

THE SONG OF SONGS.

THIS scholarly article discusses the Canticles from the point of view now dominant in Biblical criticism. A view different, in certain particulars, from that here presented, is given in Professor W. Robertson Smith's article, "Canticles," in the new edition of the "Enc. Britt.," Vol. V. The history of the interpretation of the book is also furnished in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible" (Art. "Canticles"), Am. ed., Vol. I. There is an excellent translation of the poem into English by Ginsburg (1857).—ED.

IN one of the English universities divine service was held in a large room which served the purposes of a chapel to one of the colleges,—a bare, whitewashed room with narrow splits in the wall, or here and there a rudely shaped aperture for windows. It being necessary to fix some gas-pipes into the wall, a workman struck his chisel in, when, to his surprise, a portion of the plaster crumbled off, revealing beneath the beautiful moldings of an arch. Curiosity being now excited, further explorations were made by the authorities, and it was found that a perfect little Early English chapel was walled and plastered up in that room so bare of beauty. Bit by bit fair molding and fretwork were discovered; whitewash and plaster melted away like the snows of many winters from about the lovely sculptured leaves; the long, shapeless splits in the walls became the delicate lanceolate windows, caught by our forefathers from narrowing glimpses of the sky in our light spring woods; the long-lost jeweled panes and richly woven stuffs, thick with sacred symbol and fair embroidery, were restored,—until there it rose, that buried chapel, like "frozen music," an exquisite little shrine, with all its delicate harmonies of form and color, a vision of beauty.

Perhaps no more apt illustration could present itself of one of the books in our Bible than this walled-up chapel. Most of us, I suppose, have, from time to time, perused "the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's," as it stands in the authorized version, with a perplexed feeling as to what it all means. Perhaps, if we were honest enough, we should confess also to some feeling of violated good taste and delicacy. Should we have turned in our perplexity to an orthodox commentator, these feelings would scarcely have been relieved by finding language of a confessedly erotic character and of doubtful propriety—some of it addressed by a voluptuous king to an inmate of his harem—transferred entire to the mouth of Christ as his language in addressing his Church.

It has, however, been reserved for modern Hebraists to restore this lovely little epithalamium to its proper place, and, scraping away

the accumulated whitewash and plaster of ages,—the mistranslations and misunderstandings of centuries,—to reveal it as it is, an exquisite little shrine of the affections, embedded in the very heart of our Bibles, aflush with passionate color, but pure and chaste and enduring as sculptured marble.

Before giving our readers a sketch of the Song, it would be best to premise where its difficulties lie, and, even after the research and critical acumen that have been lavished upon it by Jacobi, Herder, Ewald, De Wette, Renan, etc., we think will continue to lie. Its obscurity is not in the language, which, with some exceptions, is simple enough; but, in the absence of any names to the *dramatis personæ*, or any indication except such as can be drawn from internal evidence as to who it is that is speaking—a difficulty enhanced by our being unable to compare it with any other Hebrew dramatic poem, and our consequent inability to come to any definite conclusion as to the exact form the drama assumed among the Jews at this early date of their history, the time, probably, of their freest development. "We cannot frame thought of one term only," says Herbert Spencer; but, unfortunately, the Song of Songs is the "one term only" out of which we have to frame our conceptions of this Hebrew drama, no other dramatic poem having come down to us. Whether we are to hold, with Ewald,* that the Semitic author of the Song had the distinct conception of a sustained plot and a gradual working out of the situation in five acts, or whether we are to hold, with Renan,† that his dramatic conceptions were of the rudest, and that the *dénouement* is anticipated at the end of each act, will probably remain a disputed point.

We will take the two best-known translations, Ewald's and Renan's, as the basis of our sketch, confining ourselves, to begin with, chiefly to Ewald's, as that which carries the highest Hebraistic authority, and also as the most comprehensible to a European mind, and then illustrating the difficulties we have

* "Die Dichter des Alten Bundes." Von H. Ewald.

† "Étude sur le Cantique des Cantiques," par Ernest Renan. 2d ed.

touched on by stating in what particulars the French scholar differs from him in his interpretation of the Song.

The plot or argument of the poem is this: King Solomon, on one of his numerous pleasure excursions, accompanied, as usual, by his court, is passing through the north of his kingdom,—a land rich in vineyards, and fair pastoral beauty,—when they perceive, in a neighboring nut-garden, a beautiful girl, singing and dancing to herself in the joy of the spring. She has come down to the garden to look at the tender opening buds, and in the gladness of her own opening life and the happiness of first love she has thrown aside her veil, and is singing with the birds and dancing with the dancing lights. They watch her, lost in admiration, when, suddenly perceiving she is observed, she makes a shy movement of flight, arrested for a moment by the entreating voices with which they call her back. The king, at once deeply enamored of the beautiful stranger, leaves orders that she shall be transferred to his harem, her dress denoting that she was unmarried and un-pledged. On inquiry it is found that the maiden—the Sulammite, as she is called throughout the poem. from her native village, Sulem—is the only daughter of her mother. Her father is dead, and her step-brothers, the sons of a former marriage, exercise his authority in his stead. They treat her with great harshness and make her the keeper of one of their vineyards. There she meets with a young shepherd and keeper of gardens like herself, on whom she pours out her “forgotten heart,”—a love which he returns, but without, as yet, having gained the consent of the brothers to their betrothal. They, on the contrary, very much prefer the advantageous offers of the king, and she is at once transferred to the harem at Jerusalem. There the great king woos the simple village maiden, and she has to endure every seduction that wealth and luxury and rank can bring to bear upon her. But she remains faithful to her shepherd-lover, preferring true love to worldly advancement. Finding her obdurate, the king at last resolves to pay her the highest honor of all. He resolves to marry her and make her one of his queens; but with no better result. His advances are always stopped by her fainting away with the despairing cry on her lips: “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Till at length, since the worship of Jehovah puts bounds to even the passions of a king and forbids the use of violence, he suffers her to depart to her shepherd-lover. The poem ends in the gardens of the north, with the reunion of the lovers and their approaching marriage, and with the great

unveiled utterance and key-note of the poem, “Love is as strong as death” and “many waters” (even the deep waters of trial through which the Sulammite had passed) “cannot drown it,” followed by a little mirthful song of triumph on her part, and a mocking allusion to the failure of the great king to bribe her from her faithfulness.

We will attempt a rough translation, that the reader may see how this is worked out by the poet, keeping as near the authorized version as we can consistent with the sense of the original. The poem is divided into five days, which, with ancient simplicity, are marked off by the recurrence of “the love sickness.”

FIRST DAY.

THE opening of the first scene shows us the Sulammite surrounded by the ladies of the harem. Her beauty is enriched with costly attire and precious jewels. She has already tasted that voluptuous life, heavy with fragrance, rich with sparkling wines, languid with sweet, enervating strains; but her heart only reverts the more to her shepherd-lover. The poem opens with a passionate invocation to him, yet couched in indirect terms, followed by a cry for deliverance.

Becoming conscious of the wondering glances of the court ladies, in her village simplicity she conceives that they are staring at the rich dark brown of her skin in such singular contrast to themselves, and pleads with them not to despise her on that account, since hers had been no sheltered court-life, but one of hard toil, which had forced her to neglect her own vineyard, her beauty.

Then again she sinks into delicious reverie, unconsciously uttering words that can no longer admit of misapprehension; and the odalisques taunt her, that if, indeed, she can be so simple as to prefer a shepherd-lover to the caresses of a king, she had better return to her old life.

SULAMMITE.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
For thy caresses are better than wine.
Sweet is the breath of thine odors,
Thou that art sweetest spikenard named!
Therefore do the maidens love thee.

SULAMMITE (*after a pause*).

Draw me after thee, O let us fly!—
The king has brought me into his harem—
We will be glad and rejoice in thee,
Will find thy caresses sweeter than wine.
Well may the maidens love thee!

SULAMMITE (*perceiving that the ladies of the harem are looking wonderingly at her*).

Dark am I, but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem,
As Kedar's tents, and as the pavilions of Solomon.

Look not upon me because I am dusky-skinned,
For the sun has scorched me at noon.
The sons of my mother wished me evil;
Made me a keeper of vineyards;
Mine own vineyard have I not kept.

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,
Where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to
rest at noon!
That I be not as one who wanders forgotten by the
flocks of thy companions.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

Art thou so simple, O thou fairest of women?
Then go hence, and follow the track of the flocks,
And pasture thy goats by the huts of the shepherds.

The king now enters, and makes his first advances to her. Throughout he is made to use the language of mere sensual love, with a certain clumsy heaviness of metaphor, by which the poet doubtless meant to express the want of true inspiration in mere sensual passion, and its essentially lowering character in contrast with the spiritual beauty of the utterances of true love.* The Sulammite, on the other hand, here receives the first compliments and promises of her royal lover with a thinly veiled rebuff; it was in the king's absence that her spikenard, the thought of her beloved, gave forth its fragrance. Then ensues a curious dialogue, in which the king addresses her, while she in answer addresses her absent lover. Her fresh young heart, sick with the languid, heavy-scented atmosphere of the court, and a love that rings false to her ear, turns back to the sweet open-air life she had lived with him whom her soul loved, reclining side by side on the flowery field-beds, and gazing up at the living roof of the mighty cedars above them, or wandering through the trellised vines with his arms around her—slipping back into those delightful days in the very presence of the king, till, overpowered with these memories and the sense of her captivity, she faints away, pleading, as consciousness goes from her, that her helplessness may be held sacred, as one who is "sick of love."

SOLOMON.

Unto my charger in Pharaoh's stud
I would compare thee, O my friend!
Fair, fair are thy cheeks with golden rings,

* Professor W. Robertson Smith differs with this view of the character of Solomon's addresses. "It is remarkable," he says, "that the only passage which can hardly be freed from a charge of sensuality [vii. 1-9] hangs so entirely loose from the proper action of the poem." This passage is regarded by Professor Smith as an interpolation. The king's admiration, he says, "does not reach the pitch of passion, and his sensuousness nowhere degenerates into grossness, except in the imagination of commentators, who have been apt to detect a *double entendre* in every passage they did not understand."—*Enc. Britt.*, vol. v., p. 36.—Ed.

Thy neck with strings of coral.*
Lo, golden rings will we make for thee,
Studded with many a silver bell.

SULAMMITE.

So long as the king still sat at table,
My spikenard gave forth her fragrance.
My beloved is to me a nosegay of myrrh,
That close to my bosom rests;
A cluster of alhenna to me is my beloved,
In the vineyards of Engedi.

SOLOMON.

Behold, thou art fair, O my friend!
Behold, thou art fair, and thine eyes as doves.

SULAMMITE (*to her absent lover*).

Behold, thou art fair, yea, delightful, O my beloved!
Lo, too, our bed grew green;
The beams of our house are the cedars,
And our ceiling the cypress,
I am the Narcissus of Saron,†
And a lily of the valley.

SOLOMON.

As a lily among thorns
So is my friend among the daughters.

SULAMMITE.

As an apple-tree among the trees of the wood
So is my beloved among the sons;
In his shadow I sat down with great delight
And his fruit was sweet to my taste;
He led me in among the trellised vines‡
And his banner over me was Love.

Strengthen me with raisin-cakes,
Refresh me with apples!
For I am sick of love.
His left arm under my head,
And his right embraces me!
I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!
By the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye awake not,
Nor arouse,
The loved one till she please.

SECOND DAY.

THE second day shows us the Sulammite alone with the ladies of the harem, undisturbed by the king. Though consciousness has returned, the "love sickness" is still at its height, and her fevered imagination transplants her wholly into the past, as it was with her in the first days of spring, when her lover came to the cottage where she dwelt with her mother and called her out into the sunshine. And as her thoughts by day are his, so are her dreams by night—troubled dreams, which are but the reverberation of the hopes and fears of her captive days.

* Renan's translation.

† Renan. But, according to Ewald, "meadow saffron of the plain." The exact flower probably cannot be ascertained.

‡ The word used in the original denotes the vineyard cellars, but, according to Ewald, like the German *Weinhof*, had come to mean the whole vineyard.

THE SULAMMITE (*alone with the ladies of the court*).

The voice of my beloved! behold he cometh
Bounding over the mountains, leaping over the hills;
My beloved is like the gazelle, or the fawn of the hinds;
Behold he standeth behind our wall,
Looking through the casement, shining through the
lattice.

My beloved spake and said unto me:
"Rise up, rise up, my love,
My fair one, and come away!
For lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth,
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.

"The young shoots of the fig-tree are beginning to
redden
And sweet are the blossoming vines;
Rise up, rise up, my love,
My fair one, and come away.
My dove in the caves of the rock, in the clefts of
the crag,
Show me thy face and sing unto me with thy voice,
For sweet is thy voice and fair is thy face."

(*She sings one of the vineyard songs.*)

"Take us the foxes,
The little foxes that ravage the vines,
For our vineyard is in flower."

My beloved is mine and I am his;
He pastures his flocks among the lilies.
Ere the day cool, and the shadows flee away,
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like
The gazelle or the fawn of the hind
Over the mountain ravines.

By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth.
I sought him, but I found him not!
"Rise will I now and go about the city, the streets,
and the market,
Will seek him whom my soul loveth!"
I sought him, but I found him not.
Found me the watchmen who go round the city,
"Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?"
Scarce had I passed them by when I found him
whom my soul loveth,
I held him and would not let him go,
Till I had brought him into the house of my mother,
Into the house of her who brought me forth.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!
By the gazelles and the hinds of the fields,
That ye awake not,
Nor arouse,
The loved one till she please.

THIRD DAY.

IN the third act Solomon has resolved to overcome the Sulammite's reluctance by offering her the highest honor of making her one of his queens, and it accordingly opens with his public marriage procession, followed by the king again wooing the Sulammite, and his departure, after promising to return in the evening and claim her as his own. But now, in the very crisis of her fate, the very hopelessness of the entanglement in which she finds herself, awakes in her the thought of her lover as saving her from even these

heights of Lebanon, these caves of the lion, and makes her realize more than ever that in heart she is married to him, and to him only, with a love that must triumph in the end, and then follows a dream which reflects her ever deepening conflict.

CITIZENS OF JERUSALEM.—A VOICE.

What is this going up from the desert like a pillar
of smoke,
Exhaling the fragrance of myrrh, and all the spicy
powders of the merchant?

ANOTHER.

Lo, Solomon's palanquin!
Fifty mighty men are about it of the valiant of
Israel,
Each with a sword on his thigh to ward off the
fears of the night.

A THIRD.

A state-litter King Solomon wrought for himself of
the wood of Lebanon,
With pillars of silver, and golden the couch and
cushioned with purple,
In its midst a beautiful damsel, one of Jerusalem's
daughters.
Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King
Solomon
Crowned with the crown his mother crowned him
withal
On the day of his espousals, the day of his glad-
ness of heart.

SOLOMON—THE SULAMMITE AND LADIES IN THE
HAREM.

SOLOMON.

Behold, thou art fair, O my friend!
Behold, thou art fair, and thine eyes as doves gleam
from the midst of thy locks.
Thy tresses are as a flock of goats on the slopes
of Mount Gilead.
Thy teeth are like newly-shorn sheep that come up
from the water,
Each the mother of twins, not one of them sterile;
Thy lips like crimson threads, and thy mouth most
comely;
Thy cheeks like pomegranates in the midst of thy
locks;
Thy neck as the tower of David, built for an ar-
mory
Where a thousand shields are suspended, and the
arms of the mighty;
Thy breasts as two young gazelles that feed among
the lilies.

Ere the day cool and the shadows flee away
I will get me to my mountain of myrrh and hill
of sweet frankincense.
Thou art all fair, O my friend!
No spot is in thee.

(*The king departs.*)

THE SULAMMITE AND THE LADIES OF THE HAREM.

THE SULAMMITE.

The voice of my beloved! Behold how he cometh!
Give ear to the words that he saith unto me.
"Away with me from Lebanon, my bride, with me
from Lebanon;

Escape from the heights of Amana, from the heights
of Shenir and Hermon,
Out of the caves of the lion, from mountains the
haunt of the leopard!

Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my bride,
Thou hast ravished my heart with a glance of thine
eyes,
With one chain of thy neck.

"Fairer are thy caresses, my sister, my bride;
Fairer are thy caresses than wine;
And thy spikenard more fragrant than spices,
Thy lips, O my bride, drop with honey,
Honey and milk are under thy tongue,
And the smell of thy garments as Lebanon!
O garden enclosed, my sister, my bride,
O fountain enclosed, O well-head fast sealed!
Thy plants are a park of pomegranates, with fruits
of the noblest,
Alhenna with spikenard.
Spikenard and krokus, kalmus and sweet frankin-
cense,
Aloe and myrrh, together with costliest spices,
Thou fountain of gardens, well-head of waters,
And streams from Lebanon."

Awake, O North wind, and come, O thou South!
Blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may
flow out,
Let my beloved come to his garden and take of his
costliest fruits.

I come to my garden, I gather my myrrh and my
spices;
I eat my honey and grapes, I drink my wine and
my milk;
Eat, O my friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O
ye loved of my soul!

I sleep but my heart waketh; it is my beloved that
knocketh.
"Open to me, my sister, my bride, my dove, mine
undefiled!
For my head is filled with dew and my locks with
the drops of night."
I have put off my garments, how shall I clothe me
again?
I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them
afresh?
My beloved reached in his hand through the lattice
And my heart within me was moved!
I rose up to open to my beloved, and my hands
dropped with myrrh,
And my fingers with myrrh that flowed from the
latch.*

I opened to my beloved, but lo! my beloved had
vanished,—was gone.
My soul fainted within me as he departed;
I sought him but found him not; called him and he
answered me not.
The watchmen found me that go round the city:
they wounded and smote me,
The watchmen of the ramparts took away my veil.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!
If ye find my beloved what will ye tell him,
That I am sick of love?

FOURTH DAY.

THE third day having again closed with a
renewal of the "love sickness" and a consequent
interruption of the king's designs, the

* At lacrimans exclusus amator limina saepe
Floribus et sertis operit postesque superbos
Unguit amaracino.—*Lucretius*, IV. 1177-79.

fourth act witnesses a renewal of his advances,
after an impassioned description of her beloved
from the Sulammite to the women of the
harem. Undismayed by the hard, defiant look
with which she now receives him, the king
woos her in two songs, in which he endeavors
to rival the language of the unknown and
obscure lover, in one of which he dramatic-
ally describes the circumstances of his first
meeting with the Sulammite; and in the
second sinks into the only sensual utterances
to be found in the poem. But he only wins a
renewed protestation of her faithfulness to her
lover. To all the king's seductions she has
but one answer: "I am my beloved's and he
is mine," followed by a passionate invocation
to him to come and take her away; after
which she again sinks into unconsciousness.

THE LADIES OF THE COURT AND THE SULAMMITE.

THE LADIES OF THE COURT.

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

SULAMMITE.

My beloved is white and ruddy, chiefest among ten
thousand;
His head is of pure gold, his locks like vine-tendrils,
black as the raven;
His eyes as doves in the beds of the river, washed
in milk laid smooth in a vessel;
His cheeks are as beds of spices, a plot of sweet-
smelling flowers;
His lips like lilies dripping with odorous myrrh;
His hands are as golden rings set with the beryl;
His body as fine wrought ivory, overlaid with sap-
phires;
His legs are as marble pillars, based in sockets of
gold;
His form is as Lebanon, a youth like 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!

THE COURT LADIES.

Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest of
women?
Whither hath he turned, that we may seek him
with thee?

THE SULAMMITE.

My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the
beds of the spices,
To feed in the garden, and gather the lilies.
I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine!
He pastures his flock among the lilies.

(*The king enters.*)

SOLOMON.

Thou art lovely, O my friend, as Thirza, fair as
Jerusalem, fearful as an army in battle—
Turn away thine eyes for they make me to fear,—
Thy tresses are as a herd of goats on the sides of
Mount Gilead;

Thy teeth as a flock of ewes that come up from
the water,
Each the mother of twins, not one of them sterile;
Thy cheeks as pomegranates in the midst of thy
locks,—
Three score the queens,
Four score the concubines,
And virgins without number!
But one is my dove, mine undefiled,
The only one of her mother, and dear to her who
bore her.
The daughters saw her, and blessed her;
The queens and the concubines, and they praised
her.
Who is this that looketh forth as the dawn, fair as
the moon,
Clear as the sun, fearful as an army in battle?
“I went down into the garden of nuts to see the
herbs of the valley,
To see whether the tender vine-shoot had budded
and bloomed the pomegranates,
And lo! unawares, I fell in with the chariots of the
princes of Israel.”
“Return, return, O Sulammite, return, return, that he
may behold thee.”
“What will ye see in the Sulammite?” “What
equals the dance of Mahanaim.”*

(Here follows the passage (ch. vii. 1-9), the only passage, according to Prof. W. Robertson Smith, which is really chargeable with grossness, and which he considers, on grounds of internal evidence, an interpolation.—ED.)

SULAMMITE.

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,
And unto me his desire!
Come my beloved, let us go forth to the fields and
abide under boughs of the cypress;
Let us betimes to the vineyard, and see if the vine
stock has sprouted;
Whether the blossom has opened,—bloom the pome-
granates.
There will I give thee myself.
The love-apples smell sweet, and over our door
all manner of fruit,
New and old, which I have laid up for thee.
O that thou wert as a brother, that sucked the
breasts of my mother,
That I might find thee without, and kiss thee,
and not be despised;
That I might bring thee into my mother's house,
and thou mightest instruct me;
And that I might cause thee to drink my spiced
wines, my pomegranate juice.

His left arm under my head,
And his right embraces me.
I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!
By the gazelles and by the hinds of the field,
That ye awake not
Nor arouse
The loved one till she please.

FIFTH DAY.

At last she has conquered. The king perceives that she cannot be moved, and as the true religion to which he belongs forbids the use of force, he sees that he has no choice but to send her back to her shepherd-lover. The scene accordingly changes to the north

* An ancient city celebrated for its dances.

of the country, and shows us the Sulammite leaning on her beloved, and a band of shepherds coming out to meet them. She pauses under an apple-tree consecrated by precious memories in the past, and there bids him cherish her as one who has been tried to the uttermost, and not found wanting, uttering the great key-note of the poem,—the unconquerable nature and lofty incorruptibility of true love,—a grand climax in which for the first and only time the name of God occurs. Then, turning to the shepherds, she entertains them with a little Eastern apologue, doubtless drawn from some discussion between those hard elder brothers of hers (overheard while she was yet a child), as to what they would do with her when she came to a marriageable age. If she proved a wall, resisting all attempts on her virtue, they would crown the wall with battlements of silver, procure her an honorable marriage; but if she proved too accessible, then they would board up the wall with cedar, marry her to some hard rich man, who would effectually shut her up from the effects of her own lightness and folly. Then suddenly the girl bursts out into the jubilant cry of triumph, “I am a wall, resisting even the seductions of a king”; and she ends with a little taunting allusion to the wealth and power of that king, the owner of many vineyards, who yet had not been able to purchase of her that little vineyard she owned, her beauty and chastity.

The bridegroom, with the friends who have come to assist at their betrothal, then request her to sing to them. But this unconquerable maiden is not to be won too easily even by him whom her soul loveth; and the poem closes with the half mocking, half tender words,

“Too tender
Not to be seeming bitter to the ear,”

in which she bids him “turn, and be like the gazelle or the fawn of the hinds,” no longer on the dark mountain ravines that part them, but on the hills that are all fragrant with love and reunion.

SHEPHERDS—THE SULAMMITE—HER LOVER.

SHEPHERDS.

Who is this that cometh up from the desert
Leaning on her beloved?

SULAMMITE (*to her lover*).

Under this apple-tree I awoke thee,
There thy mother brought thee forth, there she bore
thee in anguish.

Set me as a seal on thine heart, as a seal on thine arm,
For love is as strong as death, unconquerable as the
grave.

The flame thereof is as fire, even the fire of God!
 Many waters cannot quench love, nor the rivers overflow it,
 Though a man give all his possessions for love, he would be but contemned.

(Turning to the shepherds.)

We have a little sister who is yet without breasts;
 What shall we do with our sister in the day when men woo her?
 If she be a wall we will crown her with battlements of silver;
 If she be a door we will bar her with strong planks of cedar.
 I am a wall, and my breasts are strong towers,
 For thus I obtained that he should leave me at peace.

A vineyard hath Solomon in Baal-hamon;
 He let out the vineyard unto keepers;
 A thousand pieces of silver they brought for the fruit.
 But my vineyard, mine, is before me!
 The thousand pieces hast thou, O Solomon!
 And the keepers two hundred pieces each.

THE LOVER.

O thou that dwellest in the gardens
 My companions wait for thy voice.
 Thy voice let me hear.

THE SULAMMITE.

Turn thou, my beloved, and be thou like
 The gazelle, or the fawn of the hind,
 On the spicy mountains afar.

In the rough sketch we have now given of this song, drawn almost entirely from Ewald's version, except in a word here and there where Renan seems to have rendered the sense of the original more accurately, we have purposely refrained from perplexing the reader with difficulties, in order that he might form some undisturbed idea of the beauty of the poem as a whole. But probably to the thoughtful reader the difficulties have already suggested themselves, and we will therefore proceed to touch lightly upon them.

It must, first of all, be remembered that the drama grew out of the song publicly sung or recited by one or more voices in succession at religious or marriage festivals. In our present poem we have the transition from the one to the other, the drama not yet wholly differentiated from the song or lyrical recital. On the one hand, Solomon's marriage procession, witnessed by the citizens of Jerusalem, points to some sort of *mise en scène*; and probably the scene again changes in the fifth act to some sort of rude representation of vineyards and gardens. On the other hand, unquestionably, in the lovely little scene II., 3, where the Sulammite recalls how her lover came to her cottage in the first warm days of spring and called her out, she recites the dialogue between herself

and her lover—in other words, performs two parts, altogether unallowable in the drama proper. The same in II., 4. Indeed, in Ewald's version, a large part of the Song is rather lyrical recital than drama properly so called. But, as to whether Ewald has not carried this method of interpretation too far, especially when he places the words "Away with me from Lebanon, my bride!" (III., 7), in the mouth of the Sulammite, and before which he has, accordingly, to interpolate the words we have put into brackets, or when he makes the account of her capture part of a song the king sings to her, we cannot but think very problematical.

Renan goes on altogether a different supposition. According to him, the shepherd-lover first makes his appearance in the words, "As a lily among thorns, so is my friend among the daughters," though this is very improbable, owing to the occurrences of the word *raïati*, the name by which Solomon is always made to address the Sulammite; and he contends that the final *dénouement* is anticipated at the end of each act, each day being the account of some particular attempt of the king's on the Sulammite's faithfulness, ending with the ever-recurring triumph of the lovers, the adjuration "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!" being put into the shepherd's mouth, and not the Sulammite's. The Hebrew mind, in Renan's view, is incapable of working out a sustained plot, preferring a foregone conclusion, round and round which it wheels in circular flights of fancy. The stage, as he pictures it, consisted of some rude scenes but seldom shifted, the Sulammite seated in front, with the shepherd-lover on one side and the king on the other, by whom she is alternately addressed with an utter disregard of dramatic possibilities of time and place, the final taunt at the king, accordingly, hitting him "*en pleine poitrine*," doubtless to the great delight of the audience. In the background a group of men were placed who form a sort of chorus, and alternately represent the friends of the shepherd, the citizens of Jerusalem, or the watchmen of the wall; and a similar band of women, to impersonate either the daughters of Jerusalem or the daughters of Zion. For one great principle in interpreting the song must be carefully observed. The author, in the absence of names to the *dramatis personæ* and in the paucity of actors, takes care to denote who it is that is speaking, by especial methods of accost. The Sulammite, with Solomon, is always "my friend"; with the women of the harem she is the fairest of women: with her lover she is "my sister," "my bride," "my dove," "mine undefiled"; he himself is always "my be-

loved"; Solomon is "the king," or sometimes "King Solomon," or briefly "Solomon"; the ladies of the harem are "the daughters of Jerusalem," "the women of Jerusalem," "the daughters of Zion." But even with these internal guides it seems to us quite impossible to come to any final decision as to the exact form and arrangement of this beautiful ancient epithalamium, which probably was performed during the prolonged marriage feasts of the East.

With regard to the approximate age of the poem, the data are more satisfactory. The poem itself is sufficient to prove that it was not written by Solomon. The great king would certainly not have satirized himself so severely. All the internal evidence points to the poem having its birthplace in the north of the country, whence we also have the Song of Deborah, the prophecies of Hosea, the history of Gideon, of Jephthah, of Samson, of Elijah and Elisha. Not only is the imagery of the poem that of the rich pastoral vine-clad district of Lebanon, but, with the exception of Jerusalem, Heshon and Engedi, all the localities named in the poem,—Saron, Gilead, Thirzah, Senir, Carmel, Sulem, Baal-hamon,—belong to the north of the country. Indeed, it is to this richness of local coloring that we owe an illusion which enables us to fix the date of the poem within narrow limits. The Sulammite is compared for her beauty to Thirzah and to Jerusalem. The author here contrasts the capitals of Judah and Israel. Now we know that Thirzah was the capital of the kingdom of Israel from the reign of Jeroboam to that of Omri, from 975 to 924 B. C. In 923, Omri built Samaria, which thenceforth became the capital of the northern kingdom, Thirzah disappearing from history—its decline and fall being so rapid and complete that its very site is unknown.

This allusion alone, as both Renan and Ewald point out, authorizes us in placing the first redaction of the poem anterior to 924 B. C. But the same evidence places it after the death of Solomon, and the schism which took place in 936 B. C. Other evidence might be adduced, but we think this is sufficient. The Song would be therefore contemporary with the probable date of Homer.*

But a question of far wider interest and importance is the purpose of the Song of Songs in the sacred canon. How came it in our Bibles? To those of us who recognize the Bible to be emphatically the book of man,

* "A poem in the northern dialect, with a northern heroine and scenery, contrasting the pure simplicity of Galilee with the corrupt splendor of the Court of Solomon, is clearly the embodiment of one phase of the feeling which separated the ten tribes from the house of David." So writes Prof. W. Robertson Smith, "Enc. Britt.," vol. v., p. 36.—Ed.

and God revealing Himself in and through man, its presence should be no difficulty. If in the sacred page man is portrayed on all sides of his moral and spiritual nature,—now his wide national and political life, and now the narrow, peaceful life of homesteads set among their golden corn-fields, now in his sickness and sorrow uttering the divine cry, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," and now in his weariness, wailing "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," now pouring forth his aspirations after the unseen in hymns and sacred songs, and now affirming the eternal laws of right and duty in lofty prophecy,—to those, I say, who recognize this, it would be an insuperable difficulty if the master passion, Love, alone found no place, or was but indirectly represented. To all Teutonic nations especially it ought to be a welcome discovery to find that the principles on which we base the purity of our homes, the inviolable sanctity of the love of one man for one woman, should find its recognition in our Bible, and receive the sanction of the "Oracles of God," even though they had their birthplace in the heart of a polygamous nation. We can but echo the words of the illustrious Niebuhr, when a young minister was lamenting the necessity of having to admit a mere love poem into the sacred canon: "For my part," he said emphatically, "I should feel that there was something wanting in the Bible, did I not find in it an expression for the deepest and strongest of the feelings of humanity."

A far more difficult question is the religious use the Church has always made of the Canticles. The limits of this brief sketch will not permit our entering on the curious history of the gradual allegorization of the Song as the true comprehension of it faded out of men's minds. We can only touch upon the question how far the allegorical interpretation of it can be maintained. We believe that any such systematic method of interpretation is incompatible with the nature of the poem, and must be surrendered with so much of the early allegorizing of the fathers. There is no evidence that the poem originally had a mystical meaning, and there is every internal evidence to the contrary.* But so long as marriage remains the type of the union of the soul

* The allegorical interpretation, it is curious to discover, was not given to the poem by the Alexandrian Jews, who were such devotees of allegory. The symbolical view (beginning in the Jewish Talmud) was brought into the Church by the school of Origen. This interpretation, now apparently obsolescent, was defended in this country by Professor Stuart. It is set forth in the ingenious commentary of Dr. L. Withington (1861). It is vigorously opposed in a work of the late Professor Noyes, of Cambridge.—Ed.

with God, of Christ with the Church; so long as the faithful attachment of one soul to another shadows forth the love of the heavenly Lover who "loved us and gave himself for us," so long will religious feeling express itself

in the language of the Canticles, so long will the soul that "is joined to the Lord" utter, as its deepest cry of adoration to its Redeemer, the words of the Song of Songs, "My Beloved is mine and I am His."

Ellice Hopkins.

NEAR SUNSET.

SOMETIMES, from fields grown sadly strange
Since robins fled, by woodland path,
Straight up the valley-head I range
To reap the day's poor aftermath.

I climb the hill: the top draws nigh;
The path grows light again, and lo,
The pale new moon, the crimson sky,
The village on the plain below!

The spiders spin across my face;
The startled partridge, fleeing, makes
A sudden silence in the place
The rasping cricket scarcely breaks.

And weary huskers, binding long
On dusky slopes, still bind by night,
While, like the murmur of a song,
Their talk is blown across the height.

L. Frank Tooker.

EUGÈNE FROMENTIN.

IN one of the tall buildings on lower Broadway,—that rear their fronts of cast-iron with pitiless regularity of design and repetition of ornament before the ever-shifting crowd,—are hundreds of rugs and carpets disposed on bare benches flooded with light from high, bald windows. They have come all the way from Cashmere and Bokhara, from Mesopotamia and Kurdistan, some of them from India and Indo-China. They fill the cold, square rooms with the colors of candied fruits and of those preserves which are made from roses and violets. Deep and rich tones, in which a distinct pattern is often lost and almost never a thing or a living creature certainly imitated, caress the glance with double effect as the eyes come to them weary from the sight of our barbarous iron architecture and the alternately sordid and ungainly garments of our fellow-citizens. A dreary multitude shuffles and scuffles along outside of windows that stand plumb with an irritating exactness. A German Oriental, with a flash coat and with cheap jewelry in his necktie, is crying out in a voice rougher than that of the native American the numbers and prices of an auction which has lately taken place. How comes it that merchants find a profit in importing these bales and bales of Turkish and Persian carpets, rugs, prayer-mats, and shawls? How comes it that the same people that build the iron boxes which line the business thoroughfares have enough taste and discrimination to encourage imports of articles so fine? For hardly three are alike. Every tenth piece is strong in make,

durable, fine in colors; every twentieth is a veritable work of art. And yet these fabrics are not woven by machinery. The vast majority are true hand-made work. Over nearly every one the pale and half-starved children of Persia or of Kurdistan have labored slowly and sadly, letting their fingernails grow long, as the latest traveler through Persia has noticed, in order to separate the colored threads more readily; racking their young memories with the rules by which those threads are laid in place, and breathing an air that gives them one more push toward their early graves. And yet these fabrics take several years to complete, and in the cities where they are made cannot be bought for the price at which they are likely to go when brought to the hammer in New York. How does it happen that the tide of export sets this way so strongly that many reach here only to be disposed of at a loss? Writers not a few, travelers, novelists, poets, have had a hand in bringing this about. Perhaps no one of our time has had more influence in accelerating the movement, if not in initiating it, than the writer and painter, Eugène Fromentin.

Taste for Oriental things rests on sound principles. It is not affectation to value an article because the maker has put the impress of his own individuality on it, and to turn away from another because it is the thousandth out-put of a loom run by steam. At a certain remote period, when only a part of France was Frankish, the architects of churches painted walls, clerestories, ceilings,