

The King's Garden

The Present Truth – May 30, 1901

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All of you would, I feel sure, if I should ask you which you think the sweetest and loveliest of all the fair flowers, agree with me in giving the crown of honour to "sweet Queen Rose."

We might almost say that all that is beautiful in flower life, meets in this crowning wonder, which seals up the sum, "perfect in beauty." The purity of the lily, and the snowdrop; the fulness of the peony and the hyacinth; the perfect shape and delicate moulding of the lilac and the Egyptian lily; the exquisite colours and shading of the sweet pea, the petunia, and the pansy; the richness of the gladiola and the geranium; the precious fragrance of the violet, the wallflower, and the mignonette;—all the virtues which distinguish the different flowers, we find combined, bound up, and sealed, in this "perfection of beauty," which stands as the type of all.

Now we are going to talk about that flower in the King's Garden which He calls "the bond of perfectness," and so we have taken the rose as the fit emblem of it. Can you tell what it is?

Do you remember that we said last week that each of the commandments of God is a divine seed from the Father's own heart, which He plants in the heart gardens of His children, to bring forth the fragrant flowers of His own lovely character? But there is one word that sums up all the commandments, and has in it the grace of every one of them. It is Love; "for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love."

And so God says that Love "is the bond of perfectness." As the Rose, the emblem of perfection, is the Queen of the flowers, so Love, is "the bond of perfectness," reigns in the King's garden, and gathers up and seals within itself the graces of all the fair flowers that bloom there.

Each commandment, as we shall see when we come to look at them more closely, contains some special grace of God, that it may be unfolded and revealed in the hearts of man. But in love, the crowning grace, or rather the summing up of all the graces, "all the fulness of God" shines forth, for "God is Love."

The Rose seems to us the summing up of all that is beautiful in nature; and Christ, who is "the One altogether lovely," calls Himself, "The Rose of Sharon."

Since God is Love, and the seeds of all that is fair in His garden come from His own heart, they must all spring from Love, and show to us its different characteristics.

You know that there are different families of plants, and the plants belonging to each family are known by their likeness to each other in some particular. Now the family name of all the plants in the King's Garden is Love, from which they all spring.

As we walk in the Garden, and examine the flowers, we shall find many different ones,—Worship, Holiness, Obedience, Faithfulness, Kindness, Purity, are the names of

some of them. But we shall know by their fragrance that they all belong to the one family of Love. For it is Love that is the life of every virtue; it is this that breathes its sweet odour over the whole Garden, and makes of each flower a censer in which holy incense is offered to the King. This fragrance is not something put on from outside, as we might sprinkle scent on an artificial flower; it is the life of Love within, breathing itself out.

Do you think that the King would be pleased with worship, if such there could be, that did not spring from Love? Do you think He would accept the forced obedience of fear, or the gifts of self-interest? No; the King wants no scentless flowers in His Garden for the sake of appearances, but such only as breathe out the sweet fragrance of Love.

But when Worship is the expression and offering of Love; when Obedience is Love hastening to fulfil His lightest wish; when Kindness is Love pouring out its treasures in His service,—this is “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”

And so in its fragrance, as in its beauty, the Rose is a fit symbol of the Love of God, which He plants in the hearts of His children, to be the glory and sweetness of the King’s Garden.

The fragrance of the Rose cannot be separated from its petals; it keeps its sweetness, even in death. To the one who crushes and bruises it, it but yields a Sweeter fragrance, even as Christ, the Rose of Sharon, showed the full strength of His love when “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” Then Love poured itself out, a willing offering, that we might receive it into our hearts, and so be able to offer to God the sweet incense of loving service that would be acceptable to Him.

So each of the King’s Gardens may be to Him “a sweet savour of Christ,” His beloved Son who said: “I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yes, Thy law is within My heart,”—that law which is summed up in the one word, Love.

May the sweet Rose of Sharon which in His heavenly courts

“Unfolds its heartsome bloom,
And fills the air of heaven
With ravishing perfume,”

bloom also in each “little corner” of the King’s Garden on earth, until it shall shed its fragrance over all the wide world.

“O to behold it blossom,
While by its fragrance fanned,
Where glory-glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land.”