

Cheap Repository.

THE
SHEPHERD
OF
SALISBURY PLAIN.

IN TWO PARTS.



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T H E
SHEPHERD OF SALISBURY PLAIN.

PART I.

MR. JOHNSON, a very worthy charitable gentleman, was travelling some time ago across one of those vast plains which are 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 these 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 manage-

ment of his wife. His stockings no less proved her good housewifery, for they were entirely covered with darns of different colored 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 wore it thin. This is a rule of judging, by which one shall seldom be deceived. If I meet with a laborer, hedging, ditching, or mending the highways, with his stockings and shirt tight and whole, however mean and bad his other garments are, I 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 neighbors 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 wea-

that as shall please God, and whatever pleases him always pleases me.'

Mr. Johnson, who delighted in good men and good things, was very well satisfied with this 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 from 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 enquiry, 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—Your's 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 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 at

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 over-ruled all that, you know, Sir, I do 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 gladest 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 the 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 thinking how God has honored 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 laboring 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 an

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 had 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 the promise 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 neighbor's 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, 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 comparison 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 upon 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 indeed little enough for himself, and a large family into the bargain; 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 of age—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 her 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 did 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 you see, Sir, I am not so badly off as many are—nay, if it were not that it costs me so much in 'pothecary'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 '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 it's way through the holes of her clean, but scanty and ragged woollen apron. The father said, this has been a successful day indeed, Molly, don't you see the gentleman? Molly now made a curtsey down to the very ground; while Mr. Johnson enquired into the cause of the mutual satisfaction 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 regard for honesty and goodness; I 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 to 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 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 the 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

* 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.

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 surprised to think how many ways of subsisting there are which those that live at their ease little suspect.— He secretly resolved 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 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 upon 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 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 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 she 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 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 neighbors.

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 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 a 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 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 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 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 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 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 or sickness? No, my honest Shepherd, I do not pity, but I respect and ever 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."——I shall now conclude this first part with

The Shepherd's Hymn.

THE 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 mountains pant,
 To fertile vales and dewy meads
 My weary wand'ring steps he leads,
 Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
 Amid the verdent landskip 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.

PART II.

MR. JOHNSON, after having passed some time with his friend, sat out on his return to Salisbury, and on the Saturday evening reached a very small inn, a mile or two distant from the Shepherd's village; for he never travelled on a Sunday. He went the next morning to the church nearest the house where he had passed the night; and after taking such refreshment as he could get at that house, he walked on to find out the Shepherd's cottage. His reason for visiting him on a Sunday, was chiefly, because he supposed it to be the only day which the Shepherd's employment allowed him to pass at home with his family, and as Mr. Johnson had been struck with his talk, he thought it would be neither unpleasant nor unprofitable to observe how a man who carried such an appearance of piety spent his Sunday, for though he was so low in the world, this gentleman was not above entering very closely into his character, of which he thought he should be able to form a better judgment, by seeing whether his practice at home kept pace with his professions abroad. For it is not so much by observing how people talk as how they live that we ought to judge of their characters.

After a pleasant walk, Mr. Johnson got within sight of the cottage, to which he was directed by the clump of hawthorns and the broken chimney. He wished to take the family by surprize; and walking gently up to the house, he stood awhile to listen. The door being half open, he saw the Shepherd, who looked so respectable in his Sunday-coat, that he should hardly have known him; his wife, and their numerous young family, drawing round their little table, which was covered with a clean though very coarse cloth. There stood on it a large dish of potatoes, a brown pitcher, and a piece of coarse loaf. The wife and children stood in silent attention, while the Shepherd, with uplifted hands and eyes, devoutly begged the blessing of Heaven on their homely fare. Mr. Johnson could not help sighing to reflect that he had sometimes seen better dinners eaten with less appearance of thankfulness.

The Shepherd and his wife then sat down with great seeming cheerfulness, but the children stood, and while the mother was helping them, little fresh coloured Molly, who had picked the wool from the bushes with so much delight, cried out, Father, I wish I was big enough to say grace, I am sure I should say it very heartily to day, for I was thinking what must poor people do who have no salt to their potatoes, and do but look, our dish is quite full. That is the true way of thinking, Molly, said the father; in whatever concerns bodily wants and bodily comforts, it is our duty to compare our own lot, with the lot of those who are worse off, and this will keep us thankful; on the other hand, whenever we are tempted to set up our own wisdom or goodness, we must compare ourselves with those who

are wiser and better, and that will keep us humble. Molly was now so hungry, and found the potatoes so good, that she had no time to make any more remarks, but was devouring her dinner very heartily, when the barking of the great dog drew her attention from her trencher to the door, and spying the stranger, she cried out, Look, father, see here, if yonder is not the good gentleman. Mr. Johnson finding himself discovered, immediately walked in, and was heartily welcomed by the honest Shepherd, who told his wife that this was the gentleman to whom they were so much obliged.

The good woman began, as some very neat people are rather apt to do, with making many apologies that her house was not cleaner, and that things were not in fitter order to receive such a gentleman. Mr. Johnson, however, on looking round could discover nothing but the most perfect neatness. The trenchers on which they were eating was almost as white as their linen; and notwithstanding the number and smallness of the children there was not the least appearance of dirt or litter. The furniture was very simple and poor, hardly indeed amounting to bare necessaries. It consisted of four brown wooden chairs, which by constant rubbing were become as bright as a looking glass; an iron pot and kettle; a poor old grate which scarcely held a handful of coals, and out of which the little fire that had been in it, appeared the have been taken, as soon as it had answered the end for which it had been lighted, that of boiling their potatoes. Over the chimney stood an old-fashioned broad bright candlestick, and a still brighter spit; was very clear that this last was kept rather for ornament than use; an old carved elbow chair, and chest of the same date which stood in the corner

were considered as the most valuable part of the Shepherd's goods, having been in his family for three generations. But all these were lightly esteemed by him, in comparison of another possession, which added to the above, made up the whole of what he had inherited from his father, and which last he would not have parted with, if no other could have been had, for a King's ransom; this was a large old Bible, which lay on the window-seat, neatly covered with brown cloth, variously patched. This sacred book was most reverently preserved from dogs'-ears, dirt, and every other injury, but such as time and much use had made it suffer in spite of care. On the clean white walls was pasted a Hymn on the Crucifixion of our Savior, a print of the Prodigal Son, the Shepherd's Hymn, and a new History of a true Book.

After the first salutations were over, Mr. Johnson said, that if they would go on quietly with their dinner, he would sit down. Though a good deal ashamed, they thought it more respectful to obey the gentleman, who having cast his eye on their slender provisions, gently rebuked the Shepherd for not having indulged himself, as it was Sunday, with a morsel of bacon to relish his potatoes. The Shepherd said nothing, but poor Mary coloured and hung down her head, saying, indeed, Sir, it is not my fault—I did beg my husband to allow himself a bit of meat to day out of your honour's bounty; but he was too good to do it, and it is all for my sake. The Shepherd seemed unwilling to come to an explanation, but Mr. Johnson desired Mary to go on. So she continued—you must know, Sir, that both of us next to a sin dread a debt, but indeed in some cases a debt is a sin; but with all our care

and pains we have never been able quite to pay off the doctor's bill, for that bad fit of the rheumatism which I had last winter. Now when you were pleased to give my husband that kind present the other day, I heartily desired him to buy a bit of meat for Sunday, as I said before, that he might have a little refreshment for himself out of your kindness. But, answered he, Mary, it is never out of my head long together that we still owe a few shillings to the doctor, and thank God it is all we did owe in the world; now if I carry him this money directly, it will not only shew him our honesty and our good-will, but it will be an encouragement to him to come to you another time in case you should be taken once more in such a bad fit; for I must own, added my poor husband, that the thought of your being so terribly ill without any help, is the only misfortune that I want courage to face.

Here the grateful woman's tears ran down so fast, that she could not go on. She wiped them with the corner of her apron, and humbly begged pardon for making so free. Indeed, Sir, said the Shepherd, though my wife is full as unwilling to be in debt as myself, yet I could hardly prevail on her to consent to my paying this money just then, because she said, it was hard I should not have a taste of the gentleman's bounty myself. But for once Sir, I would have my own way. For you must know, as I pass best part of my time alone tending my sheep, 'tis a great point with me, Sir, to get comfortable matter for my own thoughts; so that 'tis rather self-interest in me to allow myself in pleasures and no practices that won't bear thinking on over and over, For when one is a good dea

alone, you know, Sir, all one's bad deeds do so rush in upon one, as I may say, and so torment one, that there is no true comfort to be had but in keeping clear of wrong doings and false pleasures; and that I suppose may be one reason why so many folks hate to stay a bit by themselves. But as I was saying—when I came to think the matter over on the hill yonder, said I to myself, a good dinner is a good thing I grant, and yet it will be but cold comfort to me a week after to be able to say—to be sure I had a nice shoulder of mutton last Sunday for dinner, thanks to the good gentleman, but then I am in debt. I HAD a rare dinner, that's certain, but the pleasure of that has long been over, and the debt still remains. I have spent the crown, and now if my poor wife should be taken in one of those fits again, die she must, unless God works a miracle to prevent it, for I can get no help for her. This thought settled all; and I set off directly and paid the crown to the doctor with as much cheerfulness as I should have felt on sitting down to the fattest shoulder of mutton that ever was roasted.—And if I was contented at the time, think how much more happy I have been at the remembrance! O, Sir, there are no pleasures worth the name but such as bring no plague or penitence after them.

Mr. Johnson was satisfied with the Shepherd's reasons, and agreed, that though a good dinner was not to be despised, yet it was not worthy to be compared with 'a contented mind,' which, as the Bible truly says, 'is a continual feast.' But come, said the good gentleman, what have we got in this brown mug?—As good water, said the Shepherd, as any in the King's dominions. I have heard of countries beyond sea, in which there is no whole-

some water—nay, I have been myself in a great town not far off, where they are obliged to buy all the water they get, while a good Providence sends to my very door a spring as clear and fine as Jacob's well. When I am tempted to repine that I have often no other drink, I call to mind, that it was nothing better than a cup of cold water which the woman of Samaria drew for the greatest guest that ever visited this world.

Very well, replied Mr. Johnson—but as your honesty has made you prefer a poor meal to being in debt, I will at least send and get something for you to drink. I saw a little public house just by the church as I came along. Let that little rosy-faced fellow fetch a mug of beer. So saying, he looked full at the boy, who did not offer to stir, but cast an eye at his father to know what he was to do. Sir, said the Shepherd, I hope we shall not appear ungrateful, if we seem to refuse your favour; my little boy would, I am sure, fly to serve you on any other occasion. But, good Sir, it is Sunday, and should any of my family be seen at the public-house on a Sabbath-day, it would be a much greater grief to me than to drink water all my life. I am often talking against these doings to others, and if I should say one thing and do another, you can't think what an advantage it would give many of my neighbours over me, who would be glad enough to report that they caught the Shepherd's son at the ale-house, without explaining how it happened. Christians, you know, Sir, must be doubly watchful, or they will not only bring disgrace on themselves, but what is much worse, on that holy name by which they are called.

Are you not a little too cautious, my honest friend? said Mr. Johnson. I humbly ask your pardon, Sir, replied the Shepherd, if I think that is impossible. In my poor notion, I no more understand how a man can be too cautious, than how he can be too strong or too healthy.

You are right, indeed, said Mr. Johnson, as a general principle, but this struck me as a very small thing.—Sir, said the Shepherd, I am afraid you will think me very bold, but you encourage me to speak out.—'Tis what I wish, said the gentleman.—Then, Sir, resumed the Shepherd, I doubt, if where there is a temptation to do wrong, any thing can be called small; that is, in short, if there is any such thing as a small wilful sin. A poor man, like me, is seldom called out to do great things, so that it is not by a few great deeds his character can be judged by his neighbours, but by the little round of daily customs he allows himself in.—While they were thus talking, the children who had stood very quietly behind, and had not stirred a foot, now began to scamper about all at once, and in a moment ran to the window-seat to pick up their little old hats. Mr. Johnson looked surprised at this disturbance; the Shepherd asked pardon, telling him it was the sound of the church bell which had been the cause of their rudeness; for their mother has brought them up with such a fear of being too late for church, that it was but who could catch the first stroke of the bell and be first ready. He had always taught them to think that nothing was more indecent than to get into church after it was begun; for as the service opened with an exhortation to repentance, and a confession of sin, it looked very presumptuous not to be ready to join in it: it looked as if people did not feel themselves to be

sinner. And though such as lived at a great distance might plead difference of clocks as an excuse, yet those who lived within the sound of the bell, could pretend neither ignorance nor mistake.

Mary and her children set forward. Mr. Johnson and the Shepherd followed, taking care to talk the whole way on such subjects as might fit them for the solemn duties of the place to which they were going. I have often been sorry to observe, said Mr. Johnson, that many who are reckoned decent good kind of people, and who would on no account neglect going to church, yet seem to care but little in what frame or temper of mind they go thither. They will talk of their worldly concerns till they get within the door, and then take them up again the very minute the sermon is over, which makes me ready to fear, they lay too much stress on the mere form of going to a place of worship. Now, for my part, I always find that it requires a little time to bring my mind into a state fit to do any COMMON business well, much more this great and most necessary business of all.—Yes, Sir, said the Shepherd, and then I think too how busy I should be in preparing my mind, if I was going into the presence of a great gentleman, or a lord, or the king—and shall the King of Kings be treated with less respect?—Besides, one likes to see people feel as if going to church was a thing of choice and pleasure, as well as duty, and that they were as desirous of not being last there, as they would be if they were going to a feast or a fair.

After service, Mr. Jenkins the clergyman, who was well acquainted with the character of Mr. Johnson, and had a great respect for him, accosted him with much civility, expressing his concern

that he could not enjoy just now so much of his conversation as he wished, as he was obliged to visit a sick person at a distance, but he hoped to have a little talk with him before he left the village. As they walked along together, Mr. Johnson made such inquiries about the Shepherd, as served to confirm him in the high opinion he entertained of his piety, good sense, industry, and self-denial. They parted, the clergyman promising to call in at the cottage in his way home.

The Shepherd, who took it for granted that Mr. Johnson was gone to the parsonage, walked home with his wife and children, and was beginning in his usual way to catechize and instruct his family, when Mr. Johnson came in, and insisted that the Shepherd should go on with his instructions just as if he was not there. This gentleman who was very desirous of being useful to his own servants, and workmen in the way of religious instruction, was sometimes sorry to find, that though he took a good deal of pains, they did not now and then quite understand him, for though his meaning was very good, his language was not always very plain, and though the THINGS he said were not so hard to be understood, yet the WORDS were, especially to such as were very ignorant. And he now began to find out, that if people were ever so wise and good, yet if they had not a simple, agreeable, and familiar way of expressing themselves, some of their plain hearers would not be much the better for them—For this reason he was not above listening to the plain, humble way in which this honest man taught his family, for though he knew that he himself had many advantages over the Shepherd, had more learning, and could teach him many things, yet he

was not too proud to learn, even of so poor a man, in any point where he thought the Shepherd might have the advantage of him.

This gentleman was much pleased with the knowledge and piety he discovered in the answers of the children, and desired the Shepherd to tell him how he contrived to keep up a sense of divine things in his own mind, and in that of his family, with so little leisure and so little reading—O, as to that, Sir, said the Shepherd, we do not read much, except in one book to be sure, but by hearty prayer for God's blessing on the use of that book, what little knowledge is needful seems to come of course as it were. And my chief study has been to bring the fruits of the Sunday reading in the week's business, and to keep up the same sense of God in the heart, when the Bible is in the cupboard, as when it is in the hand. In short, to apply what I read in the book, to what I meet with in the field.

I don't quite understand you, said Mr. Johnson.—Sir, replied the Shepherd, I have but a poor gift at conveying these things to others, though I have much comfort from them in my own mind; but I am sure that the most ignorant and hard working people, who are in earnest about their salvation, may help to keep up devout thoughts and good affections during the week, though they have hardly any time to look in a book. And it will help them to keep out bad thoughts too, which is no small matter. But then they must know the Bible: they must have read the word of God; this is a kind of stock in trade for a Christian to set up with; and it is this which makes me so diligent in teaching it to my children—and even in storing their memories with psalms and chapters. This is a great help

to a poor hard working man, who will hardly meet with any thing but what he may turn to some good account. If one lives in the fear and love of God, almost every thing one sees abroad will teach one to adore his power and goodness, and bring to mind some texts of Scripture which shall fill the heart with thankfulness, and the mouth with praise.—When I look upwards, ‘The Heavens declare the glory of God;’ and shall I be silent and ungrateful? If I looked round and see the valleys standing thick with corn, how can I help blessing that Power who ‘Giveth me all things richly to enjoy?’—I may learn gratitude from the beasts of the field, for the ‘Ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,’ and shall a Christian not know, shall a Christian not consider what great things God has done for him? I, who am a Shepherd endeavor to fill my soul with a constant remembrance of that good Shepherd, who ‘Feedeth me in green pastures, and maketh me to lie down beside the still waters, and whose rod and staff comfort me.’

You are happy, said Mr. Johnson, in the retired life, by which you escape the corruptions of the world.—Sir, said the Shepherd, I do not escape the corruptions of my own evil nature. Even there, on that wild solitary hill, I can find out that my heart is prone to evil thoughts. I suppose, Sir, that different states have different temptations.—You great folks that live in the world, perhaps, are exposed to some of which such a poor man as I am, know nothing. But to one who leads a lonely life like me, evil thoughts are a chief besetting sin, and I can no more withstand these without the grace of God, than a rich man can withstand the snares of evil company, without the same grace. And I

feel that I stand in need of God's help continually, and if he should give me up to my own evil heart, I should be lost.

Mr. Johnson approved of the Shepherd's sincerity, for he had always observed, that where there was no humility, and no watchfulness against sin, there was no religion, and he said, that the man who did not feel himself to be a sinner, in his opinion, could not be a Christian.

Just as they were in this part of the discourse, Mr. Jenkins the clergyman, came in. After the usual salutations, he said, Well, Shepherd, I wish you joy.—I know you will be sorry to gain any advantage by the death of a neighbour, but old Wilson, my clerk, was so infirm, and I trust so well prepared, that there is no reason to be sorry for his death. I have been to pray by him, but he died while I staid. I have always intended you should succeed to his place; 'tis no great matter, but every little is something.

No great matter, Sir, said the Shepherd, indeed it is a great thing to me—it will more than pay my rent—blessed be God for all his goodness. Mary said nothing, but lifted up her eyes full of tears in silent gratitude.

I am glad of this little circumstance, said Mr. Jenkins, not only for your sake, but for the sake of the office itself. I so heartily reverence every religious institution, that I would never have even the AMEN added to the excellent prayers of our church by vain or profane lips, and if it depended on me, there should be no such thing in the land as an idle, drunken, or irreligious parish clerk. Sorry I am to say, that this matter is not always suffici-

ently attended to, and that I know some of a very indifferent character.

Mr. Johnson now enquired of the clergyman whether there were many children in the parish.—More than you would expect, replied he, from the seeming smallness of it, but there are some little hamlets which you do not see. I think, returned Mr. Johnson, I recollect that in the conversation I had with the Shepherd on the hill yonder, he told me you had no Sunday-school.—I am sorry to say we have none, said the minister—I do what I can to remedy this misfortune by public catechizing; but having two or three churches to serve, I cannot give so much time as I wish to private instruction; and having a large family of my own, and no assistance from others, I have never been able to establish a school.

There is an excellent institution in London, said Mr. Johnson, called the Sunday-School Society, which kindly gives books and other helps, on the application of such pious ministers as stand in need of their aid, and which I am sure would have assisted you, but I think we shall be able to do something ourselves. Shepherd, continued he, if I was a king, and had it in my power to make you a rich and a great man, with a word speaking, I would not do it. Those who are raised by some sudden stroke, much above the station in which Divine Providence had placed them, seldom turn out very good or very happy. I have never had very great things in my power; but as far as I have been able I have been always glad to assist the worthy. I have however, never attempted or desired to set any poor man much above his natural condition, but it is a pleasure to me to lend him such assistance as

may make that condition more easy to himself, and to put him in a way which shall call him to the performance of more duties than perhaps he could have performed without my help, and of performing them in a better manner.—What rent do you pay for this cottage?

Fifty shillings a year, Sir.

It is in a sad tattered condition, is there not a better to be had in the village?

That in which the poor clerk lived, said the clergyman, is not only more tight and whole, but has two decent chambers, and has a very large light kitchen. That will be very convenient, replied Mr. Johnson: pray what is the rent?—I think, said the Shepherd, poor neighbour Wilson gave somewhat about four pounds a year, or it might be guineas.—Very well, said Mr. Johnson, and what will the clerk's place be worth, think you?—About three pounds, was the answer.

Now, continued Mr. Johnson, my plan is, that the Shepherd should take that house immediately, for as the poor man is dead, there will be no need of waiting till quarter-day, if I make up the difference.—True, Sir, said Mr. Jenkins, and I am sure my wife's father, whom I expect to-morrow, will willingly assist a little towards buying some of the clerk's old goods. And the sooner they remove the better, for poor Mary caught that bad rheumatism by sleeping under a leaky thatch. The Shepherd was too much moved to speak, and Mary could hardly sob out, Oh! Sir, you are too good, indeed, this house will do very well—It may do very well for you and your children, Mary, said Mr. Johnson, gravely, but it will not do for a school; the kitchen is neither large nor light enough. Shepherd, con-

tinued he, with your good minister's leave, and kind assistance, I propose to set up in this parish a Sunday-school, and to make you the master. It will not at all interfere with your weekly calling, and it is the only lawful way in which you could turn the Sabbath into a day of some little profit to your family, by doing as I hope, a great deal of good to the souls of others. The rest of the week you will work as usual. The difference of the rent between this house and the clerk's, I shall pay myself, for to put you in a better house at your own expence, would be no great act of kindness. As for honest Mary, who is not fit for hard labour, or any out-of door work, I propose to endow a small weekly school, of which she shall be the mistress, and employ her notable turn to good account, by teaching ten or a dozen girls to knit, sew, spin, card or any other useful way of getting their bread, for all this I shall only pay her the usual price, for I am not going to make you rich but useful.

Not rich, Sir, cried the Shepherd. How can I ever be thankful enough for such blessings? And will my poor Mary have a dry thatch over her head! And shall I be able to send for the doctor when I am like to loose her? Indeed, my cup runs over with blessings, I hope God will give me humility. Here he and Mary looked at each other, and burst into tears.—The gentlemen saw their distress, and kindly walked out upon the little green before the door, that these honest people might give vent to their feelings. As soon as they were alone, they crept into one corner of the room, where they thought they could not be seen, and fell on their knees, devoutly blessing and praising God for his mercies. Never were heartier pray-

ers presented, that this grateful couple offered up for their benefactors. The warmth of their gratitude could only be equalled by the earnestness with which they besought the blessings of God on the work in which they were going to engage.

The two gentlemen now left this happy family, and walked to the parsonage, where the evening was spent in a manner very edifying to Mr. Johnson, who the next day took all proper measures for putting the Shepherd in immediate possession of his now comfortable habitation. Mr. Jenkins's father-in-law, the worthy gentleman who gave the Shepherd's wife the blankets, in the first part of this history, arrived at the parsonage before Mr. Johnson left it, and assisted in fitting up the clerk's cottage.

Mr. Johnson took his leave, promising to call on the worthy minister and his new clerk once a year in his summer's journey over the Plain, as long as it should please God to spare his life.—He had every reason to be satisfied with the objects of his bounty. The Shepherd's zeal and piety made him a blessing to the rising generation. The old resorted to his school for the benefit of hearing the young instructed; and the clergyman had the pleasure of seeing that he was rewarded for the protection he gave to the school, by the great increase in his congregation. The Shepherd not only exhorted both parents and children to the indispensable duty of a regular attendance at church, but by his pious counsels he drew them thither, and by his plain and prudent instructions enabled them to understand, and of course to delight in the public worship of God,

F I N I S.