

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Beneath the burning skies and starry nights of Palestine there grows up between the shepherd and his flock a union of attachment and tenderness. At any moment the sheep are liable to be swept away by some mountain torrent, or carried off by hill robbers, or torn by wolves. At any moment their protector may have to save them by personal hazard. The shepherd king tells us how, in defence of his father's flock, he slew a lion and a bear; and Jacob reminds Laban how he watched Laban's sheep in the day when the drought consumed them. Every hour of the shepherd's life is risk. Sometimes, for the sake of an armful of grass in the parched summer day, he must climb precipices almost perpendicular, and stand on a narrow ledge of rock, where the wild goat will scarcely venture. Pitiless showers, driving snows, long hours of thirst, all these he must endure to keep the flock.

How much in all this connection there is of *heart*, of real personal attachment, is almost inconceivable to us. It is strange how deep the sympathy may become between the higher and the lower being. Alone almost in the desert, the Arab and his horse are one family. Alone in those vast solitudes, with no human being near, the shepherd and the sheep feel a life in common. Differences disappear—the vast interval between the man and the brute; the single point of *union* is strongly felt. One is the love of the protector, the other the love of the grateful life; and so, between lives so distant, there is woven by night and day, by summer suns and winter frosts, a living network of sympathy. "The shepherd knows his sheep, and is known of them."

Try to feel, by imagining what the lonely Syrian shepherd must feel towards the helpless things which are the companions of his daily life, for whose safety he stands in jeopardy every hour, and whose value is measurable to him not by price, but by his jeopardy, and then we have revealed some notion of the love which Jesus meant to represent; that eternal tenderness which bends over us, infinitely lower though we be in nature, and knows the name of each and the trials of each, and thinks for each with a separate solicitude, and gave himself for each with a sacrifice as special, and a love as personal, as if in the whole world's wilderness there were none other but that one.

—Robertson.

## SEEING AND BELIEVING.

The ancient Rabbinical writings contain a romance which illustrates the effects of substituting sight for faith in matters of religion. A Rabbi, was once expounding the passage, "I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles," and declared that God would provide jewels and pearls thirty cubits in circumference, and would place them in the gates of Jerusalem. One of his disciples ridiculed him, and sneeringly asked, "where such jewels could be found, since there were none known to exist larger than a pigeon's egg." This person being afterwards at sea, saw some angels cutting immense gems and pearls; and asked for what purpose they were preparing them. They answered, "to place them in the gates of Jerusalem." On his return, he found the Rabbi, and said to him, explain what I have seen. The Rabbi answered, "Thou Knave, unless thou hadst seen, thou wouldst not have believed." At that moment he fixed his eyes upon the man and the latter was instantly turned into a heap of bones.

This story is no doubt a specimen of the "vain traditions" with which our Lord reproached the Pharisees, and of "the old wives' fables," against which Paul warned Timothy. Yet though a silly fiction in its incidents, it is sound and essentially Christian in its theology. God has wisely connected our salvation, in no degree with our seeing, and in every degree with our believing. We would gladly walk by sight if we could; and, as far as we put sight into the province of faith, we only act in the principle of our nature, which has depraved our hearts and periled our souls. Our safety consists in our believing as true whatever God says, and believing as good whatever God does. Whatever doctrine seems doubtful, or whatever providence seems dark, must not be treated with unbelief till we have it illustrated by sight. God's very design in throwing darkness or difficulty over it is to incite us to the prayer, "Lord we believe, help thou our unbelief." Should we foolishly wait to be convinced by demonstrations, rather than piously supplicate to be convinced by heavenly influence, we may not perhaps be suddenly withered into heaps of bones; but at last, we will, in the contrary case, hear our Lord's voice saying to us, "Blessed are ye who have not seen, and yet have believed."

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