

**The Rose and the Lily.**

BY REV. CHARLES H. SPURGEON.

Delivered on Lord's Day morning, Dec. 8th, 1867.

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."—*Solomon's Song*, ii. 1.

I. First, I shall speak, as I may be helped by the Holy Ghost, upon the MOTIVES OF OUR LORD IN THUS COMMENDING HIMSELF.

I take it that he has designs of love in this speech. He would have all his people rich in high and happy thoughts concerning his blessed person. Jesus is not content that his brethren should think meanly of him; it is his pleasure that his espoused ones should be delighted with his beauty, and that he should be the King and Lord of their spirits; he would have us possess an adoring admiration for him, joined with most cheerful and happy thoughts towards him. We are not to count him as a bare necessary, like a bread and water, but we are to guard him as a luxurious delicacy, as a rare and ravishing delight, comparable to the rose and the lily. Our Lord, you observe, expresses himself here poetically, 'I am the rose of Sharon.' Dr. Watts, when he had written his delightful hymns, was the subject of Dr. Johnson's criticism; and that excellent lexicographer, who wrote with great authority upon all literary matters, entirely missed his mark when he said that the themes of religion were so few and so prosaic that they were not adapted for the poet—they were not such as could allow of the flight of wing which poetry required. Alas, Dr. Johnson! how little couldst thou have entered into the spirit of these things! for if there be any place where poetry may indulge itself to the uttermost, it is in the realm of the infinite. Jordan's streams are as pure as Helicon, and Siloa's brook as inspiring as the Castalian fount. Heavens Parnassus has not half the elevation of the Christian's Tabor, let critics judge as they may. This book of Solomon's Song is poetry of the very highest kind to the spiritual mind, and throughout Scripture the sublime and beautiful are as much at home as the eagles in their eyries of rock. Surely our Lord adopts this form of speech in this song in order to show us that the highest degree of poetical faculty may be consecrated to him, and that lofty thoughts and soaring conceptions concerning himself are no intruders, but are bound to pay homage at his cross. Jesus would have us enjoy the highest thoughts of him that the sublimest poetry can possibly convey to us; and his motives I shall labor to lay before you.

Doubtless he commends himself because *high thoughts of Christ will enable us to act consistently with our relations towards him.* The saved soul is espoused to Christ. Now, in the marriage estate, it is a great assistance to happiness if the wife has high ideas of her husband. In the marriage union between the soul and Christ this is exceedingly necessary. Listen to the words of the Psalm, 'He is thy Lord; and worship thou him.' Jesus is our husband, and is no more to be named Baal—that is, thy master—but to be called Ishi, thy man, thy husband; yet at the same time he is our Lord. 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body.' When the wife despises her husband, and looks down upon him, then the order of nature is broken, and the household is out of joint; and if our soul should ever come to despise Christ, then it can no longer stand in its true relation to him; but the more loftily we see Christ enthroned, and the more lowly we are when bowing before the foot of the throne, the more truly shall we be prepared to act our part in the economy of grace towards our Lord Jesus. Brethren, your Lord Christ desires you to think well of him, that you may submit cheerfully to his authority, and so be a better spouse to this best of husbands.

A high esteem of Christ, moreover, as he well knoweth, is very necessary to our comfort. Resolved, when you esteem Christ very highly, the things of this world become of small account with you, and their loss is not so heavily felt. If you feel your losses and crosses to be such ponderous weights that the wings of Christ's love cannot lift you up from the dust, surely you have made too much of the world and too little of him. I see a pair of balances. I see in this one the death of a child, or the loss of a beloved relative; but I perceive in the other scale the great love of Christ; now we shall see which will weigh the most with the man: if Jesus throws the light affliction up aloft, it is well; but if the trouble outweighs Jesus, then it is ill with us indeed. If you are so depressed by your trials that you can by no means rejoice, even though you know that your name is written in heaven, then methinks you cannot love Jesus as you should. Get but delightful thoughts of him, and you will feel like a man who has lost a pebble, but has preserved his diamond—like the man who has seen a few cast clouts and rotten rags consumed in the flames, but has saved his children from the conflagration. You will rejoice in your deepest distress because Christ is yours, if you have a high sense of the preciousness of your Master. Talk not of plasters that will draw out all pain from a wound! Speak not of medicines which will extirpate disease! The sweet love of Christ, once clapped on to the deepest wound which the soul can ever know, would heal it at once. A drop of the precious medicine of Jesus' love, tasted in the soul, would chase away all heart-pains forever. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, be thou within us, and we make no choice of situations: put us in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, if thou wilt walk the glowing coals as our companion, we will fear no end.

Further, our Lord would have us entertain great thoughts of himself, because this will quicken all the powers of our soul. I spoke to you just

now of love receiving force from an esteem of Jesus; I might say the light of faith, or patience, or humility. Wherever Christ is highly esteemed, all the faculties of the spiritual man exercise themselves with energy. I will judge of your piety by this barometer: Does Christ stand high or low with you? If you have thought little of Christ, if you have been content to live without his presence, if you have cared little for his honor, if you have been neglectful of his laws, then I know that your soul is sick—God grant that it may not be sick unto death! But if the first thought of your spirit has been, How can I honor Jesus? if the daily desire of your soul has been, O that I knew where I might find him! I tell you that you may have a thousand infirmities, and may even scarcely know whether you are a child of God at all, and yet I am persuaded, beyond a doubt, that you are safe, since Jesus is great in your esteem. I care not for thy rags; what thinkest thou of his royal apparel? I care not for thy wounds, though they bled in torrents; what thinkest thou of his wounds? Are they like glittering rubies in thine esteem? I think nothing the less of thee, though thou liest like Lazarus on the dung-hill, and the dogs do lick thee; I judge thee not by thy poverty; what thinkest thou of the King in his beauty? Has he a glorious high throne in thy heart? Wouldst thou be willing to die if thou couldst but add another trumpet to the strain, which proclaims his praise? Ah! then, it is well with thee. Whatever thou mayest think of thyself, if Christ be great to thee, thou shalt be with him ere long.

High thoughts of Jesus will set us upon high attempts for his honor. What will not men do when they are possessed with the passion of love! When once some master thought gets hold of the mind, others who have never felt the power of it think the man to be insane; they laugh at him and ridicule him. When the grand thought of love to God has gained full possession of the soul, men have been able to actually accomplish what other men have not even thought of doing. Love has laughed at impossibilities, and proved that she is not to be quenched by many waters, nor drowned by floods. Inexplicable words have nevertheless been made a foot way for the Christian missionary; through the dense jungle, steaming with malaria, men have passed, bearing the message of truth; into the midst of hostile and savage tribes, weak and trembling women even have forced their way to tell of Jesus; no sea has been so stormy, no mountains have been so elevated that they could shut out the earnest spirit; no long nights of winter in Labrador or in Iceland have been able to freeze up the love of Christ in the Moravian's heart; it has not been possible for the zeal of the heir of heaven to be overcome, though all the elements have combined with the cruelty of wicked men, and with the malice of hell itself. Christ's people have been more than conquerors through him that hath loved them, when his love has been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and they have had elevated thoughts of their Lord.

"Yet we love thee and adore;  
O for grace to love thee more."

II. Whatever may be the commendable motive for any statement, yet it must not be made if it be not accurate, and therefore, in the second place, I came to observe OUR LORD'S JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS COMMENDATION, which is abundantly satisfactory to all who know him.

What our Lord says of himself is strictly true. It falls short of the mark; it is no exaggeration. Observe each one of the words. He begins, 'I am.' Those two little words I would not insist upon, but it is no straining of language to say that even here we have a great deep. What creature can, with exact truthfulness, say 'I am'? As for man, whose breath is in his nostrils, he may rather say, 'I am not,' than 'I am.' We are so short a time here, and so quickly gone, that the ephemera, which is born and dies under the light of one day's sun, is our brother. Poor short-lived creatures, we change with every moon, and are inconstant as the wave, frail as the dust, feeble as a worm, and fickle as the wind. Jesus saith 'I am,' and blessed be his name, he can fairly claim the attributes of self-existence and immutability. He said, 'I am,' in the days of his flesh; he saith, 'I am,' at this hour: whatever he was he is; whatever he has been he is to any of his saints, at any time, he is to us this day. Come, my soul, rejoice in thine unchangeable Christ; and if thou gettest no further than the first two words of the text, yet thou hast a meal to stay thine hunger, like Elijah's cakes, in the strength of which he went for forty days. 'I am' hath revealed himself unto thee in a more glorious manner than he did unto Moses at the burning bush; the great 'I AM,' in human flesh, has become thy Saviour and thy Lord.

'I am the rose.' We understand from this that Christ is lovely. He selects one of the most charming of flowers to set forth himself. All the beauties of all the creatures are to be found in Christ in greater perfection than in the creatures themselves.

"White and ruddy is my Beloved;  
All his heavenly beauties shine;  
Nature can't produce an object  
Nor so glorious, so divine;  
He hath wholly  
Won my soul to remain above."

'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,' all are to be found stored up in our Well-beloved. Whatever there may be of beauty in the material world, Jesus Christ possesses all that in the spiritual world, only in a tenfold

multiplication. He is infinitely more beautiful in the garden of the soul and in the paradise of God than the rose can be in the gardens of earth, though it be the universally acknowledged queen of flowers.

But the spouse adds, 'I am the rose of Sharon.' This was the best and rarest of roses. Jesus is not 'the rose' alone, but 'the rose of Sharon,' just as he calls his righteousness 'gold,' and then adds, 'the gold of Ophir'—the best of the best. Jesus, then, is not only positively lovely, but superlatively the loveliest—

"None among the sons of men,  
None among the heavenly train,  
Can with Sharon's rose compare,  
None so sweet and none so fair."

The Son of David takes the first place as the fairest among ten thousand. He is the sun, and all others are the stars; in his presence all the feeble lights are hidden, for they are nothing, and he is all in all. Blush for your deformities, ye beauties of earth, when his perfections eclipse you! Away, ye pageants, and ye pompous triumphs of men, the King in his beauty transcends you all! Black are the heavens and dark is the day in comparison with him. Oh, to see him face to face! This would be a vision for which life would be a glad exchange. For a vision of his face we could fain be blind forever to all joys beside.

(Conclusion in our next.)

**The Eruption of Mount Vesuvius.**

Wind, rain, hail, and snow have been our visitors for the last two days. Vesuvius from the top of the cone to the bottom, is covered with snow, and so are the mountains all round the bay. Yet the column of smoke continues to rise from the gigantic crater, and the flames to gush out, while the streams of lava descend, making broad black lines on the glistening white mantle of the mountain. The union is remarkable; it seems to upset all our preconceived ideas of things—fire and snow thus mingling in happy harmony. Who shall say that oil and water shall not henceforward mingle, or any other opposites, material, moral, or social? I have already sent you one or two descriptions of the eruption in its early state, but so marvellous and long continued a spectacle will perhaps justify some additional notes—especially as it has exhibited various phases. To the eye Vesuvius has never failed in beauty; indeed the magnificence of the display has increased from day to day, and poor unscientific mortals like myself might well be excused for thinking that, as in pyrotechnics, all must terminate in one grand explosion for the benefit of the assembled spectators. Professor Palmieri, the director of the Observatory, has, however, more than once toned down our expectations, and done his best to destroy our illusions. Last Saturday he said there were indications of a decline of the eruption, but on the next day, as if resenting the imputation, the mountain showed greater vigor than ever, and shot up stones and flames to an extraordinary height. The grounds of the opinions of the learned professor were that the sismograph had been less active for two days, the detonations, too, had almost ceased, and the character of the matter ejected was altogether different from what it was at first. In early days the lava was in small bulk, and was covered over with scorice, here known by the name of *feosine*, but towards the end of last week the smoke that ascended was perfectly black, and the ashes were of a kind which are thrown out generally towards the termination of an eruption. For some days, too, the summit of the mountain has been whitened with a deposit of sublimate of chlorine and sulphates, leading one to believe, when on bright sunny days that the snow had fallen above.

The heavy rains, however, cleared that off, and we now see Vesuvius mantled in real snow. Some scientific friends who were up the other evening, after rapturously describing the scene they observed at one time a curious phenomenon—the ascent of a perfectly formed circle of flame, vacant within; it mounted high into the air, and then remained suspended for some time. To go up the cone, however, or even to approach its foot, is now impracticable, so frequent are the showers of stones, and to so great a distance are they thrown. Those who are willing to encounter a great danger are promised a wondrous spectacle. In the upper part of the irregular of just which walls round the crater is an opening, somewhat above the ordinary level of the lava which is flowing over the lower parts of this boundary, and through this opening the adventurous visitor may witness a boiling sea of fire. But he may pay dearly for it; the lava may rise to the height of this deep hole, or the wind may change and bring down upon him a shower of burning stones which may crush him. I have not heard, therefore, of any one who has risked his life to enjoy the pleasure of a moment. It is satisfactory to be able to state that as yet no accidents have occurred. The guides are good, and those who implicitly follow their directions are pretty secure. Many parties go up every night, and amongst them many ladies—that is, principally English ladies, for those of this country have long lost the use of their legs.

As you will be prepared to believe, the form of the mountain is greatly altered, and I may say improved, as the cone has an apex now. For the last seven years one might have fancied that an accident had happened to it, or that some of those Goths who visit us in the winter, and chip off bits of antiquity, and knock off the noses of statues, had by some gigantic effort thrown down the culminating point of Vesuvius. It is all right now; the little inner cone has shot above the crater, or has grown by the vast accumulation of ashes, and so the beauty of the form of the mountain is perfected. At present

the eruption is more glorious than it ever has been. The lava flows down in increasing floods between the north and east, encroaching even on the path of ascent; the electro-magnetic sismograph, too, shows continued agitation, and this gorgeous spectacle still gives promise of a much longer continuance.—*Naples Cor. London Times.*

**Correspondence.**

**IN MEMORIAM.**

For the Christian Messenger.

MRS. DEBORAH W. TOOKER.

Two or three weeks ago we received the following communication from Rev. David Freeman, but as it did not contain the date of Mrs. Tocker's death and other particulars, we laid it over, expecting soon to hear from Bro. Tocker. We have just received the following:—Died at Port Medway, on the 23rd of December, 1867, Deborah W. wife of Rev. J. F. Tocker, aged 34 years."

We deeply sympathise with our brother in his great sorrow:

CANNING, Dec. 30, 1867.

Dear Brother,—

It is a dying time amongst us, I have had to attend six funeral services in about a week. Other ministers have been equally busy in a similar work. In the midst of our gloom Bro. Tocker came to us from Port Medway with the remains of his dear wife, Deborah; that she might be interred among her friends in Habitant. She was a daughter of the Rev. Jacob Norton. Although comparatively young, only 33 years, she was yet a mother in Israel. She leaves her husband with, I think, five little children to care for. Last Saturday I attended her funeral at the Congregationalist meeting-house. The funeral was attended by the Methodist and Congregationalist ministers, and by Rev. S. T. Rand, all of whom took part in the services. The discourse was delivered by the writer by special request from Eph. ii. 8, as expressive of the triumphant feelings uttered by our sister just before her death. She is much regretted by all. She was peculiarly dear to her aged parents. In death she is dearer still, as the following expression of their testimonies: "Like all true worth, then dearest when 'tis lost." May our brother be sustained and comforted, and his children be blessed. I hope he will give us a brief obituary of the departed. He delivered to us yesterday, in Canning, a very appropriate discourse from "These in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they?"

Yours in the Lord,

D. FREEMAN.

MR. JOHN LISCOMB,

Died near Sydney, C. B., on Sunday, Jan. 12th, aged 87 years. About 22 years ago he professed faith in the Redeemer, and was baptized by Elder Geo. Richardson. From that time he appeared to be constantly in the enjoyment of peace with God. He exercised such a simple, unquestioning faith in the unchanging love of Christ, that he rose above the dark clouds of doubt, and dwelt in the shining light. When he was asked concerning his prospect for eternity his countenance beamed with joy, and his words were no less cheerful.

His weary pilgrimage is done and he has entered the eternal home of the Redeemed. May we all trust Christ as he trusted, and be sustained in death by a hope like his.

**Religious Intelligence.**

REV. NEWMAN HALL.—Proceedings of a singularly interesting character took place recently at Surrey Chapel, London. The congregation assembled in large numbers for the purpose of giving a welcome to the Rev. Newman Hall on his return from America. The welcome consisted of a most enthusiastic greeting and a purse containing £500. Mr. Hall referring to a statement copied by some of the London papers from the *New York Herald*, said he went over to America as a private gentleman, and did not receive for himself one farthing in return for any sermons or lectures he delivered whilst there. And money that was realized by his sermons and lectures he desired should be handed over to the Lincoln Memorial as a contribution from the Surrey Chapel Congregation. He, in every case declined to receive any pecuniary remuneration for the services and lectures he delivered, but, in some instances, agreed to allow contributions to be made to the church and schools he contemplated building in London.—He expected that £1,000 would be sent from America for the latter object. Contributions had also been received from Canada towards the getting up of a beautiful window in the new church. This window would be erected in