

"The Sheep"

The Present Truth – July 26, 1900

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We began last week talking about things to be seen in the country, and our picture this week shows us something that can be seen at some time or other in almost every English meadow. It is interesting to count how many flocks of sheep are passed in riding through the country, and the number of them will show that the raising of sheep is very largely undertaken in this country.

No country produces finer sheep than England. Their fleeces are large and well suited for making up into clothing. The Spanish sheep have finer wool, and some of this is usually worked up with that of the English sheep, but the fleece of the Spanish sheep is not nearly so heavy as that of the English.

A flock of sheep is a beautiful sight, and brings to mind many of the tenderest passages of Scripture. See how many of these you can recall.

From the earliest times there have been very close ties between men and the gentle, harmless sheep, perhaps because, being so helpless, they require more of man's care and thought than animals of more strength and intelligence. And do you know that the way to cultivate love is to bestow kindness and thoughtful care? So every good shepherd learns to love his sheep, because they need so much of his attention.

One of the first things that we are told in the Bible is that Abel "was a keeper of sheep." No doubt his work among the sheep taught him many lessons of the Lord's love and care for him, which made him obedient and faithful to God.

The riches of kings and princes in the old patriarchal times of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, consisted largely of their immense flocks and herds. You can recall many incidents in the Bible that show this, and many scenes in which the sheep are a part of the picture.

The cause of the separation of Abraham and Lot was that their flocks and herds had become so large that the land could not bear both. There was continual strife among the herdsmen, all anxious to get the best pasturage for their own flocks and herds. Think of the evening scene at "the mouth of the well" in "the east country" to which Jacob fled from the wrath of Esau. While he waited at the well, making enquiries about his uncle Laban who lived near, "Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them."

And during all the years that Jacob served Laban for the love that he had for the beautiful shepherdess, his work was "to feed and keep his flock." When he left, he described his anxious and faithful care for them in the words:—

“Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus having been twenty years.”

The occupation of Moses in the land of Midian for forty years was that of a shepherd; he “kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law.” And it was when he was leading the sheep that the Lord appeared to him in the burning bush.

Of the shepherd boy David I need not remind you, for you know well the beautiful shepherd psalm in which he sings of the love and care of the Lord our Shepherd for us the sheep of His pasture.

It seems sad, as we see the happy flock in their peaceful country surroundings, to think of what will be the end of so many of the sheep—to be driven terror-stricken through the crowded city streets to the slaughter houses where their lives will be sacrificed, and they will be butchered to make food for man. But this we will talk more another time.

“No flocks that range the valley free
To slaughter I condemn;
Taught by the Power that pities me,
I learn to pity them.”