

LUTHERVILLE, GA., }
March 31st, 1870. }

DEAR BROTHER BODENHAMER:—
Through a private letter, Sister D. L. Hitchcock, of Eatonton, Ga., has requested my views, through the Landmarks, on 2nd Kings 4 : 26, or this much of it, "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, it is well." I therefore send you the following, submitted, of course, to your better judgment.

In the scriptures of the Old Testament, persons, generally of the same family, represent principle, constituting a christian under the law of the New; as Ishmael and Isaac represent the old and new man, or the carnal and spiritual minds. In the subject before us, the Shunammite woman, I think, represents works, and her husband faith. The apostle in 1st Corinthians and 11th chapter, makes husband and wife represent faith and works; responded to by the metaphor of Boaz and Ruth in the Old Testament. The marriage ceremony, a figure of baptism or public ceremony and profession of Christ, and admittance into a new state and relation from which they arise, in the likeness of the burial and resurrection to newness of life. "Marriage is honorable," and the offspring legitimate, because lawful. We honor Christ when we put Him on by public profession; and not till then is our faith counted living, nor can works find affinity with the Spirit and be recognized as spiritual, because works we know, abstractly, are not spiritual, however, according to the strict letter of the law, until joined to, as one with faith, even as the body or bride of Christ is by marriage, one with Him, and hence is called by the seemingly paradoxical phrase, a spiritual body," in the right of her spiritual Lord and Husband. So faith is the spiritual head and husband of work. Hence the figure of the Shunammite and her husband.

This Shunammite "was a great woman" (13 verse) in the character of good works, having given all diligence to add to the blessing (of faith) her husband, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness and brotherly kindness and charity; demonstrated by her kindness to the man of God, who is a figure of the Holy Spirit. This man was in the habit of calling at her house, whom she gladly received and entertained; she rather solicited or encouraged the en-

grafted word, and quenched not the Spirit, made him a little chamber on the wall. Common visitors might share the common hall or chamber of the house or heart, but a private, secret recess of soul was kept sacred to the Prophet of God; it was his little chamber. How sacred to us is the visitation and entertainment of the Spirit? Time and place are held sacred and kept secret from unhallowed feet, and profane curiosity and from being meddled with by strangers. Her husband consented to the little room, and their work was considered by the Prophet "unto holiness," (Rom. 6 : 22) and being justified by (faith) her husband, she had peace with God—had nothing to ask of the king, but dwelt among her own people, or kindred in heavenly principles (12th) and was contented and patient. But the Lord has said, such "shall neither be barren nor unfruitful." 2nd Pet. 1 : 8. So she embraced a son—a figure of hope—the "promise of the Spirit through faith." Gal. 3 : 4. The germ of hope was already then in weakness, but "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." Rom. 1 : 17. And "faith wrought with works and by works was made perfect." James 2 : 23. Faith begets the living hope, and "the flesh rests in hope." No doubt but the woman dearly loved and prized this son, and rejoiced in him, as she daily saw him wax stronger and stronger. Rom. 5 : 3. But every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit.—John 15 : 2, that he may perfect that which is lacking. This (3 : 10) in some point of faith or practical godliness "for the furtherance and joy of faith," Phil. 3 : 25, for the trial also of faith, James 1 : 3, which trial is more precious than gold and the end salvation, that it might be in God.—1st Peter 1 : 21. To this end, the husband went to the harvest field and the child followed—when faith leaves us, hope is sure to follow—how desolate and wretched we are then. The furnace whereunto we are appointed is heating. Harvest time is a hot season, and the burning rays fell upon the head of the child. The father, seemingly indifferent, goes not home with him, but sends him to his mother sick. Oh the poignant grief! Who knows it but those who have seen and felt their hope in God dwindling, fading, dying? At noon, when the furnace is hottest, he dies. The mother now enters her greatest extremity of

anguish and despair. She remembers the little chamber of the man of God, and with silent unutterable sorrow, she there enters and lays her dead upon the bed and shuts the door. So with us, when faith is absent, and has seemingly forsaken us in distress, and when our hope is dead before us.—Noise and outburst of lamentation is not heard; our grief is too deep for words, for that dearer than life has expired; our lost treasure is too sacred, to be paraded before human eyes; so we shut the door upon it, in the most hidden place of the soul, and even smile on those around, while our heart is rent and bleeding. Then she called unto her husband for help, for in the emergency she wished to hasten to the man of God; she wished to go by the sanction and in the authority of her husband. He, still indifferent to her distress, rather expostulated, as it was neither new moon nor Sabbath; but she persisted and said "it shall be well," and went forward in great haste to the man of God. Gehazi met her and used the words of the subject; "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered It is well," and passed on to whom she alone sought and caught him by the feet, she had no wants here. Gehazi essayed to thrust her aside, but the man of God said "let her alone for her soul is vexed within her." She then freely poured out her complaint to him—"Did I desire a son of thee? said I not, do not deceive me?" I believe there are but few christians who enter the furnace of trial, while heated seven times hotter than usual; but where it is the portion of one to be thus tried, they understand this Shunammite here.—Faith is absent, Hope is dead, they have remained quiet and inactive until the last breath is gone; oh then how we call unto faith; how we go in haste on the wings of prayer, to God. We meet Gehazi, the law, on the way, and he enquires of us, as one with faith and hope, and as one with these, remembering that our afflictions are deserved of God, and that He in faithfulness, afflicts us, Psal. 119 : 75, and that just and true are his ways, Rev. 15 : 3, that justice and judgment are the habitations of His throne, and that He perverts not His throne, Job 8 : 3, and thus regarding justice, we answer truthfully and conscientiously "It is well." But law in justice, is not the object sought, but God in mercy. And though jus-

tice may essay to thrust us aside from the feet of mercy, he shall be rebuked by the God who is pitiful and of tender mercy to a contrite and broken heart. And the more closely will we cling then to his feet and cry: "Deal with thy servants," not according to justice, but "according to thy mercy," "let thy tender mercies come unto me," have mercy on the afflicted; said I not unto thee, let me be not deceived, and if deceived to undeceive me; thou didst make me to hope, Psal. 22 : 19, and shall I taste of the powers of the world to come, that I may but know its preciousness, and then be banished forever. Where is now my hope? Job 17 : 15, removed; Job 19 : 10, perished; Lam. 3 : 18, yet in thy mercy "there is hope of a tree if it be cut down," Job 14 : 7, and as the Lord God liveth, and Jesus a mediator and merciful High Priest, "I will not leave thee, but trust thee though thou slay me."

Then the man of God arose and followed her—Gehazi went before, but he could put neither voice nor hearing in the child. The man of God could. The child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes; and he said to the woman take up thy son. She fell at his feet, and bowed down herself to the ground, and took up her son. And thus by the seven attributes of God, he is bound to hear the prayer that pleads for Jesus' sake, to behold the righteous and open his ears to their prayers. 1st Peter 3 : 12. "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble." Psal. 9 : 12. The "Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted." Psal. 140 : 12. And will gather her that He has afflicted. Mic. 4 : 6. The humble shall see this and be glad. Psal. 69 : 32, and shall, like the Shunammite, fall at His feet, and be humbled to the ground; and like Peter cry in joy. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope."

I now leave the subject, hoping my dear bereaved Sister may soon verify that the promises of the Lord are exceeding great and precious. God will have mercy on the afflicted. Is. 49 : 13.

Yours in love and fellowship,

E. ANNA PHILLIPS.

P. S. Will all others who have requested my views through the Landmarks have patience. If the Lord gives me strength of body and light, I will try to comply.