

THE COVENANTER.

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[For the Covenanter.]

THE COMPANY OF HORSES.

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"I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots."—SONG I. 9.

The Arab who traverses the desert, from the perpetual state of warfare in which he lives, and the rapid movements he is accordingly compelled to make, is chiefly concerned about the swiftness of his horse; but the Egyptian, occupying a fixed and quiet habitation, enervated by luxury, and fond of splendid shows and processions, adorns his courser with magnificent trappings, and teaches him to move with a slow and pompous step. The horses of Egypt have long been celebrated for their height, their plumpness, and the stateliness of their pace. Corpulency is regarded as a leading character of beauty in several regions of Africa, and perhaps in other eastern countries, and even a lady to be accounted beautiful must be fat. Upon this principle is founded the compliment of Solomon, which may seem rather coarse to a mere English reader: "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots."

It is remarkable that the elegant Theocritus in his *Epithalamium*, celebrates the portly size and plumpness of Helen, the most celebrated beauty of ancient times, and uses exactly the same image with Solomon, comparing her to the horse in the chariots of Thessaly.*

The Beloved designs by this striking and beautiful figure to encourage the spouse in her despondency, and to awaken in her a more exalted opinion of herself. He expresses his strong and enduring love by the title he gives her, and by the comparison his high estimate of her beauty and excellence. He compares her not only to the horse, the noblest of animals, but to a company of these yoked, as of old, in Pharaoh's chariots. The Egyptian horses were among the noblest of breeds, distinguished for their strength and symmetry of form, and were held in great estimation in Syria and the adjacent countries. Four well trained and richly caparisoned horses were usually harnessed in a chariot, and those in the royal chariots of Pharaoh were the noblest of the Egyptian breed, excelling all for their symmetry of form, their vigorous action, and their high training, their measured and pompous step. The numerous and splendid studs of Solomon were chiefly formed of Egyptian horses. It is not to the horse singly, but to a number also, as associated and trained to act in unison, that the spouse is compared. She may be contemplated then in the individuals of which she is constituted, and in their collective

* Paxton.

and associated capacity; and in these aspects the doctrine will be "The church, viewed in her individual members, and these in their associated action, is, in the estimation of Christ, possessed of the most exalted qualities."

Keeping the figure in view, let us contemplate the Church in her members. They are endowed with a high degree of intelligence. There are few animals as sagacious as the horse. His susceptibility of education implies something more than instinct. In this characteristic, he is a suitable illustration of the intelligence of the members of the Church. Their minds are endowed with a capacity of receiving instruction of the highest character. The natural man has not this capacity. He cannot know the things of the Spirit of God. But the members of the Church are possessed of this spiritual endowment. Their minds are enlightened to perceive spiritual objects. They are capable of making the most extensive acquisitions of the highest kind of knowledge. The world by wisdom knows not God. The most exalted intellects, possessed of the noblest faculties for the acquisition of knowledge in the various arts and sciences, who have penetrated into the depths of earth, and the heights of heaven, and have unveiled their hidden knowledge, seem to be incapable of perceiving the simplest truths of the higher knowledge—the *knowledge of God*. They know not God; but the weakest of the Church's members are endowed with a high spiritual sagacity—a noble capacity for the attainment of divine knowledge. The eyes of their understandings are enlightened, and they are enabled to see wondrous things out of the divine law. It is this spiritual capacity of divine knowledge that exalts the members of the Church, and gives the weakest of them a high position, above the most learned of this world's philosophers. "That the mind of Humboldt, stored with all physical knowledge and human learning, should have swept, as on angels' wings, through the visible universe without discovering a God, or at least without expressing an admiration of his perfections, is the most lamentable proof which these latter ages have furnished, of the true greatness of the human mind in itself, and of its accompanying spiritual blindness."*

The members of the Church are endowed with a majestic beauty. The animal employed as the symbol in the text excels all others in this respect, the combination of beauty with majesty. The Egyptian horse excelled in these points. He combined remarkable beauty and symmetry of form with vigour of action and majesty of movement. Four of these splendid animals, trained as they were to "a slow and pompous step," yoked to one of Pharaoh's chariots, afforded a grand and pleasing spectacle.

This is not a low comparison. The Deity himself introduces the horse as one of the noblest specimens of his own handiwork. "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? The glory of his nostrils is terrible; he paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength."† The lofty neck with flowing mane, the slender head with expanded nostril, the proud chest swollen luxuriant with brawny muscles, the pliant limbs with their graceful and pompous movement, and the noble fire which animates his proud spirit, present a figure by no means derogatory as an illustration of the majestic beauty of the members of the Church.

The beauty of the Church's members is not the beauty of outward

* M'Cosh.

† Job xxxix. 19—21.

form and symmetry, it is moral and spiritual. It is the beauty of an enlightened mind and sanctified heart; the just proportion and harmony of the graces of the Holy Spirit; and the majesty of holiness as displayed in their stately movements in the Christian life. Christians are not proud nor haughty, yet there is a noble dignity and stateliness of mien, as though they were conscious of their high-birth—being born from above—and as animated by a sense of the high morality which becomes their deportment, and the exalted ends for which they are bound to live; that nothing mean, or impure, or low becomes them; nothing that would be a reproach to their own good name, or derogatory to the glory of their God. Theirs is the graceful and majestic beauty of a holy life, to which they have been trained by the teachings and grace of the Holy Spirit.

There is a beautiful and pliant docility in the Christian character. The horse is remarkable for his docility. By nature wild and impetuous, yet by appropriate treatment he becomes the most tractable and gentle of all animals. By nature the members of the Church are untractable, they are men of like passions with other men. But by the grace of God they become most gentle and amiable. The Christian grace of meekness presents this characteristic of docility, of which this noble animal is so beautiful an illustration, in a very lovely light.

"It is a temper of mind not easily provoked to resentment. In the Greek language it is *πραος*, quasi, *paos*, facilis, easiness of spirit; and thus it may be justly called, for it accommodates the soul to every occurrence, and so makes a man easy to himself, and to all about him. The Latins call a meek man *Mansuetus*—quasi, *Manu assuetus*, used to the hand; which alludes to the taming and reclaiming of creatures wild by nature, and bringing them to be tractable and familiar. "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body:" so when the grace of meekness reigns, it subdues the impetuous disposition, and teaches it submission and forgiveness. It teaches us to govern our own anger whenever we are at any time provoked, and patiently to bear the anger of others, that it may not be a provocation to us."

This happy illustration of Buck is appropriate to our subject, and establishes the view we have taken of the Christian character, as presented by the figure. By the infusion, by the Holy Spirit, of the sweet grace of meekness, the Christian becomes gentle and tractable, as this generous and noble animal.

There is in the character of the Church's members a disposition to active and lively obedience; as illustrated by the swiftness of the horse in obedience to his rider's will. Few animals can outstrip the horse in rapidity of movement. His swiftness in the onset or flight, is a favourite figure with the prophets! "His chariots shall be as a whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles." "Their horses also are swifter than the leopard." "Their horses' hoofs shall be counted like a flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind."* Obedient to the will of his rider, the horse rushes into the battle with the swiftness and force of the whirlwind, or, with the rapidity and alertness of the leopard's spring, scours the desert in the flight, and bears his rider afar off into its bosom to a place of safety.

Thus is the Christian obedient to the will of God. With like swiftness and alertness he proceeds to do his heavenly Father's will. He sur-

mounts every obstacle, and overcomes with speed every difficulty in the way of new obedience.

Christians are remarkable for their indomitable courage and indefatigable endurance. These are some of the noblest qualities of the horse. These are the chief attributes in the sublime description in Job.* "He goeth to meet the armed men; He mocketh at fear and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

In this inimitable picture we have a thrilling description of the indomitable courage of the horse, in which he is a noble symbol of the valour of the true Christian. "The Lord of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle."†

It requires great courage to fight the Christian's battle. His whole life is a scene of warfare; a continual combat. He has often fierce and mighty foes to encounter, and he requires all the noble courage of this warlike animal to qualify him for the conflict. God gives him his Spirit, and even the feeblest have become most fearless, as the goodly horse in the battle, and have, with the rapidity and force of the whirlwind, rushed to the encounter, and, sweeping the field, have said among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and have exulted amidst "the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

The power of endurance is as requisite as courage; and with this, after the example of this admired animal, the Christian is largely endowed. The horse's capability of endurance is remarkable, especially the Egyptian and Arabian steeds. The Septuagint gives a somewhat different translation. The word for horse is, in the Greek of those interpreters, feminine, (*τη ιππω*.) The Arabians, it seems, prefer the female to the male, because it is more gentle, silent, and able to endure fatigue, hunger, and thirst; qualities in which, they have found from experience, the former excels the latter. The mare on which the Emir or Prince of Carmel rode, had carried him three days and three nights together, without eating or drinking, and by this means effectually saved him from the pursuit of his enemies.‡

"Here is the faith and patience of the saints." Their warfare is a protracted one. Their enemies are persevering and relentless. But, by their faith and patience, the saints overcome. Through all opposition, and over all obstacles, they persevere unto the end and are saved.

It is in their associated character that the figure more properly presents the members of the Church. They are as "a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." They are here presented as yoked together, and acting in concert. Let us view them in this most interesting light.

The members of the Church cherish a warm attachment to each other, and especially those who are called to act together in carrying forward the great interests of the church. The horse is remarkable for its ardent attachments. Those who are for a time associated in the chariot become very strongly attached; they are unhappy when separated. No doubt Solomon, who was a lover of the horse, noted this interesting fact in the natural history of this noble creature; and this was probably in his mind

* Job xxxix, 1—2.

† Zech. x. 3.

‡ Paxton.

when he penned this verse. He saw in the figure the members of the Church, in the beauty of their strong mutual attachment.

How beautifully and exactly the well trained chariot horses co-operate in the draught; they draw together in the most beautiful harmony, and their movement is as if they were of one heart and one mind.

What a beautiful illustration of harmonious Christian co-operation, in bearing along the chariot of the Church, as it springs from mutual love; as they are of one heart and one mind, *striving together* for the faith of the gospel. The chariot will not proceed rapidly nor pleasantly if the horses do not draw together. The Church will not make progress, nor will her communion be pleasant, if her members do not pull together—co-operate in love and harmony.

It is remarkable how the ambition in the high spirit of the horse yoked in the chariot, will excite that of the company who are united with him to the same vehicle. Thus it is also in the church; the zeal of one member stimulates the zeal of all the others with whom he is associated; there is an action and reaction, until the whole community, as the horses in a chariot, proceeds as if animated by one Spirit.

In this mutual co-operation, this unity of zeal and action, lies the strength of the Church. Unless the horses in the chariot draw together, their great strength is exerted in vain. The chariot will not move off; it is often too in danger of upsetting by the refractory action of the rebellious or stubborn steed. With what force, however, and consequent rapidity and pleasantness the chariot rolls onward, surmounting every obstacle when the vigorous and active animals pull with united strength and effort. The chariot of the Church is often retarded, and her interests in particular places in danger of being upset by balking members; but when they unite their forces, and act with undivided effort, the interests of the Church progress, and the Church herself proceeds with rapidity and beauty, as when "the bickering chariot speeds adown the level causeway," drawn by swift and vigorous coursers, acting with united strength, and animated by one common generous spirit, as the church triumphs over her enemies, conquers in the deadly battle, when her numbers, animated by the warlike spirit of "the goodly horse in the battle," charge the foe in their united strength, and scour the field with the swiftness and force of the whirlwind, as when Pharaoh's war chariots sweep impetuously over the battle field.

What a beautiful subject, and what a happy illustration this figure of Solomon's. The members of the Church advancing in harmonious co-operation, in the furtherance of the kingdom of Christ, as the well trained horses act in concert, in drawing the chariot obedient to the will of their master.

The lesson is much needed in these sad times of disunion and adverse pulling. Some of the Church's horses are hanging in the traces, and holding back with all their weight and force, and some of them rearing and plunging like refractory steeds, or champing the bit with madness and rage, that they are urged to go forward in active and energetic co-operation. These are the wild, fierce, treacherous *mustangs*, and not of the noble and generous, and docile Egyptian or Arabian breed. It would be well for the Church if the traces of such were cut, and they were sent loose and untrammelled to career in their native wildness and ferocity over the boundless plains.

Would that there were more of the pure blood. The sagacious, the docile, the obedient, the majestically beautiful, and indomitably coura-

geous, and enduring animals, well trained for the chariot, or enured to the battle field, who would swiftly, in affectionate and united effort, bear onward over the rough course, "the chariot of the Lord;" or, like the Lord's "goodly horse for the battle," might be seen "pawing in the valley, rejoicing in their strength;" or, courageously "going to meet the armed men, mocking at fear, neither turning back from the sword," but "smelling the battle afar off," and heroically excited by "the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

THE CONSISTORY.

(Continued from p. 110.)

I have already conceded to you, that the "Eldership" of the second Book was a veritable Presbytery: but I will claim your consent in return, that it was also a veritable session, transacting all sessional business up to the time when Presbyteries were organized as we now have them. Not that it was half session and half presbytery; but whole session and whole presbytery; not a compound mass, but a compact body acting in two capacities.

You have given the testimony of Dr. M'Crie, that the "title" of session was known from the formation of the first book of Discipline. It may be fully admitted that it was known even before that book; but it is subject to the following observations, which materially affect the present argument:—

1. The "session" of the first Book was not distinguished from the presbytery. The first Book knows nothing about the presbytery—it recognises a session as the only court below the Superintendent's Synod. See chapters 7 and 8. After examining the original documents of the times, you have not furnished us with any distinction between a session and a presbytery, prior to 1585; that is 7 years *after* the second Book was completed, and 24 years after the adoption of the first. Appeals to 1592 and 1597, are still *farther* from the point, for it is known that there was a constant progression towards the second Reformation, completed in 1648.(1)

2. The "session" of the first Book included deacons as constituent members, even in matters of discipline: so says Dr. M'Crie, so you admit. The general assembly accordingly treats them as on a level with the elders. See the following in the Book of the Universal Kirk. In 1562, an elder or deacon was required from particular kirks, to accompany the minister to synod: page 13. In 1563, John Knox, with certain elders *and deacons*, was commissioned to take cognizance of a case of adultery, charged on Paul Methven, minister at Jedburgh: page 14. In December of the same year, elders *and deacons* are allowed to assist the pastor in family visitation.(2) But why add? You seem to make it a point to present the

(1.) We did not say that there was a complete Presbytery formed at the date of the first Book: we did say, however, and *proved*, that there was an "incipient" Presbytery. And now we state—and call the brother's particular attention to the fact—that, in Edinburgh and, partially, elsewhere, the congregations were united in *collegiate* charges. This one fact furnishes, of itself, a complete solution of all, or, at least, nearly all, the historical difficulties on which we dwell. What this progress was we shall see in its own place—it will not be found to favour the brother's view.

(2.) We do not defend the Scottish Church in this; but surely the brother must see that if she allowed and directed the deacons to take part in discipline, she did not exclude them from taking an active part in ordering pecuniary affairs.