

The Gazelles and the Deer

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WRITTEN AT MENTONE

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"By the gazelles, and by the deer of the field." Solomon's **Song 2:7**.

THE spouse was in the full enjoyment of fellowship with her Beloved. Her joy was so great as almost to overpower her and yet so nearly does fear tread upon the heels of joy, she was filled with dread lest her bliss should come to an end. She feared lest others should disturb her Lord, for if He were grieved, she would be grieved, also, and if He departed, the banquet of her delight would be over. She was afraid even of her friends, the daughters of Jerusalem. She knew that the best can interrupt fellowship as well as the worst and, therefore, she entreated even Zion's daughters not to sin against Zion's King. Had they awakened her Beloved and broken His sacred peace, she would not have found a recompense in their company, but would rather have regarded them with scorn for having robbed her of her chief delight.

The entreaty which she used is a choice specimen of Oriental poetry—she charges them, not as we should prosaically do, by everything that is sacred and true—but "by the gazelles, and by the deer of the field." So far as we understand her meaning we will endeavor to profit by it during our brief meditation. It touches one of the most mysterious points of the secret life of the Believer and we shall much need the guidance of the Holy Spirit while we endeavor to open up its meaning. "The gazelles and the deer of the field" are creatures of great BEAUTY. Who can gaze upon them as they wander among the ferns without an inward admiration?

Now, since nothing can be more lovely than communion with Jesus, the spouse exhorts the daughters of Jerusalem, by all the loveliest objects in Nature, to refrain from disturbing it. No one would wish to drive away the gazelle, but would feast his eyes upon it and yet its graceful elegance can never be compared with that beauty of holiness, that comeliness of Grace which is to be seen in fellowship with Jesus! It is beautiful from both

sides! It is a lovely display of condescension for our beloved Lord to reveal Himself to us and, on the other hand, it is a charming manifestation of every admirable virtue for a Believer to enter into fellowship with his Lord. He who would disturb such mutual communion must be devoid of spiritual taste and blind to all which is most worthy of admiration.

As one delights to see the red deer in the open glades of the forest and counts them the finest ornaments of the scene, so do men whose eyes are opened rejoice in the saints whose high communion with Heaven renders them beings of superior mold to common mortals. A soul in communion with its God is the admiration of angels! Was ever a lovelier sight seen than Jesus at the table with the beloved disciple leaning on His bosom? Is not Mary sitting at our Master's feet a picture worthy of the choicest art? Do nothing, then, O you who joy in things of beauty, to mar the fellowship in which the rarest beauty dwells! Neither by worldly care, nor sin, nor trifling, make even the slightest stir which might break the Beloved's repose. His restful Presence is Heaven below and the best foretaste of Heaven above—in it we find everything that is pure, lovely and of good report. It is good and only good! Why, then, O daughters of Jerusalem, should you stir up our Beloved and cause His adorable excellence to be hidden from us? Rather join with us in preserving a joy so fair, a bliss so comely!

The next thought suggested by—"by the gazelles, and by the deer of the field"—is that of TENDER INNOCENCE. These gentle creatures are so harmless, so defenseless, so timid, that he must have a soulless soul who would do them harm or cause them fright. By all, then, that is tender, the spouse beseeches her friends not to disturb her Beloved. He is so good, so kind, so holy, harmless and undefiled that the most indifferent ought to be ashamed to molest His rest! About Him there is nothing to provoke

offense and everything to forbid it. He is a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. Being reviled, He reviled not again, but in His death agonies He prayed for His enemies.

Who, then, could find cause for offense in Him? Do not His wounds ward off the blows which might be challenged had He been of another character? Who will wish to vex the Lamb of God? Go elsewhere, you hunters! "The Gazelle of the morning" has already sweat great drops of blood falling to the ground! When dogs compassed Him and the

assembly of the wicked enclosed Him, He felt the full of grief—will you afflict Him again? In fellowship with Jesus there is a tenderness which ought to disarm all opposition and even command respectful deference! A soul communing with the Son of God challenges no enmity! The world may rise against proselyting zeal, or defiant controversy, or ostentatious ceremonialism—for these have prominence and power and are fair game for martial spirits—but fellowship is quiet, retiring, unobtrusive, harmless.

The saints who most abound in it are of a tender spirit, fearful to offend, non-resistant and patient—surely it would be a superfluity of cruelty to wish to deprive them of their unselfish happiness which deprives no hearer a drop of pleasure and costs no eye a tear! Rather let even those who are most indifferent to religion pay a generous respect to those who find their delight in it. Though the worldling may care nothing for the love which overpowers the Believer's ravished spirit, let him tread with reverent care when he passes the closet of devotion, or hears a stray note from the song of meditative gratitude.

Rough men have paused when they have suddenly come upon a fair gazelle grazing in a secluded spot—they are so charmed at the sight of such tender loveliness, they have scarcely dared to move a foot lest they should alarm the gentle animal! And some such feeling may well forbid the harsh criticism or the vulgar laugh when even the infidel beholds a sincere heart in conversation with its Lord. As for those of us who know the blessedness of fellowship with Jesus, it behooves us to be doubly jealous of our words and deeds, lest in a single instance we offend one of the Redeemer's little ones and cause him to lose, even for an hour, his delight in the Lord! How often are Christians careless about this, till at the sight of some professors the more spiritual may well take alarm and cry out in anguish, "I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the deer of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He pleases."

A third thought most certainly had place in the mind of the anxious spouse. She meant to entreat and persuade her friends to silence by everything which sets forth LOVE. The lilies and the gazelles have always been sacred to love. The poet of the Canticles had elsewhere used the symbol of the text to set forth married love. "Let her be as the loving gazelle and pleasant doe" ([Prov. 5:19](#)). If ever there was true love in all this selfish world, it is the love of Jesus, first, and next the love of His people. As for His love, it passes the love of women—many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. And as for

the love of the Church, He who best knows it says, "How fair is your love, My Sister, My Spouse! How much better is your love than wine! And the smell of your ointment than all spices!"

If love, therefore, may plead immunity from war and ask to have its quietude respected, the spouse used a good argument when she pleaded, "by the gazelles and by the deer of the field," that her royal Bridegroom's rest of love might not be invaded. If you love, or are loved, or wish to be loved, have a reverent regard for those who commune with Jesus, for their souls take their fill of love—and to drive them from their bliss would be inexcusable barbarity! O you who have any hearts to feel for others, do not cause the bitterest sorrow by depriving a sanctified soul of the sweetest of delights! Draw not near here with idle tales, or wanton speech, or empty mirth—the place where you stand is holy ground—for surely God is in that place where a heart, enamored of the altogether Lovely One, delights itself in the

Lord!

O that all Believers were so anxious to retain the enjoyment of Divine love that they would warn off every intruder, whoever he might be! The daughters of Jerusalem were welcome to visit the spouse at fitting times. She, on another occasion, bade them carry a message for her to her Beloved One and gave

them a full description of His surpassing charms. But when her Lord was with her at the banquet, she only asked of them that they would not come between her and the sunshine of His Presence. Nor do we wonder at her jealous fear, for we have had a sip of those sweets which she had tasted and we would sooner lose all else than lose the luxury of Divine Love! It is such joy as cannot be imagined by those who have never partaken of it! It is such joy as can never be rivaled even in the Paradise above, if in that place there is any other joy than that which springs from Divine Love! Let none, then, deprive us of its continued enjoyment. By the sanctities of true love let every friendly mind assist us to preserve the hallowed quiet so essential to communion with our Lord.

Once more, upon the very surface of the figure lies the idea of delicate sensitiveness. The gazelles and the deer of the field soon disappear if anything disturbs them. In this respect they represent the speediness with which the Beloved departs when He is annoyed by sin. He is as a deer or a young gazelle for this quality, among many others, that while He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills, He also soon withdraws

Himself. The Lord our God is a jealous God. In proportion to the fire of love is the heat of jealousy and, therefore, our Lord Jesus will not brook a wandering affection in those greatly beloved ones to whom He manifests Himself.

It needs constant watchfulness to maintain constant fellowship. Hence the spouse entreats and beseeches those who came near her not to give offense to her Lord. They might do this unwittingly, hence she warns them. They might do it in wanton carelessness, hence she "charges" them. She would have them speak softly and move gently, lest He should be disturbed. Should we not feel the same anxiety that nothing in our families, or in any of our relations or connections should be tolerated by us so as to envelope us in the wrong and grieve our Lord? Should we not especially watch every thought of our mind, desire of our heart, word of our tongue and deed of our hand lest any of these should offend Him and break our rapturous communion?

If we would be favored above others we must be more on our guard than others are. He who becomes "a man greatly beloved" must keep his heart with sevenfold diligence, for to whom much is given, of him much will be required. Kings will bear from common subjects behavior which could not be endured in favorites. That which might cause but slight pain from an enemy, will sorely wound if it comes from a friend. Therefore the favored spouse may well use, in her entreaty, the name of the most tenderly susceptible of love's favorites and plead, "by the gazelles, and by the deer of the field."

Dear Friend, do you know what communion with Jesus means? If so, imitate the spouse whenever you are in the enjoyment of it. Be jealous of yourself and all around you, that the Well-Beloved may not be vexed. Aim at the maintenance of life-long communion. Remember how, for centuries, Enoch walked with God—our lives are but a span compared with his—why should we not always come up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved? The Holy Spirit has almighty power. Let us ask and receive, that our joy may be full! If you do not understand this precious secret, may the Lord reveal it to you even now. You must first receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, or you can never know Him as your Bridegroom. Faith must trust Him before love can embrace Him.

You must be brought to be washed, or you can never be brought to be banqueted. Pant after the Redeemer as the deer pants after the water brooks and when you have drank of the Water of Life, then shall you be as a gazelle let loose! Then, too, your feet shall be like deer's' feet and you shall be set upon your high places. When this shall have been made

your own by experience, you shall understand the text and shall also breathe the prayer of another verse of the same song—"Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a gazelle or young stag upon the mountains of spices."