

One day the old clergyman, stung by witnessing the sufferings of his family, yet still confiding in Him who had so often proved his help in times of need, took his staff in his hand, and set forth to make a tour of the island, in the hope of somewhere procuring even a single bushel of rye in order to supply his hungry children with bread. But in most of the houses into which he entered he found as great destitution as in his own, and the very few who still possessed a little store refused to part with it. So, with a heavy heart, the old servant of the Lord returned in the evening to his home, as empty-handed as he had set out.

But though "cast down," he felt sure he was "not forsaken," for he had experienced during his long life, and especially in these last years of famine, too many instances of Divine assistance to allow him to "cast away his confidence"; and so he entered into his closet, and in his distress called upon God, imploring Him to interpose in his extremity, and thus enable him to praise His name. And lo! He who is the Hearer and Answerer of prayer did not put the confidence of His sorely-tried servant to shame. For while the father of the family was thus on his knees before God, the mother had sent two of her sons to fetch a basket of turf from an outhouse, and in proceeding to this shed they had to pass close by a clay-pit, from which clay had recently been dug for some necessary repairs.

God's providence so ordered it that one of the boys caught sight of what seemed to be a ring, projecting from the side of the pit. He jumped down to examine it, and sure enough it was a ring, at which both boys now tugged with all their might; but it stuck too fast for them. They then fetched a spade, and digging away the clay, soon discovered that the ring was affixed to a tin box, which lay imbedded in the clay-pit. By their continued blows with the spade, the side of the box was broken in, and lo! a quantity of ancient coins tumbled out into the bottom of the pit!

The boys ran with all speed to announce what they had found to their father, whose eyes overflowed at this discovery, which he accepted as an answer to his prayer; and he felt disposed to exclaim with pious Paul Gerhardt,

"Ways hath He always ready,  
Of means He hath no lack."

The tin box was now dug out, and the coins, which were chiefly of the date of 1649 (in the reign of Frederick III. of Denmark), amounted in value to eleven hundred dollars.

The clergyman delivered over the treasure found by his sons to the nearest magistrate, by whom it was reported to the king, together with a faithful account of the extreme want in which the finders were pining. The result was, an order that the whole sum should be given back to the worthy clergyman; and thus was a servant of the Lord visibly helped out of a most pressing necessity.

## THE GOSPEL.

**S**UPPOSE the Gospel to be only a system of morality, requiring that we should "be holy and without blame before Him in love." Here is no good news for the sinner. He has no inclination or ability to be sanctified throughout, body, soul, and spirit.

Suppose the Gospel treats principally of the resurrection. Here is no good news for the sinner. He is not delighted with the idea of rising again—he would rather remain in the grave for ever.

Suppose the Gospel only brings "immortality to light." Here is no good news for the sinner. He is not pleased with the thought of eternal duration—he would rather cease his continuance.

Suppose the Gospel only a promise of pardon and life on condition of faith and repentance. Here is no good news for the sinner. It is bad news; his desire is only irritated to be disappointed—like a person engaging to give me an estate if I will fly to the moon.

Or suppose the Gospel to be a revelation of absolute mercy as ready to pardon iniquity. Even here is no good news for the sinner, unless he can see a way in which it can come to him agreeable to the character which the Scripture has led him to entertain of God.

"God is holy in all His ways, and righteous in all His works." Whatever favours He confers as a benefactor, He must preserve His claims as a legislator. Therefore, when I begin to be delighted with the glad tidings of Mercy, saying, Spare him, bless him! I am terrified again by the language of Justice, Cut him off, destroy him! It is evident the one, as well as the other, exists,—the one, as well as the other, has its claim.

In this case, Mercy shows me the tree of life; Justice stands with flaming sword to guard it from approach. If we say that, we should take the declaration of God that He will pardon iniquity without any other consideration, and be satisfied of His doing it? Shall we make the Divine perfections anything or nothing, magnifying one and depreciating another? Is the Divine law to vary in its demand and fail in its execution? Shall we weaken its authority by dispensing with its penalty?

We cannot do this; for if the penalty be founded in the fitness of things, and agreeable to the Divine perfections (and unless it were so, God would never have appointed it), it follows that not only we, but God Himself, cannot dispense with it any more than with the whole law.

I think no man can rationally hope for pardon unless he can see a way in which God can do it as God, and be "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Such a scheme is the Gospel; it reveals a free, rich, righteous salvation through Jesus Christ, "set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood." Hence it answers its name; it is good news, glad tidings.

It would be easy to illustrate this view of the