is the construct state of עַם with *Yod* annexed, but not as the pronominal suffix, *my*. EWALD, however, reads with the suffix, — my people, *i.e.*, the people to which I belong. GESENIUS understands the noun as denoting friends or company (from עָמַם to collect); and נָדִיב as another noun, 'the prince;' from נָדַב 'to impel;' hithpael, 'to offer oneself willingly;' hence נדיב ready, prompt, liberal, princely; and as a noun, a prince: the expression in the text denoting 'the Prince's people or company.' NOYES: The prince's train. M. STUART: the attendants of the prince. ZOCKLER: Expresses the full display of the pomp and power of the kingdom. According to others, the two words are united in the proper name of a person celebrated for his swift chariots. So MERCER, GROTIUS, PATRICK and others: some noted captain, who easily pursued his victories with the swiftest chariots. HARMER: a furious driver of the age; the expression indicating the greatest precipitation. According to some Latin writers, Amminadib, the father of Naasson. For שָׂמַתְנִי Döderlein reads שַׁמַּתְנִי 'made me amazed;' apparently the reading of the Vulgate, which has: My soul disturbed me on account of the four-horsed chariots of Amminadib. Similarly, SYMMACHUS: I was in perplexity for, &c. The SEPTUAGINT has: My soul knew not (reading ידעת) he (or it) made me, &c. WICKLIFF and

the DOUAI Version follow the Vulgate: My soul disturbed or troubled me for, &c. CRANMER and the BISHOP'S BIBLE: I knew not that my soul had made me the chariots of the people that be under tribute. GENEVA VERSION: I knew nothing; my soul set me as the chariots of my noble people. COVERDALE and MATTHEWS: Then the chariots of the proud of my people made me suddenly afraid. LUTHER: My soul knew it not, that he had set or made me the chariots of Amminadib. DIODATI: I was not aware that my desire rendered me like the chariots of A. MARTIN: I did not perceive myself, that my affection rendered me like the chariots of A. DUTCH: Before I knew it, my soul set me on the chariots of my willing people. CASTALIO: My soul rendered me unawares like, &c. MERCER: I knew not, my soul made or placed me the chariots, &c. PAGNINUS and BRIGHTMAN: As the chariots, &c. MUNSTER: To be the chariots, &c. PISCATOR, JUNIUS, and TREMELLIUS: When I perceived not this, viz.: that the vines were budding, &c. AINSWORTH: My soul set me, *i.e.*, I put myself, &c.; the language of earnest desire and affection, as Ecclesiastes vii. 28; Canticles i. 7. DURHAM: I was made like, or, I was set on the chariots, &c. *Editor of* CALMET: My affections transported me like, &c. J. H. MICHAELIS: I knew not how, my soul placed me on, &c. PERCY, GOOD, BOOTHROYD: I knew not the irresolution of my mind, which made me withdraw swift as the chariots, &c. DEL RIO: I perceived not [thy love to me, because] my mind disturbed me on account of, &c. ROSENMULLER: Made me like, *i.e.*, swift as the chariots, &c. HOLDEN: Before I was aware, my soul hurried me away with anxious thoughts of my beloved. FRY: My heart made me like, &c. SANCTIUS: So courageous in following after the missing Bridegroom. UMBREIT: Made me into a chariot of, &c., *i.e.*, a princess. GESENIUS, HITZIG, EWALD: Transported me; made me happy among the chariots, &c. HODGSON: My fancy conceived myself on the chariots, &c. MERCER explains: Unawares an incredible desire impelled me to go to the garden where my beloved was; and I went with such speed that I did not perceive I was like, &c. JUNIUS and PISCATOR: Not seeing the Bride ready for the marriage, I took speedy counsel what I should do for her until that time. VATABLUS: I used the quickest carriages, those used by prince; so quickly did I return to my Bridegroom. SANCTIUS: I knew not that the Bridegroom had gone down to the garden; my soul disturbed me for the chariots, &c., lest I should meet them; or lest I should not be permitted to ascend them. PATRICK: I did not know it, or think so,—was not conscious of such perfections: thy praises put such motions in my soul as to make me to aim at the highest perfection, and use all haste to its attainment. DURHAM: I knew not till I was transported with an irresistible power of love to my Bridegroom. A. CLARKE: Implies strong agitation of mind,—palpitation of heart. FRY: Describes the fluttering of fear, being taken by surprise and driven to flight. PERCY: Expresses a heart palpitating between love, bashfulness, fear, and other tender passions; the meeting probably by appointment. FRY: I was not aware,—her retirement being suddenly interrupted. GESENIUS: Suddenly, while walking in the garden, I unexpectedly saw myself surrounded with the chariots of the king's companions. WILLIAMS: The affection of the prince carried him to meet his Bride with the rapidity of a chariot of A. KITTO: Solomon unexpectedly sees Shulamite. CLAY: His soul bounds towards her in swift affection as she now makes her appearance in the garden. DELITZSCH: I knew not that my soul exalted me, &c.; it was not by self-exaltation, but by the impulse of her own love,—not forgetful of her humble origin. M. STUART: Expresses her ignorance as to where he was, and her diligence in seeking him; her great haste from the strength of her affection, or her courage and resolution in surmounting all difficulties for his sake. ZOCKLER: Indicates sudden elevation to royal dignity, and her desire to be wholly his.

The passage variously allegorized. TARGUM: The Lord consults with Himself for the good of Israel. RASHI: Israel complains of the consequence of her sin in falling under the power of Rome. THEODORET: The Church complains of the heathen whom she sought to evangelize, but who attacked her and became as Satan's chariot. AMBROSE: The soul's subjection to the four passions till Christ mounts the chariot. DEL RIO: The Jews converted in the latter days excuse their long continuance in blindness and obstinancy. BRIGHTMAN: The conversion of the Jews as a thing beyond all expectation, and the ready aid given by the Gentiles in their restoration (Isa. lxvi. 20). GREGORY and many of the Latins view the chariot as that of Christ, drawn by the four evangelists. COCCEIUS sees in the passage a prophetic reference to the warlike expeditions of the Hussites under Ziska; Christ's pity for His oppressed people, and his ready assistance to their endeavours. AINSWORTH observes, that Christ uses His servants as chariots, for His 'willing people' to be brought as an oblation to the Lord. (Isa.

lxvi. 20). GILL sees in the passage the swiftness as well as the majesty and glory with with which Christ visits His Church: not finding the plants as He expected, He speedily employs methods for making them so: or, He returns with a transport of love to His Church. *Bride of Christ*: Christ in viewing the plants planted by His Father, is filled with the joy of one who finds himself suddenly surrounded with His willing people. HAWKER: The Bride conscious of the effect of Christ's visit to her, her soul being suddenly and blessedly on fire. M. STUART: The Bride suddenly transported with desire to return to her Lord and King. J. H. MICHAELIS: Christ speaks after the manner of men, as if not expecting such an event, or not knowing what to do. So CALOVIUS and COCCEIUS. DAVIDSON: Christ takes His willing people, as it were, in the chariots of His commands, and brings them to Mount Zion, the Christian Church. THRUPP: The Church unexpectedly made the source and channel of victorious might to all the willing people of God. HAHN: The Gospel in its fourfold history carried rapidly through the world; and, without thinking a moment longer, constrained by the long restrained love of His heart, Christ mounts, as Captain of the Host, the chariots of His people, to bring the penitent to Himself, and to fulfil His vocation, as Israel's King, in bringing back conquered Heathendom into the tents of Shem.

VERSE 13. *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return.* 'Return.' שׁוּבִי *shubhi*, return, come back. So most; though some, as DE WETTE, HAHN, and SANDERS render it, 'turn round,' for which a different word would probably be used. Spoken by Solomon and his female attendants. EWALD. By bride's companions, who desire her to return back to the garden with them. DELITZSCH. By the bridegroom's servants. THEODORET. By his friends. HOUBIGANT, PERCY. By chorus of women. MENOCHIUS. The Bride, finding her beloved, takes leave of the women, who call her to return. MERCER. GILL: Observing her bashfulness, they call her to turn her face, that they may behold it. HARMER: Spoken by Solomon or his attendants to the Jewish Queen, who had fled as not able to bear an interview with the King. SANCTIUS: Spoken by the 'daughters of Jerusalem,' desiring to see her beauty for themselves. M. STUART: By the 'daughters,' desiring in the King's absence to see the Bride. WEISS: By first division of the 'daughters.' FRY: by the company who had broken in upon her retirement, while she turned away to conceal herself. NOYES: By the court ladies. ZÖCKLER: The ladies calling to her when appearing to leave the court. HAHN: The call of the King and his host out of the chariots to the virgin in her home which they have speedily reached. WILLIAMS: Seeing her at a distance, the king instantly turns back and flies to meet her. Thus allegorized. TARGUM: The Lord calls Jerusalem to receive His prophets. RASHI: To return to Himself. THEODORET: Christ's servants call to the Church, not to fear the attacks of persecutors. PHILO, TRES PATRES: Call to the imperfect to repent. AMBROSE: To return to the way of virtue and of heaven. BERNARD: Bridegroom calls to the Church to return from lukewarmness, torpor and pride—from foolish joy and useless grief. DEL RIO: The call of the Christian Church addressed to the latter day Jews in the four quarters of the world. HAHN: The call of the Gospel of peace to the heathen world. WORDSWORTH: The summons reiterated, as addressed to Jew and Gentile to return to God. THRUPP: Call to the Church to return in peace from victorious conflict. HAWKER: The call of the Triune Jehovah. 'Shulamite.' הַשּׁוּלַמִּית *ha-Shulammith.* Different meanings and derivations of the name given. Probably named from Solomon. שְׁלֹמֹה *Shelomo;* 'she who is Solomon's Bride;' or, 'she who has been visited with peace.' GESENIUS. The Bepeaced. THRUPP. A dialectic variation of *Shunemite*, from Shunem, also called Solam, the place of her abode. ZÖCKLER. Shunem called Solam as early as the time of Eusebius, who refers to 1 Kings i. 3; ii. 17, as a possible explanation of the term. GESENIUS. Inhabitant of Salem or Jerusalem. ABEN EZRA, KIMCHI, COCCEIUS, PATRICK, &c. From שָׁלֵם perfect, or שָׁלַם to restore; the perfect or restored one. WEISS. Perfect in thy faithfulness. RASHI. SEPTUAGINT: Sunamite; though the Complutensian and Royal Editions have Sulamite. VULGATE, SYRIAC, and ARABIC: Sulamite. AQUILA: She who is at peace. WICKLIFFE: Sunamytis. The name here used to remind her of her condition as Solomon's bride, and so to remove her bashfulness. PERCY.

*Ibid. As it were the company of two armies.* The answer given by the Bridegroom. So THEODORET and the Fathers. By his friends. CALVIN. By the 'daughters.' ZÖCKLER and many moderns. A continuation of the Virgin's question. DE WETTE and others. 'As it were the company,' &c. כִּמְחֹלַת מַחֲנָיִם (*kimkholath mahanaim*). מְחֹלָה (*mekholah*) a choir or dance, to celebrate a victory; from חוּל, to turn or go round, to dance. GESENIUS. מָחוֹל (*makhul*)

always a religious dance, or dance at a religious festival (Exod. xv. 20; Jud. xxi. 19; Jer. xxxi. 4, 13). EWALD. מְחוֹל, a circular dance, well known and common to the Orientals in feasts and solemn occasions, performed by several companies at once and by ranks, moving in opposite directions; performed anciently round heathen idols. WEISS. מְחֹלָה, like מָחוֹל, a chorus or dance; processions or bands constantly employed on occasions of public rejoicing. FRY. מַחֲנַיִם (*mahanaim*); dual or plural of מַחֲנֶה, a camp or army; from חָנָה, to pitch tent: here, according to some, the heavenly hosts or angels. So GESENIUS and DELITZSCH. Two hosts or choral bands. PERCY, GOOD. Two bands; alluding probably to the two choruses or semi-chorusses that accompanied the Bride and Bridegroom. WILLIAMS. Two camps. A. CLARKE. Simply, Mahanaim: 'The dance of Mahanaim.' ZÖCKLER. What resembles the dance of M.: they would see her dance. EWALD, who observes: Mahanaim was an old city on the other side of Jordan celebrated in Jacob's time (Gen. xxxii. 3): must have become in the poet's time celebrated for its female dancers at the solemn religious festivals, having been a holy city from antiquity through Jacob's abode in it: hence such dances, as at Shiloh (Jud. xxi. 19), in the Kingdom of Israel, at first only at Dan and Beersheba (1 King xii. 28, 29), afterwards in in many other cities (Amos iv. 4; v. 5). These remarks, however, made on the supposition that the Song was composed by a later poet than Solomon. The SEPTUAGINT has: As choruses or dances of the camps. VULGATE: Unless the choruses of camps. WICKLIFF: But quires of tents. DOUAI: The dance of the angelic choirs. LUTHER: As the ranks at Mahanaim. DUTCH: A row of two armies. DIODATI and MARTIN: As a dance of two companies. VATABLUS, PAGNINUS, MERCER, &c.: As the chorus of a camp or camps. JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS: The quire of Mahanaim. BRIGHTMAN: What but as the company of an army. SANCTIUS: Indicates sweetest pleasure, whether it be a chorus of dancers or instrumental music. Refers to the songs or praises of warriors. RUPERT. Singing a triumph as conquerors. THEODORET. As it were the meeting or conflict of two hosts. PERCY. Rather the amiable junction of two friendly companies as in a dance. HARMER. The rushing together after the manner of dancers. GOOD. The squadrons of two hosts dazzling by their armour, and performing their evolutions with the greatest order and beauty. BOOTHROYD, COBBIN. Indicates the stateliness and majesty of two armies in battle array. GILL. Allegorically: In the Church is both warfare and festivity, choirs and camps; fighting first and singing afterwards. THEODORET. Indicates the glorious presence of God in the Christian Church, resembling what Jacob saw at Mahanaim, or in the hosts of heaven. PATRICK. The deliverance of Shulamite from her miseries, and the joy of men and angels for her victory. AINSWORTH. The union of Jews and Gentile; or rather, the conflict between the flesh and the spirit in a believer. GILL. Indicates only a certain terrible and wonderful majesty. MERCER. The Church's excellence. DURHAM. A band of two camps united under one leader: seen in the desire of Luther and others in regard to the Bohemians in 1522. COCCEIUS. Points to the time when the Beloved shall be as an ensign to the nations, and the two armies of Jews and Gentiles shall be united. WEISS. Something as magnificent and transporting as the dance of the angel bands at Mahanaim; the sight of Shulamite one of angelic beauty and heavenly sublimity. ZÖCKLER.

## CHAPTER VII.

VERSE 5: *The King is held in the galleries.* 'In the galleries.' בָּרְהָטִים (*ba-rehatim*), plural of רַהַט, a gutter, rafter, gallery, a hair or ringlet; from רָהַט, an unused root, like the Aramaic רְהַט to run or flow. Here, according to most moderns, a ringlet or lock. A king is fettered in the locks. EWALD, DE WETTE, DELITZSCH. Her locks or curls viewed as nets or snares. ZÖCKLER. The king is held captive in the flowing ringlets. GOOD. Captivated by the locks. NOYES. According to other interpreters, the word is used in the sense of 'galleries' or 'corridors,' that run along the sides of a house, or pass from one chamber to another. Places to walk in. JUNIUS, PISCATOR. So the SEPTUAGINT: A king is bound in the galleries (παραδορομαις), DUTCH VERSION: The king is as bound on the galleries. MUNSTER: Bound to the galleries to contemplate thee. JUNIUS: Any king would thus be held in the galleries. According to others, the word here denotes beams or rafters. MERCER: Is bound as it were to the beams of the house to look at thee. VATABLUS: Bound to the beams of his own

house for excessive love. Some connect the word מֶלֶךְ (*melek*), a king, with the last word in the preceding verse, 'the purple of a king,' or royal purple, and thus understand בְּרַהֲטִים of the 'gutters,' or canals used by dyers for dying the purple. So the VULGATE. The purple of a king bound in the canals. WICKLIFF and DOUAI VERSION. Joined or tied to water-pipes. So ABEN EZRA, LEO JUDA, GOGUET, &c. Others, following the same construction, translate 'plaits or folds.' COVERDALE and MATTHEWS. The purple of a king folden up in plaits. LUTHER. Bound in folds. DIODATI, giving the meaning of 'rafters.' Attached to scaffolds. HOUBIGANT. Royal purple hanging in a knot from the ceiling. FRY. Bound on the rafters: allusion to some rich canopy of state suspended from the roof of the palace. THRUPP. Like royal purple fixed among the wainscottings. SANCTIUS gives a different meaning to בְּרַהֲטִים—gold or silver headbands. So MICHAELIS. As the king encircled with a straight turban. Thus allegorized: RASHI. The King—God himself—is bound by the love and obedience of His people. ABEN EZRA and ALSHECH. The King—Messiah—born, according to ancient Rabbies, on the day Jerusalem was destroyed. RUPERT: The Saviour's passion, the more glorious the longer it was preceded by typical sacrifices. AINSWORTH and GILL. Christ the King abruptly breaks off in His description of the Church's beauty, to discover to her His love and affection. DAVIDSON and WORDSWORTH. The Church's King dispenses His grace through the appointed channels,—the ordinances of the Gospel, and the Scriptures of truth. HAHN. The love of the King and his people gained by the beauty of Shulamite's humility and poverty of spirit.

VERSE 9. *And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.* 'For my beloved,' לְדוֹדִי *le-dhodhi*. Understood by ABEN EZRA, SANCTIUS, and many moderns, as a sudden interruption by the Bride. So ROSENMÜLLER, DELITZSCH, NOYES, &c. Spoken by the Bride, who takes up the king's words to continue the description, shewing that she fully responded to his love. ZÖCKLER. Viewed by many as spoken, like the preceding, by the virgin-attendants, one speaking in the name of the rest, or the whole choir considered as one person. M. STUART. The virgins viewed, like the Bride, as both one and many, and claiming the Bride's beloved for their own. So MERCER, AINSWORTH, and others. DURHAM. 'For my special friends;' or as personating the Bride in an abrupt expression of her love to the Bridegroom. Some, like the SEPTUAGINT, connect the expression with הוֹלֵךְ (*holech*) 'that goeth,' and either translate 'that goeth pleasantly,' as PISCATOR, JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS, PERCY, and BOOTHROYD; or, 'that goeth towards my beloved,' or, 'that goeth down for my beloved,' as DE WETTE, HAHN, and others; or, 'for my friends;' or, 'sent to those whom I love;' as PATRICK and WILLIAMS. EWALD would put the word in brackets, as probably an error of the transcribers, but long before the Masorites, as only wanting in one of Kennicot's MSS. (715), and that, perhaps, by oversight. HOUBIGANT conjectures לחכי 'to my palate,' as the original word. GLASSIUS supposes it to be used euphonically for לְדוֹדִים as chap. viii. 2; 2 Kings, xi. 19. SEPTUAGINT. That goeth to my beloved. VULGATE. Worthy of my beloved to drink. So WICKLIFFE and the DOUAI VERSION. LUTHER. That enters my beloved. MARTIN. In favour of my beloved. DIODATI. Which goes to my friend. DUTCH VERSION. To my beloved ones.

'That goeth down sweetly,' הוֹלֵךְ לְמֵישָׁרִים (לְדוֹדִי) *holech* (*le-dhodhi*) *le-mesharim*. Literally: 'That goeth to or for my beloved, to or in straightness, or straightly.' מֵישָׁרִים the plural of מֵישָׁר (*meshar*) straight; with the prefix לְ to or for,—straightly or directly. So GESENIUS and EWALD. Smoothly, or 'according to evenness.' ZÖCKLER and DE WETTE. Smoothly, that is, pleasantly. WEISS. That goeth to him directly and ultroneously, as entirely belonging to him. SANCTIUS. Some connect לְמֵישָׁרִים, not with הוֹלֵךְ, but with לְדוֹדִי 'those whom I love for their uprightness.' So WILLIAMS. Or, 'whom I love uprightly,' *i.e.*, from the heart. So RASHI. SEPTUAGINT: Going to my beloved straightly (εἰς εὐθύτητα). VULGATE, perhaps reading למשתים: Worthy for my beloved to drink. LUTHER. Which enters my beloved smoothly. DIODATI. Which goes directly to my friend. CRANMER and GENEVA BIBLE. Which goeth straight to my well-beloved. DUTCH. Which goeth right to my beloved ones. MONTANUS and MERCER. Carrying itself rightly. MUNSTER. Going by straight ways. PAGNINUS

Going directly. JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS. Most rightly. COCCEIUS. Flowing to my beloved most smoothly. AINSWORTH. So delicious that it goes down glibly. FRY. Moving to my beloved as it ought; indicating the Bride's desire that her conversation should be agreeable to her husband. WEISS. Like the choice wine poured on the altar of burnt offering, which mounts directly to heaven. DAVIDSON supplies a copula, and translates: For my beloved, and for the upright ones. THEODORET, using the Septuagint: For direction to the souls that love thee.

'Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.' דּוֹבֵב *dobhebh*, from דָּבַב, to which the Talmudists give the meaning of speaking; 'making the lips of those who sleep to speak,' *i.e.*, in dreams. So MERCER, HENSTENBERG, DELITZSCH, &c. WILLIAMS. Causing to murmur. WEISS. To lisp. SANCTIUS. Inducing intoxication, and making the stammerers eloquent. PATRICK. Making men speak with the lips of the ancient, *i.e.* to utter excellent sayings. A. CLARKE. As wine causes the most backward to speak, so thy charms make the most taciturn eloquent in thy praise. FRY: Effervescing against the lips, &c. Others, however, give to דָּבַב the meaning of 'to creep or flow over.' So EWALD, GESENIUS, DE WETTE, &c. 'Gliding over the lips of sleepers,' that is, he who drinks is insensibly overtaken with sleep; the adjective being taken, as frequently, from the *effect*. ZÖCKLER, EWALD, NOYES. Flowing down. PERCY. 'Those that are asleep.' יְשֵׁנִים *yeshenim*, may be either 'persons sleeping,' or 'old men;' the former preferable, as from יָשַׁן to sleep, So GESENIUS and most. HAHN. Persons already sinking into slumber, as if, overcome by the sweetness of the wine, they were unable to remove the cup again from their lips. Some understand it figuratively of the dead. PATRICK. 'Old men;' those asleep or dead, or at the point of death. SEPTUAGINT, reading ושנים and שפתי: Reaching my lips and teeth. VULGATE. Suitable for the lips and teeth to ruminate. So WICKLIFF, BISHOP'S, and DOUAI VERSION. COVERDALE and MATTHEWS. The lips and teeth shall have their pleasure. CRANMER. Which bursteth forth from the lips of the ancient Elders. DUTCH, DIODATI, and MARTIN. Making the lips of the sleepers to speak. LUTHER. And speaks of what is afar off. MERCER. Awakening the slumbering senses, and refreshing the mind. VATABLUS. Who (viz., the friend who drinks it) speaks with the lips of them that sleep. CASTALIO: To my friend who (in consequence) babbles with sleeping lips. TARGUM, allegorizing. As Elisha and Elijah raised the dead, and as Ezekiel prophesied, and awoke the dead in the valley of Dura. RASHI. Even my fathers in the grave shall rejoice and give praise for their portion. RABBINS. Causing, by the Spirit, given in answer to the Church's intercession, the lips of the nations who were asleep before to be opened, and to show forth the praises of the Lord. WEISS. Perhaps an allusion to the Israelites expecting silently the prayer made by the priests in the Temple, or by the leader in the synagogue, when the lips only moved: the daughters of Jerusalem thus intimating that, while the Church was requested to offer fervent prayer in their behalf, they would silently repeat it after her. AINSWORTH. Sinners awakened and quickened by the word preached (Eph. v. 14); also others who from negligence fell asleep, and are enabled by this spiritual wine to speak (Isa. lvii. 13, 19).

VERSE 13. *The mandrakes give a smell.*

'Mandrakes.' דּוּדָאִים *ha-dudhaim*; plural of דּוּדִי a love-apple, from דוד to love. So GESENIUS and others. 'A mandragora (*Atropa mandragora, Linnæus*); a plant with large leaves, like the beet; its root like that of a turnip, divided in the lower part, and somewhat resembling the human form; employed in preparing love philtres, as having a soporific power, and thought to possess a virtue in matters of love, which is still ascribed to it in the East.' A wild plant common in Palestine, especially in Galilee; of the same genus as the Belladonna, with small whitish blossoms, which, in May or June, become small yellow apples, with a strong and disagreeable odour; very early regarded as an artificial provocative of sensual love, not only in the East, but also by the Greeks and Romans, and still called by the Arabs *tuffáh esh-shaitan*, or Satan's apples. ZÖCKLER, EWALD. According to others, a particular kind of melon called in the east, from its shape, *chamama*, or Woman's breast, corresponding to the Hebrew name in the text. So CALMET and FRY. TAYLOR. Some lovely fruit or flower. DE WETTE. Some beautiful sweet-smelling plant. COBBIN. A kind of highly-flavoured melon. Some read דּוּרָאִים *dudhaim*, 'baskets' (as Jer xxiv. 1). So HAHN: Baskets full of all kinds of precious fruits. According to to the Talmudists: Violets or lilies. RASHI. The Jasmine. TARGUM. The Balsam. SEPTUAGINT and VULGATE. Mandragora. LUTHER. Lilies. According to others, as Ludolf and Simon, the Indian Fig. Patrick and others needlessly object to the man-

drake, as having an offensive smell. 'Give a smell,'—give forth their odour; therefore referring to the fruit, not the blossoms, nor the plant; and so looking forward to a more advanced season than in verse 13, the fruit not being ripe till the wheat harvest' (Gen. xxx. 14. ZÖCKLER.

## CHAPTER VIII.

VERSE 5. *I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee.*

'I raised thee up,' עוֹרַרְתִּיךָ *'orarticha,* Pilel of עוּר, to be awake; literally, I awaked thee out of sleep; according to many moderns, here applied to awakening the previously slumbering affections. So ZÖCKLER. I incited thee [to love]; discovering mine to thee, I obtained thine. GESENIUS. I inspired thee with love; properly, aroused thee. DE WETTE, BOOTHROYD. Excited thee to love. WILLIAMS. Wooed thee. PERCY, GOOD. FRY: Raised thee up; perhaps, resuscitated thee,—the Bride originally found by her husband an exposed infant (Ezek. xvi. 3—6). The Masoretic pointing in our Hebrew Bibles probably in this case faulty, as determining the speaker to be the Bride instead of the Bridegroom, to whom the words appear much more naturally to belong, and to whom they are ascribed by all the Greek Fathers, and many of the Latins. 'Under the apple-tree.' Under this apple-tree,—pointing to it; one immediately adjoining her mother's house, and probably shading one of the windows. ZÖCKLER. This apple-tree one among many other places recalling their first love-intercourse. DELITZSCH. Reminding her of their first interview. BOOTHROYD. Referring to the place of her birth. SANDERS. In the woods, as rustic and poor. SANCTIUS. Reminding her of her humble origin. FRY. Refers to the scene in chap. ii. 3. WILLIAMS. SEPTUAGINT, and VULGATE: Under an apple-tree I awoke thee up (ἐξήγειρα). COVERDALE and MATTHEWS: I am the same that awakened thee up among the apple-trees. EWALD prefers adhering to the Masoretic pointing, and understands by the apple-tree the place where the Bride sometimes awoke the Bridegroom when resting at mid-day, and which had seen him born.—'There she brought thee forth that bare thee.' חִבְּלָתְךָ *khibbelathecha;* Piel of חָבַל, to bend, twist; hence Piel, to bring forth with pain. So GESENIUS and most. There, where that apple-tree stands, or the dwelling shaded by it, she travailed with thee. ZÖCKLER. Others, however, understand the verb as from חָבַל to plight, as Exodus xxii. 26; Deuteronomy xxiv. 6, 17; 'pledged or contracted thee to me.' So HOUBIGANT, MICHAELIS, A. CLARKE, GOOD, BOOTHROYD, &c. DELITZSCH. Under the same tree, Shulamite received from her mother her life, from Solomon his love. WILLIAMS. Reference to the scene in chap. ii. 3, where we may suppose the Bride's mother to have been present, and some ceremony here alluded to to have taken place. PERCY. Bridegroom makes a solemn recapitulation of the contract they had entered into. SEPTUAGINT. There thy mother travailed with thee (ὠδίνησέ σε). VULGATE, using a different reading: Was corrupted. Followed by the DOUAI version. COVERDALE. Bare thee. So LUTHER, DIODATI, MARTIN, and the DUTCH version. PAGNINUS. Conceived thee. PISCATOR, JUNIUS, and TREMELLIUS: Was in labour with thee. Allegorically:—WICKLIFFE. 'The voice of Christ to the synagogue; of the holy cross. DOUAI. Christ redeemed the Gentiles at the foot of the cross. MATTHEWS. Voice of the Spouse before the spouseless. DEL RIO. Bridegroom relates that the beginning and increase of his love to his beloved had manifested itself under the apple-tree; reminding her of her original misery and poverty, in order to keep her from pride and elation. FROMONDI. I raised thee up when dead under the forbidden tree, by sprinkling thee with the blood of my cross; that as death reigned by one tree, he might be conquered by another. SANCTIUS. I raised thee up when abandoned by thy mother to perish (Ezekiel xvi. 3—6). DAVIDSON. Raised thee up after the fall; or, by the preaching of the Gospel. WEISS. I, the risen Saviour, aroused thee under the apple or citron tree; the cross, where the sleeping Church was aroused; for example, John, Joseph, Nicodemus, the thief, &c. GILL. The apple-tree Christ Himself, or the ordinances of the Gospel. RASHI, following the Rabbinical pointing. The Bride seeks to stir up the love of her Beloved. COCCEIUS. The Bride arouses Christ by her prayers in time of trouble and persecution, as the disciples did in the storm. J. H. MICHAELIS. Arouses Him by earnest prayer to shew Himself more than formerly. AINSWORTH. Taking hold of the covenant of

grace and the promises of life in Christ, the apple-tree of life and grace (chap. ii. 3), she stirred Him up by prayer for her help and comfort. GILL: Not finding Him in ordinances, she raised Him up by earnest prayer. FAUSSET: I excited thy comparsion to come and save me from my sin and misery under the apple-tree in Eden;—spoken by converted Israel as the type of the whole redeemed humanity. M. STUART: She reminds the king of his own outcast condition. HAHN: Pledges herself solemnly to the king for ever, and the king himself to her, in the cool shade of the apple-tree of the garden (chap. vi. 11); in his home-land in Canaan, her misery out in the open field moved his loving heart to sympathy. According to AMBROSE and others: The synagogue the Church's mother, who brought forth the Church, by shedding the blood of Christ through which she is born again. THEODORET: The grace of the Holy Spirit in connection with baptism. HONORIUS: The flesh of Eve or human nature. DURHAM: Believers the mother of Christ, as bringing forth His image in the souls of men, and so giving Him a being in their heart. AINSWORTH: By the preaching of the Gospel, attended with labour, sorrow, and difficulty. J. H. MICHAELIS: By doing the Father's will, and conceiving in themselves the image of Christ by a true faith. MERCER: When fleeing to Him for refuge. M. STUART: Refers to the time of sorrow or birth-pangs that preceded Christ's resurrection from the dead. HAHN: With pain His people brought Him forth to themselves as their King.

VERSE 6. *The coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame.* 'The coals thereof.' רִשְׁפֶּיהָ *reshapheha*, plural of רֶשֶׁף resheph, a flame; from the unused root רָשַׁף to inflame or kindle. GESENIUS, ZÖCKLER. A blaze or flash of lightning. (Deut. xxxii. 24; Job v. 7; Hab. iii. 5) WEISS. EWALD derives rather from רשׁף to creep, creep forth; applied to the plague, and so the *heat* of the plague: hence, heat or flame in general. SEPTUAGINT: Its wings. VULGATE and AQUILA: Its lamps and torches. SYMMACHUS: its attacks. SYRIAC: Its sparks. LUTHER: Its flame or heat. DIODATI and MARTIN: Its burning coals. So the Rabbins, who make it like רֶצֶף *retseph*, a coal, and who are followed by PAGNINUS, MONTANUS, MERCER, PISCATOR, &c. MUNSTER has 'torches.' AINSWORTH: Burning coals or darts of love that pierce and enflame the heart. So PATRICK: Darts or arrows. PERCY prefers 'sparks.' SANCTIUS applies it to 'jealousy', which tortures like fire.—'Which hath a most vehement flame.' שַׁלְהֶבֶתְיָה *shalhebhethyah*, from לְהָבָה *lehabhah*, a 'flame' with ש 'which.' Another reading, the Recension of Ben Naphtali, divides it into two words, שַׁלְהֶבֶת יָהּ, *shalhebheth Yah*, 'the flame of Yah, or Jehovah.' EWALD thinks that probably both words were originally read, ('its flames are the flames of Jehovah,') and that one of them dropped out; and remarks that יָהּ for יהוה was seldom used before Solomon's time, its use having risen when the name of Jehovah began to be added as a surname; and that it occurs only once in the Pentateuch (Exodus xv. 2). ZÖCKLER, who translates, a 'blaze of Jehovah,' observes that this name of God is mentioned only in this passage of the Song, 'the radiant apex in the developement of its doctrinal and ethical contents.' According to ZÖCKLER, the flame not natural, but kindled and sustained by God Himself; love, and jealousy, its intense synonym, appearing here like a brightly blazing fire, sending forth a multitude of sparks or flames into men's hearts. So DELITZSCH: A flame of Jehovah, as kindled by Him; hence unquenchable. PATRICK: 'Fire of the flame of the Lord,' *i.e.*, mighty and exceedingly scorching. SIMON derives the word from the Chaldee or Syriac שלהב to burn; the ש servile marking the Shaphal species (GREEN). PARKHURST derives it from שׁל to loose, and להב a flame,—a dissolving fire WEISS, in like manner reading as one word, explains as 'a stream, volume or torrent of flame, as Ezekiel xx. 47; a conflagration of flames (Job xv. 30). PERCY: 'A flame of Jah,'—which Jehovah kindles in the clouds,—a most vehement flame (Job i. 16). WILLIAMS refers the expression to the sacrificial flame, which, according to Jewish tradition, no rain could extinguish. The SEPTUAGINT has simply: 'Its flames.' VULGATE: 'And of flames,' connecting with 'fire.' TARGUM: Like the coals of the fire of hell, which the Lord shall kindle at the last day. COVERDALE and MATTHEWS: A very flame of the Lord. GENEVA: A vehement flame. DUTCH: As a flame of the Lord. DIODATI: A very great flame. MARTIN: A very vehement flame. TIRGURINE: Which have been kindled by the flame of God. MERCER and MONTANUS: A flame of the Lord. JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS: A Divine flame. COCCEIUS: A flame of God,—bright and inextinguishable. PAGNINUS: A most vehement flame. GROTIUS: As a flame of God, *i.e.*, a whole burnt-offering. VATABLUS: As the

flame of Jah or God, *i.e*, most vehement. PISCATOR: Which Jehovah kindles; the genitive of Authorship. JUNIUS: The greatest flame, as being the Spirit's most powerful light, to endure for ever. AINSWORTH: The vehement consuming flame of the Lord; piercing and devouring lightning; the fire of His Spirit. PATRICK: Burning with a violent and inextinguishable heat; mightily moved by the Lord.

VERSE 9. *If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.* 'If she be a wall.' חוֹמָה *khomah*, from the unused root חָמָה *khamah*, to surround, defend, protect; a wall. Spoken of a chaste damsel, difficult of access. GESENIUS and EWALD. Inaccessible, unwilling to receive suitors, or to be married. NOYES. Invincible; if she offers firm and successful opposition to all immoral enticements. DELITZSCH. Firm in her love against all wiles. MENOCHIUS. Conveys the idea of the firm resistance that checks the first advance of foes. HIRZEL. Spoken by the King: If she be able as a strong wall to resist all attacks of others; the sister's fortune will depend entirely on herself. HAHN. Spoken by Shulamite's brothers, careful for the honour and purity of their little sister; or by the Bridegroom: If she be fortified against all stratagems. SANCTIUS. PATRICK. According to others: A wall adapted to rear and support a family. WILLIAMS. Implies that nothing was materially defective. FRY. Allegorically; TARGUM: If she (Israel) be established as a wall among the nations. RASHI: If she is strong in her faith and religion, so as to be before the nations as a wall of brass. GREGORY: Able to resist adversaries. DEL RIO: If firm and steadfast in my love and worship against the wiles of suitors and attacks of the wanton,—in allusion to the last times. MERCER and CALVIN: If she remain firm in the faith, in the truth and in the worship of God. COCCEIUS: If she stand firm on the true foundation. DURHAM: If she be joined to Christ. GILL: Built on a sure foundation; well walled. AINSWORTH: Strong and well grounded in the truth. PATRICK: Faithful and constant. WEISS: Converted and built up as the first wall in the temple of God; or those of her who shall prove a wall.

'We will build upon her a palace of silver.' טִירַת *tirath*, a tower, citadel, or palace; from the unused root טוּר (*tur*), to surround So GESENIUS. According to others, from טוּר, properly צוּר, to fasten, enclose. VATABLUS. טִירָה (*tirah*) a small but strong castle, tower, or bulwark. ZÖCKLER. A pinnacle or battlement crowning a wall. HITZIG, HEILIGSTADT. A palace. KIMCHI. Fair and goodly turrets. PATRICK. A fair and goodly building wont to be set on the walls of strong cities. AINSWORTH. A habitation. HENGSTENBERG. Splendid tokens of victory, marking the wall of proud fortresses. EWALD. SEPTUAGINT and VULGATE: Breastworks and bulwarks. LUTHER: Bulwarks. DUTCH BIBLE: Pinnacles. DIODATI and MARTIN: A palace. Figuratively: We will find for her an illustrious husband. GROTIUS, CALMET, A. CLARKE. Will provide for her a marriage. WILLIAMS. Will ask a high dowry for her. ROSENMÜLLER, DE WETTE. Bestow a handsome dowry on her future marriage. PERCY. Give her an ample fortune. BOOTHROYD. Improve her appearance, and ornament her person. FRY. Treat her in the most dignified manner. HARMER. Build her up and that in full glory. THRUPP. Will accord to her the freedom and honour due to her virgin purity and steadfastness. DELITZSCH. She shall be enriched and honoured. COBBIN. Allegorically; TARGUM: We will surround her (Israel) as with borders of silver, so that the nations shall not be able to rule over her. RASHI: We will be to her a strong city and a crown of beauty; and we will build for her the holy city and the chosen house. THEODORET: Silver towers or bulwarks—words resplendent with reason (Ps. xi. 7), whence we may assail the enemy. BEDE: Eloquent men converted to Christ and then employed as preachers of the Gospel. MERCER: We will add strength, and adorn her with gifts and graces. FROMONDI: Will strengthen her to resist adversaries. PISCATOR, AINSWORTH, DURHAM: We, *i.e*., the Trinity; or Christ and His people,—the former by His grace, the latter ministerially by the Word. COCCEIUS: We will endeavour that the Churches be adorned with a knowledge of the truth in its completeness and connection, and with a holiness corresponding to it. GILL. Will fortify her by ministers and ordinances; or, make her an habitation for God by His Spirit. CHALMERS: Let every good work in her be perfected: let us graft on her capabilities what may advance into a full-grown Christianity. WEISS: With her aid, we shall call in and build up the Gentiles on this first wall, this first Church built up in Jerusalem.

'If she be a door.' דֶּלֶת (*deleth*), a door, from דָּלָה (*dalah*), to hang: figuratively, a damsel easy of access. So GESENIUS. A door whose sanctity any one may violate. EWALD. A door open to all. TIRINUS. Easily tempted and overcome,—a gate passable to all. SANCTIUS. If she gives way,

BRIGHTMAN. Giving a ready reception to every suitor. NOYES. According to others: A door to keep safe what may be preserved in the house. THEODORET. If it be too weak or mean. PATRICK. In a low condition; only a door instead of a wall. GILL. Allegorically; RASHI: If she (Israel) be open to seducers. ABEN EZRA: Liable to turn aside to other lovers. DEL RIO: Open to the Lord alone, and to His grace. FROMONDI: The Church a door into eternal life. MERCER: A wall the stronger and more confirmed believers; a door, the weaker and those not yet confirmed in the faith. WEISS: Those undecided and doubting,—moving to and fro on the hinges of unbelief. AINSWORTH: If she go forward in the faith and practice of the Gospel, built up, according to Nehemiah (chap. iii.), with doors for the safeguard of the inhabitants. COCCEIUS, on the contrary: A door admitting uncertain opinions, by which the ungodly may creep into her communion. DURHAM: A door giving entrance to Christ by faith.

'We will enclose her with boards of cedar.' נָצוּר *natsur*, from צוּר, to press, enclose, restrain. GESENIUS. EWALD adds: With the additional idea of making unhappy. Will block or stop up. DELITZSCH. With boards or planks put on the inside to prevent it from turning and opening. ZÖCKLER. A door open to every one must be fastened with boards nailed to it. EWALD. Figuratively: We will keep her in strict confinement, so that access to her shall be difficult. NOYES. Will keep her in. BRIGHTMAN. Will take means to restrain and prevent her (Hos. ii. 7). ABEN EZRA. SANCTIUS. Her false freedom to be in that case limited. HAHN. We will so watch over that she shall be approachable to no seducer, and no courtier approachable to her. Will safely enclose her, so as not to be a mere thoroughfare. M. STUART. FAUSSET. According to others: We will render her firmer. MERCER. Fence her about. AINSWORTH. Further strengthen and adorn her. DURHAM. Provide for her in a manner suitable to her rank and circumstances. WILLIAMS. She shall be the graceful entrance to my favour and friendship. GOOD. Allegorically; THEODORET: We will give her rulers and pastors of the Church not liable to be corrupted. COCCEIUS: We will endeavour to fix and confirm her in doctrine and discipline. MERCER: Impart fresh grace to strengthen and adorn her. TIRINUS: The weak to be carefully strengthened, and occasion of falling removed. BRIGHTMAN: We will, by means of the civil magistrate, fortify and defend her against all foes, and make her to flourish. GILL: Will adorn her with grace here and glory hereafter. WEISS: Will plunge he into awful calamities (Isa. xxix. i. 4).

VERSE 11. *Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon.* בַּעַלְהָמוֹן, from בַּעַל *baal*, a lord, or according to some, a place; and הָמוֹן (*hamon*), a multitude, from הָמָה, to make a noise; 'the lord or place of a multitude.' GESENIUS, from Judith viii. 3, thinks the place was in the Holy Land, and especially to be sought in Samaria. EWALD rather thinks it may be Hammon (Josh. xix. 28), in the tribe of Asher, in the most fruitful part of Palestine. ZOCKLER prefers the Belamon mentioned in Judith viii. 3, in the tribe of Issachar, a locality not very far from Shunem; and thinks it mentioned here by Shulamite as an instance, very near her home, of a royal property let out at a high rent, in order to illustrate by it her relation to the king, as well as to her brothers: 'A vineyard became Solomon's,' *i.e.*, he has it now,—not, he had it once. He thinks the name may have been derived from the Tyro-Egyptian god Ammon, who may have been worshipped there. MICHAELIS, after IKENIUS, thinks it another name for Baalbec. GILL: Perhaps Baalgad (Josh. xi. 17), in the valley of Lebanon. WEISS understands Jerusalem, a 'place of tumult or confusion' at the time referred to. SANCTIUS understands the name as denoting 'a place of many people,' *i.e.*, desired by such to have a possession in it—a rich and fertile district, the place where the vineyard which was Shulamite's dowry lay—the same as Engedi. ABEN EZRA and GROTIUS think it a place not far from Jerusalem. The VULGATE reads: The Peaceable had a vineyard in her that has peoples. The ARABIC, WICKLIFF, and the DOUAI Version: In Jerusalem. Different views as to the reason of the introduction of the vineyard here. According to SANCTIUS, Shulamite means that she did not love her Bridegroom for the dowry he gave. The vineyard simply adduced by way of example. DELITZSCH, ZÖCKLER. Introduced for contrast with her own vineyard, namely, her beauty or person, for which she did not wish any pecuniary income. NOYES. Mentioned as an example of Solomon's riches, of which she may have heard; spoken only in the way of narrative, to be afterwards applied to herself. EWALD. A vineyard or estate of Solomon's, with which she compares one given to her by him for her residence. FRY. The vineyard which Shulamite had possessed in Baalhamon, but which now appertained to Solomon as the dowry she had brought him, and which she now wishes to be given to her younger sister. GOOD. The adult sister, as a newly-married bride, declares her estate, and

the diligence with which she would cultivate it for the benefit of her Bridegroom, comparing it with Solomon's in the same neighbourhood. DEL RIO, MERCER, &c. Allegorically; WICKLIFF and MATTHEWS: The synagogue speaks of the Church. COCCEIUS: Solomon the type of Christ; Baalhamon the world, among which Christ has His Church. PISCATOR, &c.: The vineyard, the Church or congregation of the righteous. THEODORET: Men who apply themselves to religion and to Christ According to MAIMONIDES and the RABBINS: The literal Solomon is here meant, and a comparison made between some literal vineyard and the Church of God. DEL RIO: The vineyard the Jewish Church, with which is compared the Gentile Church, composed both of Jews and Gentiles. GILL, DAVIDSON, &c.: Baalhamon the Gentile world. M. STUART: Jerusalem, or the land of Israel; spoken by the joint Church of Jew and Gentile, or by the little sister. HAHN: The heathen world a vineyard belonging to the king of Israel, in the land of unrest and dispeace. BRIGHTMAN: Christ compares Himself and His vineyard to Solomon and his: Solomon unable to look to his own vineyard, while Christ personally attends to His Church (Matt. xviii. 20; Rev. ii. 1).

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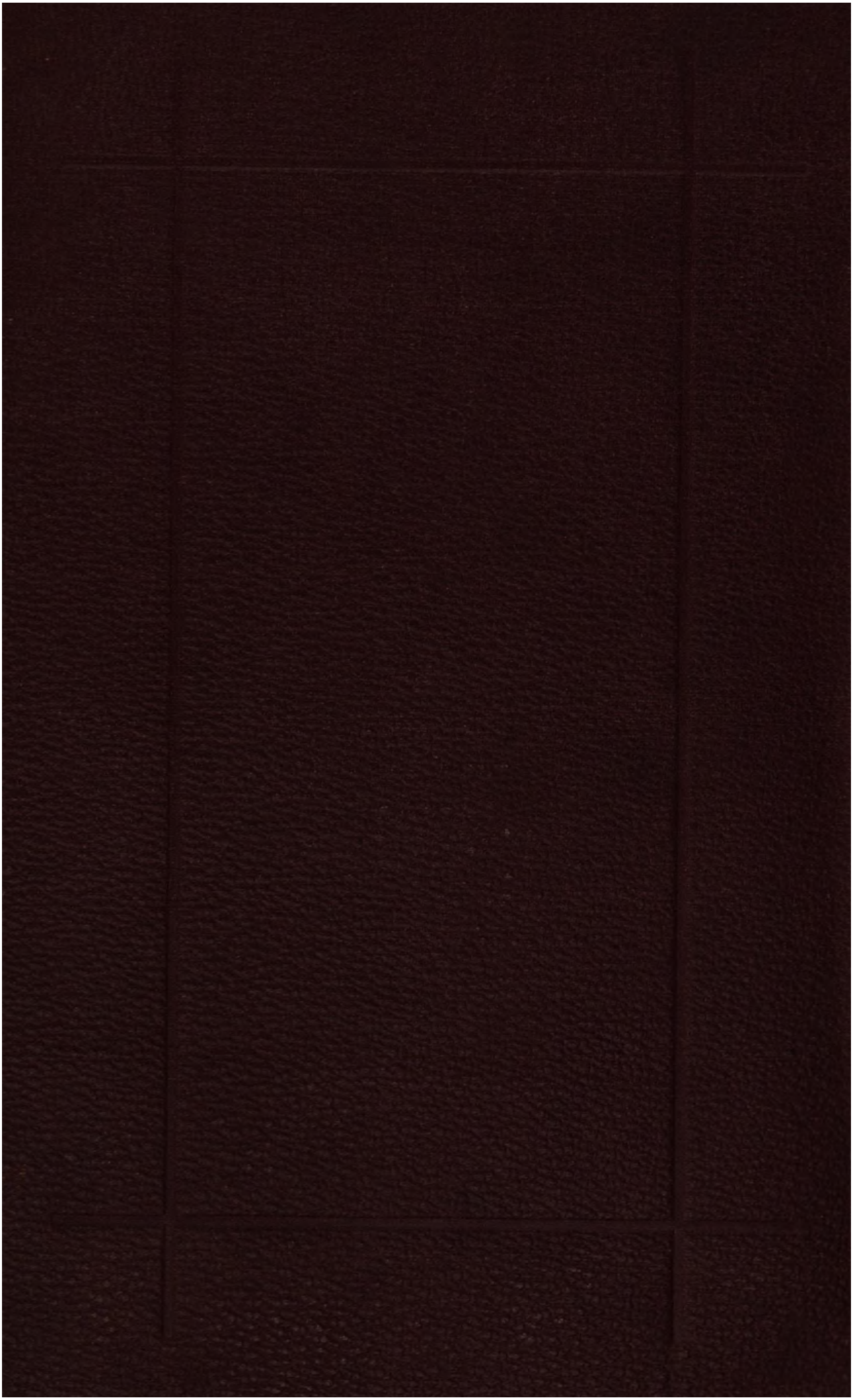
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