



THE LOST SHEEP.

A TRAVELLER in the Swiss Alps was standing at the foot of a tremendous precipice, which, with almost perpendicular steepness, overhung the road on which he was walking. A clergyman joined him and told him that, on a previous occasion he had stood at the same spot, looking up at the towering rock above them.

At a great distance up the mountain side could be discerned a few patches of bright green grass.

On one of these he could just perceive a solitary wandering sheep, which, tempted by the freshness of the herbage, and not heeding the dangers of the place, had strayed from the easier slopes of the mountain right into the centre of the precipice. He was wondering how the "silly sheep" would get back to a place of safety; when suddenly he heard a voice far up on the mountain side, though no one was visible.

The sheep had heard it as well; yes, before he had. It was the voice of the shepherd, and it knew his voice. At once it began to retrace its steps. It could not turn, so narrow was the ledge on which it stood. But walking backwards, it slowly and gradually left the dangerous precipice, and then bounded off to join the shepherd and his flock.

This little incident affords a striking illustration of the parable of the Good Shepherd, and it also serves to remind us that still does the great Shepherd care for His sheep. One of them is wandering—tempted, perhaps, by the first exposure to the pleasures of the world. All seems fresh and gay. Without any wilful or deliberate intention of deserting the Good Shepherd that gave His life for the sheep, one step after another is taken which leads further and further from Him.

It seems, perhaps, to some anxious beholder—to a parent, a teacher, or a minister—that this wandering lamb will soon fall into greater sin. But suddenly a change

takes place; the wanderer begins to retrace his steps—and why? He has heard the voice of the Shepherd. A sermon, or a hymn, or a word of Scripture comes home to his heart, shows him he is wandering and in danger. When he would have gone on to destruction, the Lord called him back to His fold.

Oh, how loving is that "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," who will not suffer one of His sheep to perish. How anxiously should we listen for His voice, how immediately should we obey it and turn unto Him. Then is fulfilled that Scripture, "The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice."

PROFIT AND LOSS.

WHAT shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? This solemn question of our Lord sets before every thinking man the priceless worth of the soul. There can be but one honest answer to this question. It shall profit a man nothing to gain the whole world if in so doing he loses his soul. There is nothing that a man can give in exchange for his soul that shall be an exchange. For his soul is that which lasts. His possessions, however large and magnificent, he can carry no farther than to the grave.

Reader, this is written of your soul. It is all the difference between success and failure, between total loss and endless salvation! Whether it be worth much or little to others that you stand in the company of the redeemed, it is the only thing of worth for you. Your own salvation is the thing towards which you should address your desires and efforts until Christ be formed in you the hope of glory.

What if you lose your soul? Can you bear the thought? Are you going to make an endless and remediless loss of yourself? Are you going to chase phantoms all your earthly days, and let yourself go out at last into the blackness of darkness for ever? Your soul is of priceless worth to you. It is you! The question before you, friend, is of saving or losing yourself. What are you going to answer to that question? The matter lies in your own hands. It is the disposal of your own soul that is at stake. What shall it profit you to lose your soul? What will you give in exchange for your soul?

Take this question home to your heart, reader. It is the question for you to face. It is a question which you are answering in spite of yourself. But we beg you, let your answer be right. Save your soul! Do not, do not throw yourself away!

O Lord, do Thou the sinner turn,
Nor let him stay the morrow's sun;
Oh! let him not Thy counsels spurn,
But haste deserved wrath to shun.