

ADVANTAGES

AND DISADVANTAGES

MARRIED STATE
OF THE

Married State,

AS ENTERED INTO WITH

Religious or Irreligious Persons.

DELIVERED UNDER

THE SIMILITUDE OF A DREAM.

Improved and amended.

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THE
ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES
OF THE
MARRIED STATE.

AS I walked through the wilderness of this world, I laid me down to sleep; and fancied myself travelling to the City of old Babylon, where I was much amazed in viewing the curiosities of the place; as the Tower, the Wall, the Gates, the Streets, the Palace, the River, the Images in the plain of Dura, &c. I observed the City, and it appeared in different views. In one part, the people were entirely taken up in revellings, feasting, diversions, splendid appearances and enjoying themselves. In the other, they were more reserved, and were much taken up in a demure dress and behaviour, in the decency of their houses and streets, in the regularity of their towers and fortifications, &c. but without any appearance of danger, they seemed entirely at ease. Howbeit, when I had satiated myself with gazing at the particular shows, I thought to take a prospect of the whole city together. So I walked to a rising ground a little retired from the crowd, where I saw a booth, which I took to be built on purpose, for the conveniency of taking pros-

pects, and went directly to it; and at the door I saw an old man, of whom I enquired, if he had ever a prospect glass, whereby I might be favoured with a full view of the royal City, which I supposed to be the metropolis of the world. He told me, if I pleased to take deliberate observation, I might perhaps have different apprehensions of that splendid City, than I had at present; but he assured me, it was so full of intestine perplexity, that the inhabitants had no real satisfaction in themselves. He therefore then fetched out his prospective, and told me, if I pleased he would shew me the situation of the place, whereby I might be convinced, that its condition was not so happy, nor its glory so majestic as I imagined.

So I took a distinct view of the south side, and the foundation appeared to be nothing but bogs and quick-sands, which could not possibly sustain the buildings, but ere long they must inevitably sink.

I again took a view of the north side, and the foundation was all bituminous and sulphureous matter, interspersed with subterraneous fire, which appeared ready in a moment to break forth in flames!

He then bid me look to the east, and I saw a very formidable army approaching the City, with full power to destroy it; and they spread themselves with fury, like

the roaring of the sea! and there was a trembling upon all the hills, rivers, trees, and fields; but all the inhabitants of the City continued in a stupification!

When I had deliberated on these things, it filled me with astonishment, such as caused my bowels to turn within me. Such was my surprise, and the horror that seized me, that I thought I was neither able to bear the sight, fly from it, nor stand my ground!

I asked the old man, if I might lodge all night in that booth? but he told me, it was not a place for lodging, nor would any person in his right mind think it safe to sleep so near the City; yet, if I pleased, I might come in and rest myself a little.

When I entered, I found four young men, brethren, very carefully perusing a map, making very particular remarks and observations, and would sometimes enquire the old man's judgment, to inform them of the meaning of some things.

Hereupon I asked what place it was that so much attracted their attention; They told me, it was the map of Babylon and Canaan, with all the bounds between the two places; and being determined to leave their native country, and travel to the latter place, was the reason of their present enquiries.

So I observed, and they all made prepa-

rations, with vigorous resolution, for their journey. And amongst other consultations with the old man, their instructor, they earnestly craved his advice. Whether it were expedient for each of them to take along with him a female companion? which he very cheerfully encouraged them to do, provided they were such as were disposed to go the same way, and had their hearts engaged to seek the same country. Otherwise, he admonished them, by all means, to avoid such companions as had no knowledge of, or delight in the way they designed to travel. He pointed out to them many difficulties in the way, where the company of strangers would be of very dangerous consequences; and further informed them of many instances, what bad effects travellers, who had formerly gone that way, had found from disagreeable companions: to prevent which inconveniences, the king of the country had made a law, that none of his subjects should join with strangers, to be companions in that journey.

I waited to see what influence this advice would have upon the minds of these young men. But I observed, that, at the first, none of them seemed to relish his counsel; for they had all either contracted some acquaintance with, or placed their fancy upon, maids who were natives of Babylon. But the more they appeared engaged in

their affections, the more their instructor insisted on the danger and pernicious consequences which would attend their having such companions; and withal told them, the king had appointed one to attend them in their journey, whose name was Self-denial, without whose company, it would be impossible ever to reach the borders of Canaan; and that to choose a stranger for a companion, would be such an insult to him at the first setting out, as might cause a misunderstanding all the way. For his part, he told them, that to pretend to travel to Canaan, and to choose a Babylonian for a companion, was a contradiction; that he could not doubt the sincerity of their hearts, for if it was possible for a sincere traveller to choose such a companion, yet he was very certain, it could not be so long as they continued in the right use of their reason; and he must discharge his conscience in giving them timely admonition.

I observed the event of those consultations, and I found the oldest, whose name was Theomachus, could not be moved by all these arguments, but absolutely chose one who was an utter stranger to the path, nor had any delight therein, nor desire thereto. And when he had covenanted with her, she proved so averse to going along with him, and so reluctant to pursuing his intended journey, that she prevailed upon him to de-

sist from his purpose; so he settled with her in Babylon. And poor Theoniacus, with his companion, were both there when the City was destroyed, and perished in the ruins!

But the second brother, whose name was Negotio, more regarded the counsel given him, and seemed more heedful in his choice of a companion that would be willing to go along with him; so, at last, he met with one who appeared compliable to his desire. Though she had no knowledge of the way, nor desire to walk in it, it only seemed a matter indifferent, as he was inclined to undertake the journey, she would condescend to compliment him with her company. This pleased the young man well, as he thought he would both gratify himself in the choice of a companion, and also act conformable to his directions: but he did not consider, that while her mind was possessed with such indifference, her company must be very unprofitable. However they joined hands and she complimented him with her company. So they set out together, as if they would proceed on the journey; but her indifferent mind soon prevailed so as to cool his warm affections, and caused their advances to be very slow. I observed, when Imac Lomb heard of his friend Negotio joining hands with a Babylonian, as he passed by his door, he wrote

upon it, *Ichabod*.—As they travelled, they would frequently sit down in the shade, divert themselves with trifles, and often turn aside, which made their progress very small; and this indolence prevailed more and more, until they came to a low valley by the brink of the river Euphrates, where they turned aside and fell asleep; and while they slept, there arose a swell in the river, and the flood swept them both away.

As for the third, whose name was Euphemius, when he heard the admonitions, they made deep impressions upon his mind, and filled him with awful apprehensions; he was convinced of the pernicious consequences which would attend such company, and appeared solicitous to avoid them; but how it was, I have now forgot, whether, before these considerations, he had contracted a correspondence, or whether afterwards, by dalliance and giving latitude to his fancy, he forgot himself, and was entangled with a daughter of the Chaldees, which, betwixt the instructions he had received, and his own misguarded affections, caused some strugglings of his mind: for the person was of a complaisant disposition, nor seemed at all reluctant to the things he had in view. Yet he plainly perceived, she had no taste to them, and that her innate disposition was more to Babylon than Canaan; she had never been convinced of the

misery and ruin that was approaching her native country nor yet acquainted with the pleasures and delights of the land which he was seeking after, nor had any desire to the way; but his strong inclination stimulated him to reason upon every thing in the most advantageous light, and to put the best constructions upon every circumstance; as thus, that her complaisance was such, that she would be no hinderance or molestation to him; that, by his example, he might engage her mind to that which she had no inclination to at present; that it was very hard to be prohibited from one who, in all other respects, appeared so desirable; and that, probably, he might never find a companion complete in every point. In short, he persisted in these kinds of reasonings, until he had almost stupified his senses; but still could not free himself from convincing and dreadful apprehensions of the evil of taking so indirect a step, and the inconveniences which would attend it, until, at length, a resolute passion prevailed so far, that his eyes were darkened that he scarce perceived the day from the night; and during this obstruction of his senses, he went one evening, after the sun was gone down, and joined hands with this Babylonian; but when the sun arose in the morning, and he was a little come to himself, he then became sensible of the

rashness of his adventure, but it was too late to recall it. He now saw into what snares he had brought himself, in what difficulties he was involved, and what incommodities must attend his journey; and that now he had no way left, but to make the best he could of the matter, and to grapple with it as well as it should please God to enable him.

So, after some bitter reflections, he endeavoured to smother his grief, and betake himself to his journey; exerting his utmost skill and power to take his companion along with him: But, alas! when he attempted to lead her into the way, he found she had not feet, she could not move a step further than he must carry her, and a heavy burthen she proved. I observed some of his travel: When he met with dangers, distresses, or disappointments, he would begin to expose his grief, and unbosom his mind to his companion; but she had no ears, no understanding, nor heart to sympathize with him, nor was she capable of knowing the nature of his complaint. If he was beset with robbers, wild beasts, or serpents, &c. he would sometimes make his complaint to her; but she could neither assist nor comfort him. If he wanted directions in the way, she could not give him any counsel: If he was sick or wounded, and wanted cordials or oil to his wounds, she

had no hands to administer any relief; and as she never was capable of yielding him any succour or comfort in his sufferings, neither was she ever capable of partaking of his enjoyments. If he met with any garden of spices, or refreshing springs, by the way, he would offer her to eat and drink with him; but she had no taste; if he found sweet flowers, she had no smell, and could have no delight in them; if he had any delightful prospects, he would endeavour to shew them to his companion; but she had no eyes; if he met with any fellow travellers, he would invite her to enjoy their company; but she was never found with any person who spoke the language of Canaan, for it was a language that she had not learned. Thus, whatever grief befel him, or whatever enjoyment he was favoured with, in all his journey, he never found any sympathy or congratulation from her, nor were her affections otherwise moved than sometimes to despise, and sometimes to shew disgust and disturbance of mind: but as she had no life, capacity, sense, nor activity, to walk in the chosen path, she had so much the more vivacity in things pertaining to her own element; so that, to draw him aside, she would discover such a sprightliness in all her senses, be so pleasant and diverting, and in all her conversations so engaging, that she proved a very great

hinderance to him in his journey; for tho' it was not in his power to find any thing, in his way, that would divert or influence her mind, yet she frequently found out something, in her own path, which did divert, and insensibly draw away his heart, by which he was many times entangled, and laden as with thick clay. Another thing I observed, that after he had begun his journey, the King of Israel (whose subject he was) sent them some young lambs to feed, with a strict charge to teach them diligently in the way, and bring them up in his nurture and admonition. But the performance of this command was rendered impracticable; for, as he instructed them to go right, she induced them to wander; as he endeavoured to gather them, she scattered them; and as he fed them with wholesome food, she would surfeit them with poisonous herbs: so, which way the King disposed of them afterwards, I never knew, but they never prospered under his care. Thus, her company never yielded him the least benefit or assistance through his whole journey, but was an alloy to all his joys, and an aggravation to all his sorrows: And it frequently caused him very much regret of mind, to think of his own unadvised engagement, and bitter reflections on his neglect of duty, wandering and lost time which it had been the occasion of,

as well as to observe the wretched stupification of her mind, which was incapable of sharing his enjoyments, or of being affected with any of his calamities; in so much that it turned his pleasant journey into a wearisome travel, through a lousome wilderness. But, at last, through many dull hours and tiresome steps, he arrived near the borders of the land, upon the bank of the river Jordan, where, in the middle of the stream, he beheld a Man, in a rich priestly vesture, standing to stop the torrent till he was passed over, which made him approach the river exceedingly transported with joy! Yet even here, he could not refrain from sighing, when he found it was not possible for his companion to go with him one step further; but the glory of this Prince, now in view, and the joy of approaching the promised land, soon revived his spirits, and made him with readiness leave her to pass the river, (See Psalm xxiii.) Here his burthens dropped off, and all his clogs were left behind; he went on with fresh spirits and vigour, and cheerfulness in his countenance, as if all things were forgotten, but the joy that was before him. But as he was taking some of his last steps, just ready to set his feet on Canaan's shore, he looked behind him, and saw her sitting upon the sand, and beheld the river returning with such an overflow, as carried her along the

rapid stream into the Dead Sea. (Matth. vii. 27.)

As for the last, whose name was Curino, when he had heard the instructions and admonitions, it wrought serious reflections on his mind, and made him very deliberate, notwithstanding he was a person of a bright genius, great vivacity, and a fine taste, he determined to deny himself; so, as when he saw the beauty, graceful mien, and heard the courteous conversation of the Babylonish maids, he would withdraw, and turn away his eyes, lest his heart should be ensnared. (See Psalm cxix- 37.) However, it sometimes fell in his way to have conversation with some who appeared very engaging, especially one Jemima, whose person, birth, circumstances, and accomplishments, rendered her extremely agreeable; inasmuch, that many of his acquaintances greatly encouraged him to pursue the opportunity, and not neglect so valuable a prize. This made him stagger a little, for indeed she wanted no accomplishment; but the language of Canaan, to make her just such an one as his heart could wish, and caused him to reason in his mind as follows.

Q. Can I expect to find a person more desirable, or one more likely to be a happy companion and help-meet?

A. She may prove so, to a person who can be conformable to stay with her in Babylon, but

as I am bound to another country, I may find bitterness in that which would appear happiness to another.

Q. But have I not reason to hope, that a person of her refined qualities may be endued with such blessings, as to make a suitable companion for me in my journey?

A. A person may be accomplished with all the excellencies of Babylon, so as to appear superior to many of the citizens, but if these be only the accomplishments of their own country, they can only make a gradual difference between them and the most abject peasant, whereas there is a specific difference between a Babylonian and Israelite.

Q. But is it not very censorious, to look upon such a worthy person as no better than a mere Babylonian?

A. Inasmuch as the difference is so great, that a Babylonian cannot become a subject of the King of Israel unless he be formed anew, we cannot esteem them any other, so long as there does not appear the specific features of the select Nation. (See John v. 19, and iii. 3.) the idiom of their language, the mien of their behaviour, nor yet an earnest enquiry after the desired land (Mat. viii. 20) for we are not to form our conception of them different from the description given by the King's scribes, (Prophets and Apostles.)

Q. Is it not exceeding hard, that I must deny myself an object so agreeable?

A. The King of Glory denies nothing that is good; therefore, if this was really good, it would not be denied me; he only denies those things which he knows would be evil, and it is a real kindness to us, to be denied of them. But suppose I thought it a real good, is it hard that he should deny me one favour, who has given himself to me, with all the blessings in heaven and earth?

Q. What if I never find one so agreeable, who travels the happy road?

A. If I had the object now before me, my happiness must entirely depend on the blessing of God; and have I not reason to expect a blessing on the right way than on the wrong? Besides, as nothing is withheld or denied but because it is evil, whatever God is pleased to bestow in his own way must be agreeable?

Q. May not the valuable qualifications attending this person be so blessed, as to be a mean to make me happy and useful in the way, though she walks not in it herself?

A. Have I any reason to expect to be made happy by a person who is an utter stranger to those things wherein my happiness consists? Or can I expect to find usefulness in the way, from that which cannot be enjoyed or obtained without going out of the way? Besides, what qualification she is endued with, or however valuable accomplishments she is possessed of, it never will be her inclination to employ those excellencies

to assist others in a way she herself hath no delight in, (Psalm lxxxiv. 12.)

Q. But seeing her disposition is so agreeable and complaisant, her mind so well qualified with natural virtues, and decorated with so many acquired ornaments, is there any reason to doubt, but that a person thus prepared, will have a taste for learning and embracing the best things; and may I not therefore expect to engage her mind to walk the blessed way?

A. All the accomplishments that a person can possibly receive from Babylon can never prepare, qualify, nor dispose them for travelling to Canaan, nor will they, by any means, induce or incline any person to receive the real knowledge or love of that country; for there is nothing in the nature of a Babylonian, without the infusion of new principles, that is capable of relishing the things of Canaan, (1 Cor. ii. 14.) but the more excellent her accomplishments are, the more strongly her mind will be cemented to that climate whence she received them. And on the other hand, as I formerly was a Babylonian, though now blessed with new principles, the old tincture still remains in my nature, which, like so much tinder, is ready to kindle with Babylonish fire; wherefore, the greater excellencies she is accomplished with, the greater influence she will have to draw me into perpetual danger of departing from the living God. (Matth. xxvi. 41.)

When he had thus reasoned with himself, he made a full pause, appeared in a strong agitation of mind, and a paleness arose in his face. I heard him sigh, and say to himself, 'Whither has my mind been roving!' Then, trembling, he lift up his eyes to heaven, and earnestly cried, 'O God of all grace, deliver me from temptation.'— And from that time, he never would regard any of the damsels of the city, but said, he would wait until he should find a true companion, and till then, he would walk alone. So he went on his way, rejoicing that he had escaped the snare, and carrying along with him this motto, *The Lord is my portion*; enjoying great satisfaction in his mind, saying to himself, 'If my King see it good for me to be alone, I know he will bless that state unto me; but if it be for my good to enjoy a companion, I know his goodness will provide one for me, without my going out of the way to find one.'

But as he was going on his way, he observed Miranda, a young virgin, who was walking the same road, and began to be favoured with her company, but thought it advisable to be very deliberate, (Prov. iv. 26.) He observed whether she closely attended to the right way: so he perceived her taking something out of her bosom, diligently perusing it for a while, then put it into her bosom again, and pursue the

straight path: Whereupon he went up to her, and enquired where she was going? She told him, to Zion.—He asked her what she had been perusing? She shewed him; it was the Map of the Road, (viz. the BIBLE,) which she took along with her for her guide. He then began to enquire who she was, and whence she came? She told him, she was by birth a Chaldean, by education and conversation a Babylonian, but was now seeking a better country.—He asked what expectation or encouragement she had in taking such a journey? She told him, she had the King's Word, (Heb. vi. 17.) to make her an inhabitant in his Royal Palace, when she arrived at the Upper Bethel, (Rev. xxi. 24. ; Isaiah xxxiii. 16.) and to grant her sufficient defence and sustenance all the way thither.—He asked, if she could be fully satisfied in the King's veracity? She told him, the frauds and jealousies of Babylon had made some impressions on her mind; that she had found it very difficult to believe Him that could not lie, but His MAJESTY had condescended to give her the strongest demonstrations of his fidelity; so that now she was convinced she had no reason to doubt his goodness; for he had confirmed his promise with an oath, and had given her to see that, in his own records, it was sealed with blood; that hitherto she had

found his word verified to her, in strongly defending and abundantly supplying her wants, so that she could set to her seal that he was true. Then she also asked him divers questions relating to his travels and enjoyments, and he likewise answered her in a free and satisfactory manner, so that their affections began to warm towards one another.

It was a very comfortable interview, and their minds were refreshed with each others' conversation.—They appeared so agreeable one to another, that he began to think they might be pleasant and profitable companions all the way; but first, he retired to deliberate on the conversation that had already passed; when the more he thought of her diligence in the pursuit of her journey, her fixed satisfaction concerning the end of it, her understanding in these things, laid down for the guiding her in the way, and the delight she appeared to take in meditating on, and conversing about the joys of the City of Habitation, &c. the more he was satisfied that she was a Prince's daughter, travelling to the Royal Palace: And when he had lifted up his eyes to Heaven, and earnestly besought God for direction, and a blessing upon their further conversation, he again came into her company. After some further discourse, he asked her the reason of her walking alone? She told

him, she found but few travelling the same road, and she did not think it expedient to turn aside, or neglect her way, for any company in the world, if she met with company, such as delighted in the ways of wisdom, she took pleasure therein, for with such company she was refreshed and strengthened in her journey; but otherwise, she chose rather to be alone, to divert herself in examining her map, viewing the springs by the way, fruit-trees, sweet flowers, hearing the singing of birds (Solomon's Song, ii. 12.) meditating upon the glories of her Prince, and the joys she should have in his presence, &c. (Isaiah xxxiii. 17.) So that tho' company was pleasant, when she could enjoy it, the delights in the way (Isa. xii. 8. Solomon's Song, xi. 4.—v. 1.) supplied that want; and upon the whole, she neither was anxious to have company, nor had any aversion against it, her design being to enjoy that only which might be most conducive to forward her in the way.

He then proposed, that since they had found each other's conversation comfortable and useful, it might be for their mutual advantage to join together, and engage to keep company all the way. She told him, it was not for persons of their profession to do any thing rashly, she would deliberate on it: so she retired, and prostrated herself before the King her father, (Phil. iv. 26.) telling him the matter, imploring wisdom

to direct, declaring herself willing to enjoy or be denied any thing, so it were according to his will, and might be for his honour. He told her, she had already been informed and well knew, what manner of persons they must be, with whom it would be expedient for Kings' daughters to keep company; but if she found the person to be of the blood-royal, (Rev. i. 6.) and endued with princely qualities, she was at her full liberty; and moreover, by him, it should be esteemed honourable, (Heb. xii. 4.) So, when these two lovers met again; having deliberately consulted between themselves all such things as they conceived necessary relating to such an engagement, considering the King's statutes thereupon, and jointly petitioned his Majesty's presence with them, and his blessing on their undertaking, they joined hands with great satisfaction and serenity of mind, rejoicing to see themselves preserved from so many snares, and thus happily united by a divine hand, (Gen. ii. 4.)

I then observed these happy companions pushing their journey, and saw verified in an ancient council (a help-meet,) for they were sincere friends, pleasant companions, faithful partners, and useful assistants to each other. If they met with difficulties by the way, they would take each other by the hand to support them, (Eccles. iv. 10. 12.) in dangers, they would counsel and

stand by one another; in sorrows they would sympathise and comfort one another; if beset with enemies, one would watch while the other slept; if one were sick, the other would comfort with cordials, (Col. iii. 2.) if one were indisposed in mind, the other would divert with some sweet song, or discourse concerning the pleasant land; if one were at a loss concerning any part of the way, the other would assist in searching and explaining the directions; if one were ready to turn aside, the other would caution and admonish of the danger: if one were employed in any service, the other would be ready to assist therein; if one found a refreshing spring by the way, would call the other to come and drink; if one found any refreshing fruit, sweet spices, or delightful flowers, would pluck and bring to the other; if one heard any joyful tidings, would come rejoicing and tell the other, if one had any pleasant prospects of the kingdom, would endeavour to shew them to the other; if one was blessed with any special favours, the other would congratulate and rejoice on the occasion, &c. (Eccles. iv. 9.)

Then I was convinced, that *two are better than one*; and yet it was manifest that they were no more twain, for I knew not whether to call them two souls dwelling in one body, or one soul inhabiting two bodies: but it appeared very conspicuous, that *two were become one*.

So I still observed this truly united pair (Mark x. 8.) advancing in the way, for they greatly contributed to help each other forward; many difficulties they surmounted, and many rich blessings they enjoyed, as they travelled in the way; at last they arrived at a pleasant hill in view of the Land of Promise, full of delights, refreshing fruits, pure streams, and desirable entertainments. Here they first sat down, and rested in a delightful arbour, blessing God, and congratulating one another, in consideration of their enjoyment. Then they went and refreshed themselves among the fruits and fountains, and afterwards they ascended to a tower, where was a large prospective glass, from whence they looked back upon Babylon, and saw it all in flames, and the country turned to burning pitch. Then they gave praise and glory to God for their wonderful deliverance they had in the way. Then they took a prospect of the land before them, and saw Jerusalem, the Royal Palace, the goodly Mountain of Lebanon, the clusters of Eshcol, and all the rivers flowing with milk, and the hills dropping down sweet wine? Then they looked below to the streams of Jordan, and beheld the great High Priest, in his shining robes, waiting to carry them over, Psalm xxiii. 4. Isa. xxxiii. 21. Rev. xix. 8. But I awoke, and behold it was a Dream.

But the thing was CERTAIN, and the interpretation thereof SURE.

FINIS.