

“‘This was all. I could not answer it. It would not do to say that the penalty is cancelled by God’s pardon, for such a system would introduce anarchy into the universe at once; it would either imply that God does not rule by law, but only by advice, or it would introduce the absurdity of naming that law which has no penalty, whereas it is the very essence of law that penalty is the award of its transgression. It was plain that any temporal ruler who should dispense with penalty on the mere ground that offenders confess their wrong-doing and beg for pardon, would unseat his rule at once. Such questions as the above lodged in the mind, must lead in time to the acceptance of mercy’ through Christ, who bore the penalty of sin ‘in his body on the tree.’ And though I did not come to the great idea of substitution at once, yet here was a help at any rate, it opened my eyes to the fact that the evangelical scheme is worthy of study; that it meets sturdy difficulties, and looks them in the face.”

APPARENT BEREAVEMENTS.

A story is told of an Oriental shepherd, who in a season of excessive drought, finding it very difficult to obtain pasturage for his sheep, left them in the care of an under shepherd, and traversed the country for many miles around in search of food for his starving flock. He ascended many a hill-top; climbed rugged mountains and examined the banks of creeks winding through narrow valleys; looked for some small opening among the trees of the great forest, where grass might be found; wounded himself, in vain, amid the tangled underbrush; and thus spent many days in his fruitless search. The whole country, mountain tops, hill side, vale and plain, all were parched and barren.

At length as he was returning, sad and disheartened, he espied a green spot near the summit of one of the mountains, close by the valley where his sheep were left. Joyfully he hastened up to it and there found a cool spring gushing out of a crevice in the rocks, which ran leaping and gurgling down the steep mountain side a little way, and then, on a small tract of table land, formed a beautiful pool of sparkling water, which overflowed and spread gently, causing an abundant growth of sweet tender grass.

Here his sheep and lambs could appease their hunger, quench their thirst and enjoy the cool breezes in the shadows of the rocks and trees, and live happily until the famine should be past.

Hastily he reported his success, and led the flock to the foot of the mountain, where it was necessary to pass a narrow tract filled with rocks and briars. Here the sheep refused to follow him farther. He gently called the leaders by name and tried to persuade them to come over, but in vain; exhausted with hunger and thirst, the prospect was too discouraging for them, and they lost confidence in their shepherd.

He then, with the aid of his assistant and shepherd dog tried to drive them through the rough passage, but they would not even be driven, but, throwing themselves among the sharp rocks and thorns, would have perished there, when the beautiful green pastures and cooling waters were almost within their reach.

At length he went to one whom all the others acknowledged as a leader, and were accustomed to follow anywhere, and taking from her side her beautiful lamb, which she tenderly loved, sprang across the rocky passage, climbed the mountain side and laid it gently down in the fresh grass beside the crystal waters.

The mother sheep hesitated a moment, then with a cry of alarm pressed on after her lamb and shepherd. The example was contagious. The whole flock immediately followed and soon all were feeding in the green pastures, and beside the living waters.

How often does the Good Shepherd find it necessary to deprive portions of his flock of the rich pasturage they sometimes find in the low vales and plains of worldliness, where they wander forgetful of Him: to dry up their streams and cause their fields to become parched and barren; to send leanness, anguish and sorrow to their souls, in order to wean them from undue earthly attachments, and