

# CHEAP REPOSITORY.

T H E

## Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain.



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T H E  
SHEPHERD

O F  
SALISBURY-PLAIN.

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**M**R. JOHNSON, a very worthy charitable Gentleman, was travelling some time ago across one of those vast Plains which are well known in Wiltshire. It was a fine summer's evening, and he rode slowly that he might have leisure to admire God in the works of his creation. For this Gentleman was of opinion, that a walk or a ride, was as proper a time as any to think about good things, for which reason, on such occasions he seldom thought so much about his money, or his trade, or public news, as at other times, that he might with more ease and satisfaction enjoy the pious thoughts which the visible works of the great Maker of heaven and earth are intended to raise in the mind.

His attention was all of a sudden called off by the barking of a Shepherd's dog, and looking up he spied one of those little huts, which are here and there to be seen on those great Downs; and near it was the Shepherd himself busily employed with his dog in collecting together his vast flock of sheep. As he drew nearer, he perceived him to be a clean, well-looking, poor man, near fifty years of age. His coat, though at first it had probably been of one dark colour, had been in a long course of years so often patched with different sorts of cloth, that it was now become hard to say which had been the original colour. But this, while it gave a plain proof of the Shepherd's poverty, equally proved the exceeding neatness, industry, and good management of his wife. His stockings no less proved her good housewifery, for they were entirely covered with darns of different coloured worsted, but had not a hole in them; and his shirt, though nearly as coarse as the sails of a ship, was as white as the drifted snow, and neatly mended where time had either made a rent, or worn it thin. This is a rule of judging, by which one shall seldom be deceived. If I meet with a labourer, hedging, ditching, or mending the highways with his stockings and shirt tight and whole, however mean and bad his other garments are, I have

have seldom failed, on visiting his cottage, to find that also clean and well ordered, and his wife notable, and worthy of encouragement. Whereas a poor woman, who will be lying a-bed, or gossiping with her neighbours when she ought to be fitting out her husband in a cleanly manner, will seldom be found to be very good in other respects.

This was not the case with our Shepherd: And Mr. Johnson was not more struck with the decency of his mean and frugal dress, than with his open honest countenance, which bore strong marks of health, cheerfulness, and spirit.

Mr. Johnson, who was on a journey, and somewhat fearful from the appearance of the sky, that rain was at no great distance, accosted the Shepherd with asking what sort of weather he thought it would be on the morrow.--“It will be such weather as pleases me,” answered the Shepherd. Though the answer was delivered in the mildest and civilest tone that could be imagined, the Gentleman thought the words themselves rather rude and surly, and asked him how that could be, “Because,” replied the Shepherd, “it will be such weather as shall please God, and whatever pleases him always pleases me.”

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Mr. Johnson, who delighted in good men and good things, was very well satisfied with his reply. For he justly thought that though an hypocrite may easily contrive to appear better than he really is to a stranger; and that no one should be too soon trusted, merely for having a few good words in his mouth; yet as he knew that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” he always accustomed himself to judge favourably of those who had a serious deportment and solid manner of speaking. “It looks as if it proceeded from a good habit,” said he, “and though I may now and then be deceived by it, yet it has not often happened to me to be so. Whereas, if a man accosts me with an idle, dissolute, vulgar, indecent, or prophane expression, I have never been deceived in him, but have generally on inquiry found his character to be as bad as his language gave me room to expect.”

He entered into conversation with the Shepherd in the following manner. Yours is a troublesome life, honest friend, said he. To be sure, Sir, replied the Shepherd, 'tis not a very lazy life; but 'tis not near so toilsome as that which my GREAT MASTER led for my sake, and he had every state and condition of life at his choice, and chose a hard one—while I only submit  
to

to the lot that is appointed me.---You are exposed to great cold and heat, said the Gentleman;--true, Sir, said the Shepherd; but then I am not exposed to great temptations; and so throwing one thing against another, God is pleased to contrive to make things more equal than we poor, ignorant, short-sighted creatures are apt to think. David was happier when he kept his father's sheep on such a plain as this, and singing some of his own Psalms perhaps, than ever he was when he became king of Israel and Judah. And I dare say we should never have had some of the most beautiful texts in all those fine Psalms, if he had not been a Shepherd, which enabled him to make so many fine comparisons and similitudes, as one may say, from a country life, flocks of sheep, hills, and vallies, and fountains of water.

You think then, said the Gentleman, that a laborious life is a happy one. I do, Sir, and more so especially, as it exposes a man to fewer sins. If King Saul had continued a poor laborious man to the end of his days, he might have lived happy and honest, and died a natural death in his bed at last, which you know, Sir, was more than he did. But I speak with reverence, for it was divine Providence overruled all that, you know, Sir, and I do  
not.

not presume to make comparisons. Besides, Sir, my employment has been particularly honoured--Moses was a Shepherd in the plains of Midian.--It was to "Shepherds keeping their flocks by night," that the angels appeared in Bethlehem, to tell the best news, the gladdest tidings, that ever were revealed to poor sinful men: often, and often has the thought warmed my poor heart in the coldest night, and filled me with more joy and thankfulness than the best supper could have done.

Here the Shepherd stopped, for he began to feel that he had made too free, and had talked too long. But Mr. Johnson was so well pleased with what he said, and with the cheerful contented manner in which he said it, that he desired him to go on freely, for that it was a pleasure to him to meet with a plain man, who, without any kind of learning but what he had got from the Bible, was able to talk so well on a subject in which all men, high and low, rich and poor, are equally concerned.

Indeed I am afraid I make too bold, Sir, for it better becomes me to listen to such a Gentleman as you seem to be, than to talk in my poor way; but as I was saying, Sir, I wonder all working men do not derive as great joy and delight as I do  
from



from thinking how God has honoured poverty! Oh! Sir, what great, or rich, or mighty men have had such honour put on them, or their condition, as Shepherds, Tent-makers, Fishermen, and Carpenters have had?

My honest friend, said the Gentleman, I perceive you are well acquainted with scripture. Yes, Sir, pretty well, blessed be God! through his mercy I learnt to read when I was a little boy; though reading was not so common when I was a child, as, I am told, through the goodness of Providence, and the generosity of the rich, it is likely to become now a-days. I believe there is no day for the last thirty years, that I have not peeped at my Bible. If we can't find time to read a chapter, I defy any man to say he can't find time to read a verse; and a single text Sir, well followed and put in practice every day, would make no bad figure at the year's end; three hundred and sixty-five texts, without the loss of a moment's time, would make a pretty stock, a little golden treasury, as one may say, from new-year's day to new-year's day; and if children were brought up to it, they would look for their text as naturally as they do for their breakfast. No labouring man, 'tis true, has so much leisure as a Shepherd,

for while the flock is feeding, I am obliged to be still, and at such times I can now and then tap a shoe for my children or myself, which is a great saving to us, and while I am doing that I repeat a bit of a chapter, which makes the time pass pleasantly in this wild solitary place. I can say the best part of the Bible by heart, I believe I should not say the best part, for every part is good, but I mean the greatest part. I have led but a lonely life, and have often had but little to eat, but my Bible has been meat, drink, and company to me, as I may say, and when want and trouble have come upon me, I don't know what I should have done indeed, Sir, if I had not had the promises of this book for my stay and support.

You have had great difficulties then? said Mr. Johnson. Why, as to that, Sir, not more than neighbours fare, I have but little cause to complain, and much to be thankful; but I have had some little struggles, as I will leave you to judge. I have a wife and eight children, whom I bred up in that little cottage which you see under the hill about half a mile off. What, that with the smoke coming out of the chimney, said the Gentleman. O no, Sir, replied the Shepherd smiling, we have seldom smoke in the evening, for we have little to

cook,

cook, and firing is very dear in these parts. 'Tis that cottage which you see on the left hand of the Church, near that little tuft of hawthorns. What that hovel with only one room above and one below, with scarcely any chimney, how is it possible you can live there with such a family! O! it is very possible and very certain too, cried the Shepherd. How many better men have been worse lodged! how many good christians have perished in prisons and dungeons, in comparision of which my cottage is a palace. The house is very well, Sir, and if the rain did not sometimes beat down upon us through the thatch when we are a-bed, I should not desire a better; for I have health, peace, and liberty, and no man maketh me afraid.

Well, I will certainly call on you before it be long; but how can you contrive to lodge so many children? We do the best we can, Sir. My poor wife is a very sickly woman, or we should always have done tolerably well. There are no gentry in the parish, so that she has not met with any great assistance in her sickness. The good curate of the parish who lives in that pretty parsonage in the valley, is very willing, but not very able to assist us on these trying occasions, for he has little enough for himself and a large family into the bargain.

gain. Yet he does what he can, and more than many richer men do, and more than he can well afford. Besides that, his prayers and good advice we are always sure of, and we are truly thankful for that, for a man must give, you know, Sir, according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not.

Are you in any distress at present? said Mr. Johnson. No, Sir, thank God, replied the Shepherd. I get my shilling a day, and most of my children will soon be able to earn something; for we have only three under five years old. Only! said the Gentleman, that is a heavy burden. Not at all; God fits the back to it. Though my wife is not able to do any out of door work, yet she breeds up our children to such habits of industry that our little maids before they are six years old can first get a halfpenny, and then a penny a day by knitting. The boys who are too little to do hard work, get a trifle by keeping the birds off the corn; for this the farmers will give them a penny or two-pence, and now and then a bit of bread and cheese into the bargain. When the season of crow keeping is over, then they glean or pick stones; any thing is better than idleness, Sir, and if they do not get a farthing by it, I would make them do it just the same, for the sake of giving them early habits of labour. So

So you see, Sir, I am not so badly off as many are; nay, if it were not that it costs me so much in 'Potecary's stuff for my poor wife, I should reckon myself well off. Nay, I do reckon myself well off, for blessed be God, he has granted her life to my prayers, and I would work myself to a 'natomy, and live on one meal a day to add any comfort to her valuable life; indeed I have often done the last, and thought it no great matter neither.

While they were in this part of the discourse, a fine plump cherry-cheek little girl ran up out of breath, with a smile on her young happy face, and without taking any notice of the Gentleman, cried out with great joy—Look here, father, only see how much I have got to-day! Mr. Johnson was much struck with her simplicity, but puzzled to know what was the occasion of this great joy. On looking at her he perceived a small quantity of coarse wool, some of which had found its way through the holes of her clean, but scanty and ragged woollen apron. The father said, this has been a successful day indeed, Molly, but don't you see the Gentleman? Molly now made a curtsy down to the very ground; while Mr. Johnson inquired into the cause of the mutual satisfaction which

which both father and daughter had expressed, at the unusual good fortune of the day.

Sir, said the Shepherd, poverty is a great sharpener of wits.—My wife and I cannot endure to see our children (poor as they are) without shoes and stockings, not only on account of the pinching cold which cramps their poor little limbs, but because it degrades and debases them; and poor people who have but little regard to appearances will seldom be found to have any great regard for honesty and goodness; don't say this is always the case; but I am sure it is so too often. Now shoes and stockings being very dear we could never afford to get them without a little contrivance. I must shew you how I manage about the shoes when you condescend to call at our cottage, Sir; as to stockings, this is one way we take to help get them. My young ones who are too little to do much work, sometimes wander at odd hours over the hills for the chance of finding what little wool the sheep may drop when they rub themselves, as they are apt to do, in the bushes.\* These scattered bits

\* This piece of frugal industry is not imaginary, but a real fact, as is the character of the Shepherd, and his uncommon knowledge of the scriptures.

of wool the children pick out of the brambles, which I see, have torn sad holes in Molly's apron to-day; they carry this wool home, and when they have got a pretty parcel together, their mother cards it; for she can sit and card in the chimney corner, when she is not able to wash, or work about house. The biggest girl then spins it; it does very well for us without dying, for poor people must not stand for the colour of their stockings. After this our little boys knit it for themselves, while they are employed in keeping crows in the fields, and after they get home at night. As for the knitting the girls and their mother do, that is chiefly for sale, which helps to pay our rent.

Mr. Johnson lifted up his eyes in silent astonishment at the shifts which honest poverty can make rather than beg or steal; and was surpris'd to think how many ways of subsisting there are which those who live at their ease little suspect. He secretly resolv'd to be more attentive to his own petty expences than he had hitherto been; and to be more watchful that nothing was wasted in his family.

But to return to the Shepherd. Mr. Johnson told him that as he must needs be at his friend's house, who lived many miles  
off

off that night, he could not as he wished to do, make a visit to his cottage at present. But I will certainly do it, said he, on my return, for I long to see your wife and her nice little family, and to be an eye witness of her neatness and good management. The poor man's tears started into his eyes on hearing the commendation bestowed on his wife; and wiping them off with the sleeve of his coat, for he was not worth a handkerchief in the world, he said---Oh! Sir, you just now, I am afraid, called me an humble man, but indeed I am a very proud one. Proud! exclaimed Mr. Johnson, I hope not---Pride is a great sin, and as the poor are liable to it as well as the rich, so good a man as you seem to be, ought to guard against it. Sir, said he, you are right, but I am not proud of myself, God knows, I have nothing to be proud of. I am a poor sinner, but indeed Sir, I am proud of my wife: She is not only the most tidy, notable woman on the Plain, but she is the kindest wife and mother, and the most contented, thankful christian that I know. Last year I thought I should have lost her in a violent fit of the rheumatism, caught by going to work too soon after her lying-in, I fear; for 'tis but a bleak coldish place, as you may see, Sir, in winter, and sometimes the snow lies so long under the hill, that I can hardly  
make



make myself a path to get out and buy a few necessaries in the next village; and we are afraid to send out the children, for fear they should be lost when the snow is deep. So, as I was saying, the poor soul was very bad indeed, and for several weeks lost the use of all her limbs except her hands: a merciful Providence spared her the use of these, so that when she could not turn in her bed, she could contrive to patch a rag or two for her family. She was always saying, had it not been for the great goodness of God, she might have had the palsy instead of the rheumatism, and then she could have done nothing--but nobody had so many mercies as she had.

I will not tell you what we suffered during that bitter weather, Sir, but my wife's faith and patience during that trying time, were as good a lesson to me as any Sermon I could hear, and yet Mr. Jenkins gave us very comfortable ones too, that helped to keep up my spirits.

One Sunday afternoon when my wife was at the worst, as I was coming out of Church, for I went one part of the day, and my eldest daughter the other, so my poor wife was never left alone. As I was coming out of Church, I say, Mr. Jenkins the minister called out to me, and asked  
me

me how my wife did, saying he had been kept from coming to see her by the deep fall of snow, and indeed from the parsonage-house to my hovel it was quite impassable. I gave him all the particulars he asked, and I am afraid a good many more, for my heart was quite full. He kindly gave me a shilling, and said he would certainly try to pick out his way and come and see her in a day or two.

While he was talking to me, a plain farmer-looking Gentleman in boots, who stood by, listened to all I said, but seemed to take no notice. It was Mr. Jenkins's wife's father, who was come to pass the Christmas holidays at the parsonage-house. I had always heard him spoken of as a plain frugal man, who lived close himself, but was remarked to give away more than any of his show-away neighbours.

Well! I went home with great spirits at this seasonable and unexpected supply; for we had tapped our last sixpence, and there was little work to be had on account of the weather. I told my wife I was not come back empty handed. No, I dare say not, says she, you have been serving a master "who filleth the hungry with good things, though he sendeth the rich empty away." True, Mary, says I; we seldom fail to  
get

get good spiritual food from Mr. Jenkins, but to day he has kindly supplied our bodily wants. She was more thankful when I shewed her the shilling, than, I dare say, some of your great people are when they get a hundred pounds.

Mr. Johnson's heart smote him when he heard such a value set upon a shilling; surely, said he to himself, I will never waste another; but he said nothing to the Shepherd, who thus pursued his story.

Next morning before I went out, I sent part of the money to buy a little ale and brown sugar to put into her water gruel; which you know, Sir, made it nice and nourishing. I went out to cleave wood in a farm-yard, for there was no standing out on the plain, after such a snow as had fallen in the night. I went with a lighter heart than usual, because I had left my poor wife a little better; and comfortably supplied for this day, and I now resolved more than ever to trust in God for the supplies of the next. When I came back at night, my wife fell a crying as soon as she saw me. This, I own I thought but a bad return for the blessings she had so lately received, and so I told her. O, said she, it is too much, we are too rich; I am now frightened, not lest we should have no portion

portion in this world, but for fear we should have our whole portion in it. Look here, John! So saying she uncovered the bed whereon she lay, and shewed me two warm, thick, new blankets. I could not believe my own eyes, Sir, because when I went out in the morning, I had left her with no other covering than our little old thin blue rug. I was still more amazed when she put half a crown into my hand, telling me she had had a visit from Mr. Jenkins, and Mr. Jones, the latter of whom had bestowed all these good things upon us. Thus, Sir, have our lives been crowned with mercies. My wife got about again, and I do believe, under Providence, it was owing to these comforts; for the rheumatism, Sir, without blankets by night and flannel by day, is but a baddish job, especially to people who have little or no fire. She will always be a weakly body; but thank God her soul prospers and is in health. But I beg your pardon, Sir, for talking on at this rate. Not at all, not at all, said Mr. Johnson; I am much pleased with your story, you shall certainly see me in a few days. Good night. So saying, he slipped a crown into his hand, and rode off. Surely, said the Shepherd, *goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.*

as he gave the money to his wife when he got home at night.

As to Mr. Johnson, he found abundant matter for his thoughts during the rest of his journey. On the whole he was more disposed to envy than to pity the Shepherd. I have seldom seen, said he, so happy a man. It is a sort of happiness which the world could not give, and which I plainly see, it has not been able to take away. This must be the true spirit of Religion. I see more and more, that true goodness is not merely a thing of words and opinions, but a Living Principle brought into every common action of a man's life. What else could have supported this poor couple under every bitter trial of want, and sickness? No, my honest Shepherd, I do not pity, but I respect and even honour thee; and I will visit thy poor hovel on my return to Salisbury with as much pleasure as I am now going to the house of my friend.

If Mr. Johnson keeps his word in sending me the account of his visit to the Shepherd's cottage, I shall be very glad to entertain my readers with it, and shall conclude this first part with (Z.)

THE

## THE SHEPHERD'S HYMN.

**T**HE Lord my pasture shall prepare,  
 And feed me with a Shepherd's care;  
 His presence shall my wants supply,  
 And guard me with a watchful eye:  
 My noon-day walks he shall attend,  
 And all my midnight hours defend.

When in the sultry glebe I faint,  
 Or on the thirsty mountain pant;  
 To fertile vales and dewy meads,  
 My weary, wand'ring steps he leads;  
 Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,  
 Amid the verdant landscape flow.

Though in the paths of death I tread,  
 With gloomy horrors overspread,  
 My steadfast heart shall fear no ill;  
 For thou, O LORD, art with me still;  
 Thy friendly crook shall give me aid,  
 And guide me through the dreadful shade.

Though in a bare and rugged way;  
 Through devious lonely wilds I stray,  
 Thy bounty shall my pains beguile,  
 The barren wilderness shall smile,  
 With sudden greens and herbage crown'd,  
 And streams shall murmur all around.

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