



“THEY TOOK THEIR LAMPS.”

It appears from this and the whole narrative that the Jewish nuptial processions took place by night, and by the light of torches or lamps. This is still the prevailing custom in the East, and was in ancient times the same also among the Greeks and Romans. Homer describes (*Iliad* xviii.)

“Rites matrimonial solemnized with pomp
Of sumptuous banquets. Forth they led their brides
Each from her chamber, and along the streets
With torches usher’d them, and with the voice
Of hymenal song, heard all around,
Here striplings danc’d in circles to the sound
Of pipe and harp, while in the portals stood
Women, admiring, all, the gallant show.”

COWPER.

In this there is scarcely any thing which may not be traced in the Jewish ceremonies; even the “striplings dancing to the sound of pipe and harp,” illustrates Luke vii. 32, where the children crying to each other in the market place “We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced,” are generally supposed to allude to the rejoicing nuptial procession. As to the lamps or torches used on such occasions, the Rabbis indicate their form as similar to those used by the “Ishmaelites” or Arabians, and which are thus mentioned by Jarchi:—“It was the custom in the land of Ishmael to bring the bride from the house of her father to that of her husband, in the night time: and there were about ten staves, upon the top of each of which was a brazen dish, containing rags, oil, and pitch, and this being kindled formed blazing torches, which were carried before the bride.” These are just the same torches which are still employed on similar occasions by the people of Arabia and Egypt.