

THE SONG OF SONGS.

BY SOLOMON.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

This beautiful poem seems to myself, and several competent critics, to be a Wedding Day Drama. I have, therefore, endeavoured in my translation to restore the actual dramatic form in which Solomon wrote it, and I think by doing so the matchless beauty of the poem is displayed as it has never previously been by any translator or commentator.—F. F.

PRELUDE.

(In a village.)

1 SHEPHERDESS.

2 Let him kiss me with his kissing mouth;—
For your love is sweeter than wine!

SHEPHERD.

3 Your breath is a charming perfume!

SHEPHERDESS.

Your fame is abroad;—that all the girls love you!

SHEPHERD.

4 Entice me!—I'll run after you!

(She runs off in sport.)

ACT I. SCENE I.

(In DAVID'S Park Lodge. The SHEPHERDESS sings on being introduced to the other attendants in DAVID'S Park Palace.)

SHEPHERDESS.

The King has brought to his home.

ATTENDANTS.

We are pleased and delighted with you!—
Your charms are more pleasant than wine;—
The Princes will love!

SHEPHERDESS *in reply.*

5 I am dusky but comely,
Jerusalem's girls!
Like pavilions of Kedar,
Like Solomon's tents;—
6 Oh! look not on me!
I am black!

The sun has embrowned me!
The sons of my mother were cruel to me,—
They set me to watch in the Vineyard,
So my own Vineyard I never could guard!

SCENE 2.

(The SHEPHERDESS alone and in the KING'S Park thinking of her Shepherd lover.) 7

(Sings.) Oh! tell me, you love of my soul,
Where you pasture?
Where your flocks lie at noon?
Why should I go wandering alone,
With my flock not alongside of yours?

(Her lover who has come to see her replies from the bushes.) 8

SHEPHERD sings.

If you do not know, oh! most charming of maids
Follow on by the track of the sheep,
And pasture your lambs
By the tents in the mead!

SCENE 3.

SOLOMON walking in the Park sees and begins to court the SHEPHERDESS.) 9

SOLOMON.

To the steeds in the Chariot of Pharaoh
I would compare you my girl!
Your cheeks are made charming with ringlets, 10
With corals your neck!
I will make for you girdles of gold, 11
With silver for clasps!

(SHEPHERDESS in response replies with cross purposes, to evade SOLOMON'S flattery, pretending she has to go to DAVID, whom she is nursing.)

SHEPHERDESS.

The King now returns from his stroll;— 12
I must run to attend him.

SOLOMON, trying to retain her by further flatteries.

My dear, you're a satchet of Myrrh 13
To be laid in my breast!
My dove, you're a cluster of roses, 14
In En-ge-di's gardens!

(The SHEPHERDESS leaves, and SOLOMON calls after her.)

SOLOMON.

You are charming, my love, you are charming! 15
You have eyes like a dove!
You are charming, my love, you are charming!— 16
Let our roof be green leaves.
And the beams of our house fir-tree boughs, 17
And the Cypress our screen!

ACT 2. SCENE 1. 2

(The SHEPHERDESS and her lover meet and talk.)

SHEPHERDESS.

Am I your Rose of Sharon?— 1
Your Lily of the Valley?—

SHEPHERD.

Like a lily in thorns,— 2
Is my dear amongst maidens!

SHEPHERDESS.

- 3 Like an apple to trees of the forest,
Amongst lads is my lover!
I delight in his shade and sit down,
4 And his fruit,—it is sweet to my taste.
He has brought to his bower,
And his banner above me is love!
5 (*She sings.*) Refresh me with flagons,
With apples support me,
Because I am fainting with love!
6 Let his left hand be under my head,
And his right hand be clasped within mine!

(*The SHEPHERD sleeps, and the SHEPHERDESS says to the CHORUS.*)

- 7 I entreat you, Jerusalem's daughters,
By the deer and gazelles of the field,
Arouse not,—disturb not my love,
Until it may please him to wake.

SCENE 2.

(*A Park Lodge. The SHEPHERDESS at the window sees her lover in the distance, and exclaims to her companions.*)

- 8 Ah! that is the voice of my love,
Who comes tripping over the hills!
9 My lover is like a gazelle,
Or a fawn of the groves!

The CHORUS of her Companions.

Look! he is hiding behind our wall,
To the window he peeps!
Thro' the flowers spread over the lattice!

SHEPHERDESS *exclaims.*

- 10 My darling addresses and calls!

SHEPHERD, *hid amongst the rosebushes, sings.*

- Arise my love, my fair, and come to me!—
Let me wander, sweet, with you:
11 For see the Winter is past,
The rain is over and gone,
The flowers appear on the earth,
12 And the Time of the Singing of Birds is come,
And the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land!

2.

- 13 The fig-leaves are tanned by the sun,
And the bloom on the vines gives perfume,
Arise and come to me, my love!
My fair one,—let me come to you!

3.

- 14 My Dove's in a cleft of the rock,
In a precipice hid!
Allow me to list to your coos,
For your voice is a pleasure,
And to see you delights!

4.

- 15 Let us hunt little foxes together,
The bad foxes, who spoil our grapes,
And our blossoming vines?

SHEPHERDESS.

My lover is mine, and I am his?

16

SHEPHERD.

Let us graze amongst lilies,
Till the evening breeze comes,
Till the shadows depart!

17

SHEPHERDESS.

Come rest yourself, darling,
Like Gazelles and the Fawns of the groves,
On the Mountains of Bethar.

ACT 3. SCENE 1.

18

(In Jerusalem. The SHEPHERDESS tells the CHORUS why she went out at night to seek her lover.)

1

SHEPHERDESS.

On my bed I dreamt of him to-night,
He who is beloved of my soul ;—
I sought him but I could not find ;—
So I rose and am going about—
In the town, in the streets, and the squares,
I sought the beloved of my life,—
I sought him,—but I could not find ;—
I met with the watch on their rounds,
I asked, " Have you seen my soul's love ? "
Soon after I parted from them
I found the beloved of my life !—
I seized him,—would not let him go,
Till I brought to my own mother's home,—
To her chamber from whom I was born !

2

3

4

5

I charge you, Jerusalem's daughters,
By the hinds and gazelles of the field,
Not to waken or rouse up my love
Till it pleases himself.

SCENE 2.

(In Jerusalem SOLOMON coming up from the country, and the SHEPHERDESS and her companions watching his advance.)

SHEPHERDESS, on the balcony.

6

Who is that coming up from the meadows,
Like columns of smoke from the burning of myrrh?
With incense and sweets from afar?

CHORUS.

7

Why, that is Solomon's chariot,
With sixty brave warriors around!
Each one grasps his sword,
Every one knows to fight;
Each has sword on his thigh
Against dangers at night.

8

(The CHORUS of girls discuss the appearance of the cavalcade and tell anecdotes of SOLOMON as he approaches.)

9

1ST GIRL.

King Solomon made his chariot of Lebanon wood.

2ND GIRL.

Its pillars of silver are made,

10

3RD GIRL.

And its panels of gold!

4TH GIRL.

And its cushions are purple!
 Its carpet is brodered with lace,
 Made by Jerusalem's girls!

SCENE 3.

A CHORUS of women who are going out to meet SOLOMON and his train, singing—

II Come out, you daughters of Zion, to look
 At King Solomon wearing the wreath
 That his mother had woven for him,
 For the day he was wed,—
 For the day of the joy of his heart.

4

ACT 4. SCENE 1.

(In the Palace Gardens on Lebanon. SOLOMON declaring his love for the SHEPHERDESS in a Serenade.)

SOLOMON sings.

I My Love, you are charming! yes, charming!
 Your eyes 'neath your veil are like doves!
 Your locks like a flock of the goats
 That wander on hills of Gilad!
 2 Your teeth like a flock of shorn sheep,
 All perfect without a defect;
 3 Your ruby lips are like a cord,
 And your talk a delight!
 Your cheeks are love-apples concealed by your veil
 4 Your neck like the tower of David
 Built up as a place of defence,—
 A thousand of bucklers defend it—
 All shields of the bravest of men!
 5 Your breasts like two fawns
 The twins of Gazelles,
 That pasture among the fair lilies!

2.

6 At the cool of the day when the shadows extend,
 Come out, walk with me on the Mountains of Myrrh,
 And the Highlands of Spice,
 7 For, my darling, you everywhere charm,—
 In you there is not a defect.

3.

8 Go with me from Lebanon, darling,
 Go with me from Lebanon!
 Go with me to look from the top of Amanah,
 From the summit of Shevir and Hermon,
 From the homes of the lions,
 And hills of the leopards!

4.

9 You embolden my heart,
 My Darling, my Perfect!
 From a glance of your eyes I am bold!
 From a bend of your neck!
 10 How delightful to love you,
 My Darling, my Perfect!

5.

To love you is more pleasant than wine;
 And your sweetness is more than perfumes!
 11 Your lips distil odours, my Perfect,
 Honey and butter are under your tongue!—

And the scent of your robes is like Lebanon's breath!—
 But a garden enclosed is my Darling, my Perfect ; 12
 A fountain barred up from the sight by a wall!
 Your glance is a peach grove with excellent fruit, 13
 Like the fruit of the Nard!
 Nard, saffron, and cinnamon sticks, 14
 With all Lebanon's Woods,
 Myrrh and sandal, with all the best sweets ;
 A Spring in a garden ;— 15
 A Fount of the Water of Life,
 And like Lebanon's brooks!

SCENE 2.

(The SHEPHERD hid in the garden amongst the rosebushes begins to plead also with the SHEPHERDESS. Sings.)

SHEPHERD.
 Arise North wind, or come from the South, 16
 O! blow on my Garden, pour out its perfumes!

(The SHEPHERDESS replies to him from her bower.) 5

SHEPHERDESS sings.
 Come in, my love, to my Garden ;— 1
 I will gather my myrrh and my balm,
 I will feed you with horey,
 Of my milk and my wine you shall drink ;
 Come, dearest, eat of my butter,
 Come, drink and be drunken with love!

SHEPHERD, *in ecstasy at the gate.* 2
 Do I sleep? Yet my heart is awake ;
 At the voice of my darling it beats!
 Open, my Darling, my Love,
 My Dove, my Most Perfect!—
 My head is all sopping with dew,
 My locks with the drops of the night!

SHEPHERDESS
 I have put off my clothing!— 3
 Why dress me again?
 My feet have been washed!—
 Can I soil them again?
 (The SHEPHERDESS soliloquizes.)
 My love puts his hand to the latch, 4
 And my breast sighs for him!

SCENE 3.

(The SHEPHERDESS arising to open the door finds her lover has gone upon her refusal, so she goes out to seek him, and is apprehended by the Police; when she appeals to the CHORUS to help her.)

SHEPHERDESS to the CHORUS.
 I rose up to let in my love,— 5
 And my hands were all dripping with myrrh,
 And my fingers gave off their perfume
 On the key of the lock ;—
 I opened the door to my love, 6
 But my darling had gone!
 My soul ran to find, it sought to speak to him,
 But it found him not!
 I called!—But he did not reply!

7 They found me, the watchmen patrolling the Town
 They struck me! They bruised me!
 They tore off my veil!
 The Guards of the wall!
 8 I entreat you, Jerusalem's daughters,
 If you meet with my lover, you tell him,
 That I am afflicted for love!

9 THE CHORUS, *replying to her, ask—*
 What is your Lover, more than other lovers?
 Oh! fairest of women!
 What is your Lover, more than other lovers?
 That you put us on oath?

10 SHEPHERDESS.
 My Lover is handsome and ruddy,
 More distinguished than many.
 11 His head is fine gold,
 His bushy curls black as a raven;
 12 His eyes are like dove's on the banks of the brook,
 Washed milk white, as they sit on the brim!
 13 His cheeks are like beds of sweet flowers,
 That grow up in rows,
 His lips are like lilies diffusing perfume,
 14 His hands ringed with gold set with topaz!
 His breast made of ivory, with sapphires adorned,
 15 His legs marble columns on bases of gold;—
 His appearance like Lebanon,
 As grand as its Cedars!—
 16 His speech is most lovely and all one could wish!—
 That is my Lover,—and that is my darling,—
 Jerusalem's daughters!

6 THE CHORUS *reply.*
 1 Where has your lover gone,
 O! Fairest of women?
 Where wanders your lover?—
 We will seek him with you!
 (*They go to seek him, and follow her.*)

SHEPHERDESS *suddenly exclaims—*
 2 My love has gone down to his field,
 To the sweet smelling hedge-rows,
 To the pastures enclosed, and is gathering lilies

SCENE 4.

3 (*The CHORUS and SHEPHERDESS finding the SHEPHERD in the Fields, she runs up to him, exclaiming:*)

SHEPHERDESS.
 I am my lover's,—my lover is mine!—
 He strolls amongst lilies.

SHEPHERD.
 4 My darling charms me like delight;
 Like Jerusalem's prospect;—
 I tremble like flags!
 5 Turn from me your eyes, they o'erwhelm me!
 Your locks are like goat flocks that wander in Gilad;
 6 Your teeth are like ewes that come up from the washing;—
 Each with its twin, and none wanting!
 7 Your cheeks under your veil, are love-apples!—

There may be sixty Queens, with their seventy attendants, 8
 And maids without number;—
 But my Dove is the one, that is perfect, 9
 She is the one of her mother;
 The best of her daughters,
 Girls see her and bless her;—
 The Queens and attendants all praise her!

ACT 5. SCENE I.

(DAVID'S Villa. SOLOMON walking in the Nut Grove of the Villa on the
 Lebanon, sees the SHEPHERDESS.)

SOLOMON.
 Who is this that bursts out like the Dawn? 10
 And fair as the silvery Moon?—
 Like the Sun on a fluttering flag?

SHEPHERDESS replies. 11
 I came down to the Garden of Nuts,
 To look at the plants in the vale,
 To see if the vines were in bloom,
 Or the Love-apples flowered.—
 I knew not, by my life, I should meet, 12
 In my walk with my Prince.

(She turns away and retires towards her duties in nursing DAVID. 7
 SOLOMON calls to entreat her to come back.)

SOLOMON.
 Why offended?—Return to me! Return! 1
 Return to me! Return!—Let me see you!

SCENE 2.

(While he calls back the offended SHEPHERDESS, a MAHANAMI DANCING GIRL of
 the Court pertly demands of SOLOMON:)

DANCING GIRL.
 Why should you look at that sulker,
 More than at a Mahanami Dancer?

(SOLOMON in irritation replies to her with satirical insult.)

SOLOMON.
 How fine your steps are in your slippers! 2
 Smart girl! The edge of your skirts is like lace,—
 And made by the hand of the skilful!
 Your belt is a bowl not deficient in drink; 3
 Is your waist a field of ripe corn, and encircled with lilies?
 Are your two breasts like two fawns,—twin gazelles? 4
 Is your neck like an ivory tower? 5
 Your eyes like the lakelets of Bethlem,
 By the Gate of Bath-rabbim?
 Is your nose like to Lebanon's tower,
 That looks on the North to Damask?
 Is your head fixed on you like Carmel, 6
 With the plaits from your hair hanging down?—
 And a Monarch involved in their twists?—

SCENE 3.

(SOLOMON leaving his satirizing of the DANCING GIRL, turns and looks
 after the retiring SHEPHERDESS, and soliloquizes.)

SOLOMON.
 Why are you so charming and pleasant?— 7
 I love her, involved in delights,—
 Your stature is like to a Palm, 8

- 9 And your breasts like to clusters of grapes.
I declare I could climb up that Palm,—
I would hang by its thorns,
For there are your grape-cluster breasts,
And your breath like perfume!
- 10 And your mind like the beautiful wine,
That comes to the truly in love,
And moistens their lips in their sleep!
- 11 (*The SHEPHERDESS hearing him speaking, turns and replies in remonstrance.*)
SHEPHERDESS.
I am for my lover, and he longs for me.
- 12 (*SOLOMON answers her in rapture; trying to induce her to forget her rustic lover, he offers to become a peasant and her equal, and lodge in a village farm.*)
SOLOMON.
Come, darling, come to the meads!
We can sit in the bowers,
And lodge with the farmers!
Can watch the Vines blossom,—
The flowers unfolding,
Or the bright peaches flourish:—
And there I will give you my love!
- (*The SHEPHERDESS refuses and departs.*)

ACT 6. SCENE I

(*The SHEPHERD and SHEPHERDESS in their native village, are prattling together in the delight of their meeting.*)

- SHEPHERD.
14 The Love-apples give out their scent,
And over our doors are new flowers,
And the old ones, my love, that I treasured for you!
- 8 THE SHEPHERDESS replies to him lovingly—
1 Who will make you my brother,
That sucked at my own mother's breasts?
When I met in the street I could kiss you,—
And they could cry shame if I did!
- 2 I would lead you to my mother's home,
She would tell me to serve you with grapes,
And to mingle the pomegranate's spice!
- 3 His left should be clasped round my head,
And his right hand be folded in mine!
- (*The SHEPHERD falls asleep, and the SHEPHERDESS then addresses the CHORUS.*)
SHEPHERDESS.
4 I ask you, Jerusalem's girls,—
Not to wake, or arouse up my love,
Till it pleases himself!
- (*A period of time is supposed to elapse.*)

SCENE 2.

(*In the Village. A cavalcade is seen advancing and the Chorus of Villagers ask each other in astonishment what it means.*)

- CHORUS.
5 Who is she coming up from the Pasture,
With her Guardian Companion?
(*The Chorus of Villagers dance as they watch the cavalcade approach the farm.*)

SCENE 3.

(The Orchard of the farm where the SHEPHERDESS was born. SOLOMON, taking her from the attendant lady, leads her to her mother, and, addressing the SHEPHERDESS, says :)

SOLOMON.

I have brought you to the Orchard,
 To the place of your mother who bore ;
 The place where she nursed you a child !
 Place ME like a seal on your heart,
 Like a brace on your arm ;
 For Love is as strong as is Death,—
 And Jealousy hard as the Grave.
 Its flashes are flashes of fire,—
 It fiercely inflames !—

6

(SOLOMON breaks off in grief.)

(The OLD MOTHER, to assuage his grief, says :)

7

MOTHER.

Many waters can never quench love !—
 Nor can the torrents sweep off !—
 If man gave the whole wealth of his house,
 To buy Love,—it would all be despised !

SCENE 4.

(The SHEPHERDESS'S two brothers seated outside the Orchard and discussing a future sale of their beautiful sister to some rich man say :)

1ST BROTHER.

We have a nice little sister !

8

2ND BROTHER.

But she has no breasts !

1ST BROTHER.

What shall we do with our sister,
 At the time when her growth is complete ?

2ND BROTHER.

If she is as hard as a wall
 We will build on her turrets of silver ;—
 But if a swing-door,—
 Will deck her with panels of cedar !

9

SCENE 5.

(The SHEPHERDESS, who has overheard them, comes on the scene with her lover, the SHEPHERD, and contemptuously exclaims to the two mercenary clowns, pointing to her lover :)

SHEPHERDESS.

I am a Wall !—And have breasts !
 Like two strong towers I shall be in his eyes,
 Who secures my place !—

10

Solomon's farm is Bal-hamon,—

Give that farm to its tenants !

11

Each brings a thousand in silver as rent.—

My farm is myself,—to be plain,—

12

For you, Solomon,—there is the thousand ;—

To the tenants two hundred for rents !

(SOLOMON giving the SHEPHERDESS to her lover replies :)—

13

SOLOMON.

You are married, fair dweller in Gardens ;—

Your companions can hear ;

I, Myself, have proclaimed it !

Go away with your love, and be like a Gazelle,

14

Or the Fawn of the Deer, on the sweet-scented hills !

THE END OF THE SONG OF SONGS.