

each other a considerable time before the marriage was consummated, and whilst in this state, they were subject very much to the same laws which were applicable to persons actually married.

When the angel appeared to Mary, probably with such circumstances of celestial splendor, as revealed at once to her, his true character, he addressed her in these words, "Hail! Thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." *Hail* was just an ordinary term of salutation among the ancients, and was an expression of good wishes. It means peace and joy be to thee. Our Saviour uses the very same form of salutation to the women, to whom he manifested himself as they were returning from the sepulchre, after his resurrection. The expression—Thou art highly favoured, or as the Romanists translate it, full of grace, does not mean any self-produced holiness, or excellence in Mary, but only her election by grace. No doubt Mary was adorned with the beauty of holiness, to a greater degree perhaps, than any of our race; but the word here employed leads us to believe that this holy beauty, this moral loveliness, was conferred on her by God, and not wrought out by her own exertions. Some interpret the expression—"The Lord is with thee,"—the Lord *be* with thee, still in the form of a good wish, and as more consistent with the nature of a salutation. As there is no word in the original corresponding to *is*, this is allowable. It appears to me, however, that our interpreters are right in interpreting this as a direct affirmation. It states the ground of her favour; and the expression is the same, as that employed by the angel in addressing Gideon, "The Lord is with thee thou mighty man of valour." The expression—"Blessed art thou among women,"—has commonly been understood to mean, "Thou art favoured beyond all others." One para-

phrases it, "Thou shalt be accounted, through all generations, the happiest of women that ever lived upon earth." But though there can be no doubt that Mary was the most highly favoured of women, it does not appear to me that the words necessarily imply this. There is a still stronger expression of a similar kind, applied to Jael in the song of Deborah—"Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be. Blessed shall she be above women in the tent."

I have been thus minute, in explaining the address of the angel to Mary, in order to show that it partakes nothing of the nature of adoration, or of the form of a prayer; but that it is just such an address, as a superior might make to an inferior.—And yet this address has been converted into a prayer, or office of devotion to Mary by the idolatrous Romanists. It is well known that the famous 'prayer to the Virgin—*Ave Maria*, or *Hail, Mary*, is used by the more bigoted papists, more frequently than any other; perhaps I might say, more frequently than all others put together. It just consists of the angelic salutation, which we are now considering, with a short, but very important addition; and is in these words—"Hail Mary, full of grace! the Lord is with thee; Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary! mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of our death. Amen." Just let us bear in mind, that these words, I mean those employed by the angel, were addressed to Mary, by one of the greatest of created beings, when he came to make to her an important communication from heaven, and the absurdity and blasphemy of employing then, as a prayer, must be at once apparent. It is one of the most dangerous characteristics of Romanism, because most likely to strike and impose upon the superficial that its worst practices are founded