

### The Highland Shepherd.

Among the "comfortable words" of Scripture probably none have a securer lodgement in the heart than those of the twenty-third psalm. To conceive of Jehovah as a Shepherd was most natural for a Hebrew poet. The concept fitted into the life of the people in a remarkable way. Many of them had flocks, as had their fathers before them. They knew all the peculiar characteristics of sheep—their innocence, helplessness of the special needs, as well as their inclination to go astray and to turn everyone to his own way. They knew also what patience was required of the shepherd, what tender solicitude, wisdom, and devotion. When the psalmist, therefore, sang of Jehovah as a Shepherd, who would not permit his sheep to want, but would lead them into green pastures and beside quiet waters, there was an eager response in their hearts. And all down the years these words have been read and pondered by men and women who gratefully relate themselves to Jehovah as sheep to a shepherd, conscious at once of his willingness to succor them, and of their need of his sympathy and loving care.

To some the acknowledgement of such a relation may seem to be a confession of weakness and yielding to the sway of mere sentiment. But those who have felt the absolute need of soul succor, and have experienced the inability of even the sweetest and kindest human sympathy to satisfy that profound need, will declare that it is infinitely more than sentiment that thus induces them to seek the shepherdly influences of Jehovah.

The relation of shepherd and sheep implies dependence of the latter upon the former, and complete and constant obedience. The sheep "shall not want" only as it obeys the voice and follows the lead of the shepherd. There are no green pastures or still waters for the erring sheep. Obedience to the Shepherd brings its own rich and sure reward.

The story is told of an American woman who, in her travel in Scotland, met a Highland shepherd. She saw him lead his flock day by day to green pastures, and noticed that he cared for his sheep as tenderly as though they were children, often speaking to this one and that, calling after one who might be straying from the flock, consoling another that had met with some mishap, and in every way discharging with loving fidelity the various duties of his position. But the visitor noted that the shepherd always carried a young sheep in his arms, and she asked him one day why he did so.

"Is that sheep sick, that you carry it every day in your arms?" she asked.

"Well, yes," said the shepherd. "That is, you see its leg is broken."

"That's very bad. How did it happen to get broken?"

"I broke it."

"You did? How cruel! How could you do such a thing?"

"Well, you see," said the shepherd, "it was like this. That sheep was a wilful, disobedient, and rebellious creature. She would not listen to or heed my voice. She would run off from the flock all by herself, or lead a few others off with her into dangerous places. She would not be content to feed where I led the flock, but sought out feeding places of her own, where the brambles grew and the grass was poor and perils lurked. Ah, she was a wilful lass and her example to the flock was bad. And so to save her and to save the flock I took her into my arms one day and broke her leg, and with the snapping of the bone a great ache came into my heart."

"What a pity!" said the woman. "But why don't you leave her at home? Why do you carry her about?"

"Well, you see, she belongs to the fold. She is my sheep just as much as the others are, and she needs me more now. And so I just gather her to my bosom, and I talk to her as gently as I can, when I put her down on the grass I gather the sweetest bunch for her to eat, and I bring her the coolest water; and we have moments of sweet communion together, my wounded sheep and I."

"Will she always be lame?"

"No, she will soon be well again. As soon as the bone was broken and the sheep saw her helpless condition, and appealed to me—O, I shall never forget the look of her eye—I set the leg, and the bone has knit nicely, and she will be about again after a while. But she's not the sheep she was. She loves and trusts me now, and she knows my voice better than before, and I'll have no more trouble with her."

And the visitor as she heard the shepherd's story thought of her own disobedience and wilfulness, and the lesson went to her heart. And there came to her mind that passage so expressive of our treatment of the great and tender Shepherd: "All ye like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."—Christian Advocate.

### The Blessedness of Rut.

BY JAMES BUCKHAM.

This constant traveling in a rut, "the everlasting routine," "the perpetual grind"—how common such

expressions are, and how familiarly they voice the discontent of people who cannot find anything more serious or distressing to complain about than the sameness of their days!

It would almost seem, from the prevalence of this sort of grumbling, as if a man were by nature a complaining creature, born to protest, to worry, to covet the things he has not and cannot have, dissatisfied always with present conditions and necessities, and disposed to attribute his unhappiness to his lot in life rather than to his own attitude and point of view. For we find all classes of men complaining about the monotonies of life. Even great men doing a great work, are apt to speak of their time as consumed by weary and uninteresting routine. Lives which the more humble of us picture as full of interest and variety and inspiration are often declared by those who are living them to be wearisomely dull and monotonous. What is wrong that we should find life so cursed with sameness, so lacking in fresh delight and buoyancy of service?

The trouble seems to be that we do not rightly interpret and value repetitiousness in life as a quality conducive to truest happiness as well as largest success. It is in the so-called monotonies of life, did we but realize it, that the greater part of its quiet, deep, equitable happiness consists. Some one has expressed this thought in a happy phrase—"the dear, everydayness of life." And when one thinks of the matter reasonably and candidly, is it not true that the sense of mastery and wontedness that attaches to the routine of our days is, or should be, one of the deepest sources of personal satisfaction? The task that we are accustomed to do and perform with practised ease and accuracy; the duties that we approach with a full understanding of their requirements and method of performance; the daily events so like each other as to be free from shock and strain; the alternation of rest and toil, planning and performing—are not these experiences full of satisfaction, if we only estimate them rightly?

Let a few days of life be broken in upon by unwonted experiences, even such as might be pleasurable in anticipation and how glad we are to get back again to the accustomed rut! The sense of strain and confusion disappears and we breathe a sigh of restful content as we resume the old round of familiar duties.

Still more, if the experiences that have broken in upon routine are of a distressing or exacting character—sickness, suspense, a trying ordeal of any sort—what grateful, what blessed relief to return to the dear everydayness of life once more! We wonder how we could ever have grumbled over it. How could it ever have seemed to us anything but the only serene and happy path?

The remedy for dissatisfaction with the routine of life seems to be a temporary suspension of routine, with all the especial and accustomed strain that it entails. We have only to demonstrate in personal experience, from time to time, how dear the everydayness of life actually is, in order to be weaned from the spirit of grumbling which is so unworthy a child of God. By thus attaining the right viewpoint we shall get rid of the notion that there is anything regrettable, anything that ought to be changed, in God's appointment of routine to the normal condition of life. We shall see clearly that it is the very condition which is, on the whole, productive of the greatest amount of peace and happiness.

If the routine of life is the condition of the highest average happiness, it is even more evidently the condition of life's highest average of achieve. In no other way than by performing the same kind of tasks over and over again could the individual or the race accomplish the greatest amount of enduring work. This in itself should be an additional cause for rejoicing in the monotonies of life. If we accomplish more by following the rut than we would in any other way, we ought to be glad that our appointed pathways fall into the ruts.

How ungracious, then, to grumble at the provision God has made both for our happiness and fruitfulness in life! Of all the paths that strike across the world, there is none, after all, so pleasant and so profitable as the rut. Abolish it, and you would have a world full of confused, erratic, unhappy men and women—a human chaos. Blessed indeed are the habitual things, the things that regulate conduct, and concentrate effort, and fill our days with that quiet, lasting happiness which is the most precious heritage of human experience.—The Congregationalist.

### God Our Reward.

The soul's first and greatest need is God himself. To be blessed and enriched by God's presence and indwelling is to receive the supreme comfort and enrichment that can come into a human soul. God does impart himself to those who receive him. The grace of his own personal indwelling is granted to those who are ready to accept him, and in this the soul finds its highest possible joy and gladness and glory.

When God called Abram to enter into covenant with him, he said: "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." He did not promise him

that he would secure a reward for him, or assure him that he had a reward prepared. The assurance was: "I am thy reward."

God is the reward of those who love him. Nothing can take his place. Material riches are less than nothing as compared to him. Physical delights and earthly charms pall on the senses. Augustine, long centuries ago, came to realize that "the heart was made for God and it is restless till it rests in him." So poor and unworthy and slight are all things as compared to him, that Paul was persuaded that no created thing should or could come in to separate him from "the love of God." One of our hymn-writers says, in speaking of his love for God:

"Were I in heaven without my God  
I would be no heaven for me."

If there are those who think that heaven would satisfy them without the love and peace of God in their hearts, they do not know the spiritual secret of heaven's joy. The joy of heaven is God, as the light of home comes from the presence of those whom we love. The Psalmist impresses this over and over. Lovingly as God's tabernacles were, he thirsted for God himself as the hart panted for the waterbrooks. Nothing but God could satisfy the soul's thirst. In his love we may be superior to circumstances, and we may say as another poet writes:

"When I am happy in him,  
December's as pleasant as May."

Personal communion with God is not the dream and fancy of the mystic. It is the daily crowning experience of each spiritual heart. The highest culture and the highest joy come from the highest personal communion. They who delight themselves in God have found the best of earth and have anticipated the gladness and glory of heaven. God himself is the soul's highest reward.—Selected.

### Parental Responsibility.

In the MESSENGER AND VISITOR of July 16th a short article, too short it seemed, entitled "A Father's Example" caused one of your readers to say "Amen and Amen" from the depths of a tried soul. Would to God that every father in the land could read and think of it, until it brought them to their knees before him, who in his infinite wisdom, ordained that man should be at the head of his home.

The mother may be noble, good and true. Her sons may love her with ardent devotion, but she is not their ideal of manliness. This we do not regret, but what pangs us inexpressibly, is that the boys' ideal is so seldom an ideal man.

We often hear it said of the mother, "She has to be father and mother too, because he takes little or no interest in his children's spiritual welfare."

This cannot be. She may be ever so faithful in her duties, she cannot do his part also. If the father does not do it, it remains undone. Furthermore, her part, however faithfully performed will not result in as much good, because of the part that is lacking.

Such men as described in the article referred to, are the noblest work of God, heaven's richest blessing to the home, the crowning glory of a woman's life, ornaments to society, the bone and sinew of the nation, and pillars in the temple of the living God.

Such attainment is possible for all men. Why are they so painfully few?

When will parents awake to a realizing sense of the responsibility resting upon them, in the training of immortal souls committed to their care?

We will have to render unto God an account, not for how highly we have educated them, or how fashionably we have dressed them, but for how well they have been trained in the fear of the Lord, and taught to walk after his commandments, and by faithful and earnest prayer led to him who said "Suffer them to come." Let us see to it fathers and mothers that we hinder them not.

A MOTHER.

Two years ago there was a violent storm, in the course of which one of the lighthouse keepers at Ailisa Craig was blown over by the wind and had a limb broken. There was nobody on the island to dress the injuries, and as the sea was running mountains high, it was quite impossible to get over to the mainland for help in the lighthouse boat. A letter was written, however, and tied to the foot of a carrier pigeon, which quickly sped over the waters to Girvan, where the communication reached the doctor. A vessel was soon got ready, a crew gathered together and the doctor taken over to Ailisa Craig, when the injured limb was duly attended to. Prayer, like a carrier pigeon, wings our cry for help to the footstool of the thorne of grace.—Exchange.

A gentleman recently made the assertion that he was so grounded in his Christian belief that he would die for it if necessary. That is very good; but just now and in this land there is more call for people who will live for their faith, and pray and work and give for its propagation.