

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XX.

TORONTO, AUGUST 18, 1900.

No 33.



EASTERN SHEPHERDS.

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

BY THE EDITOR.

In the pathetic passage in Isaiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Is. 53. 6), so exquisitely interpreted by the plaintive music of Handel's immortal "Messiah," and in Ps. 119 and 176, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep," we have a touching description of mankind wandering from the fold.

Over and over again, among the shepherds of Palestine, have I seen striking illustrations of the beautiful passages in Isaiah 40. 11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young;" and of Psalm 80. 1, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." In the loose folds of the abba, or outer garment, the weak or weary lambs are still tenderly carried almost as a mother would carry her babe.

I remember once seeing a shepherd with seemingly intense solicitude counting his flock as they were folded by night. As this is not always done it would seem that he was fearful that one of them had gone astray. It brought vividly to my mind the beautiful passage, "If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay

In the shelter of the fold,  
But one was out on the hills away,  
Far off from the gates of gold—  
Away from the mountains wild and bare,  
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, thou hast here thy ninety and nine:

Are they not enough for thee?  
But the Shepherd made answer, "This of mine  
Has wandered away from me:  
And altho' the road be rough and steep  
I go to the desert to find my sheep."

The yearning pity of our Lord for the lost sheep of the house of Israel is shown in the tender words of Matt. 9. 36, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." And should not this be our true attitude of soul to the erring and sinning?—not one of harsh condemnation, but of tender sympathy. The crowded thousands in the slums are more like dazed and bewildered sheep than like ravening wolves, to be hunted to their destruction as they often are by the relentless hand of power. They should rather be shepherded, and fostered, and gathered into the fold.

No words in any literature of any land are more beautiful and touching than those in that sweet Hebrew idyl of which

the world will never grow tired, the twenty-third Psalm. Lipped by the pallid lips of the dying throughout the ages, it has strengthened their hearts as they entered the valley of the shadow of death. To this our Lord lends a deeper tenderness by the parable of the Lost Sheep. Small wonder that to the persecuted flock of Christ in every time, to the church in



A SYRIAN SHEPHERD.—"HE GOETH BEFORE THEM AND THE SHEEP FOLLOW HIM."

the Catacombs, to the little flock in the midst of ravening wolves, to the harried Covenanters, to the great multitude "of whom the world was not worthy, who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented"—small wonder that this was the favourite type of that unwearied love that sought the erring and wandering and brought them to his fold again. In the dim, dark crypts of the Catacombs, those "dens and caves of the earth," with reiterated and manifold treatment the tender story is repeated over and over again, making the gloomy crypts bright with scenes of idyllic beauty, and hallowed with sacred associations.

This symbol very happily sets forth the entire scope of Christian doctrine. It illustrates the sweet pastoral representations of man's relationship to the Shepherd of Israel who, adeth Joseph like a flock, and his indual dependence upon him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of all souls. But it especially illustrates the character and office of our Lord, and the many passages of Scripture in which he represents himself as

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

who forsook his eternal throne to seek through the wilderness-world the lost and wandering sheep, to save whom he gave his life that he might bring them

to the evergreen pastures of heaven.

The Good Shepherd is generally represented as a youthful, fearless figure, in a short Roman tunic and buskins, bearing tenderly the lost sheep which he has found and laid upon his shoulders with rejoicing. This is evidently not a personal image, but an allegorical representation of the "Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep." He is generally surrounded by a group of fleecy followers, whose action and attitude indicate the disposition of soul and manner of hearing the Word. Some are listening earnestly; others are more intent on cropping the herbage at their feet, the types of those occupied with the cares and pleasures and riches of this world. A truant ram is turning heedlessly away, as if refusing to listen, and often a gentle ewe nestles fondly at the Shepherd's feet or caresses his hand.

Sometimes the sheep appears to nestle with an expression of human tenderness and love on the Shepherd's shoulders; in other examples it is more or less firmly held with one or both hands, as if to prevent its escape. In a few instances the fold is seen in the background, which seems to complete the allegory. Frequently the Shepherd carries a staff or crook in his hand, on which he sometimes leans, as if weary beneath his burden. He is sometimes even represented sitting on a mound, as if overcome with fatigue, thus recalling the pathetic words

towards the fallen, rejoicing more over the lost sheep that was found than over the ninety and nine that went not astray.

There is much to be said," writes Archdeacon Farrar, "for the interpretation adopted by Mr. Matthew Arnold in his exquisite sonnet which regards the kid as indicating the large divine compassion, against which Tertullian's fiercely protested"

"He saves the sheep the goats he doth not save."  
So spake the fierce Tertullian, but she sigh'd,  
The Infant Church 'of love she felt the tide  
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave,  
And then she smiled, and in the Catacombs,  
On those walls subterranean, where she hid  
Her head 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs,  
With eyes suffused, but heart inspired true,  
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew,  
And on his shoulders not a lamb, a kid."

The later Christian poets also celebrated this tender theme. In lines whose lyric cadence charms the ear like a shepherd's pipe, Thomas Aquinas sings:

"Bone Pastor, panis vere,  
Jesu, nostri miserere,  
Tu nos bona fac videre,  
Tu nos bona fac videre,  
In terra viventium.

"Tu qui cuncta scis et vales,  
Qui nos pascis hic mortales  
Tuos ibi commensales  
Cohaeredes et sodales  
Fac sanctorum civium."

Another mediaeval hymn runs sweetly thus:

"Jesu dulcissime, e throno gloriae  
Ovem perditam venisti quarere!  
Jesu suavissime, pastor filissimic,  
Ad te O trahere me, ut semper sequar  
te!"

As a protection against the Bedouin robber strong sheepfolds were constructed, like that shown in our cut, in which the sheep were carefully guarded at night, even, if need be, at the cost of the shepherd's life. Again and again one sees the parable of the Good Shepherd, enacted under his eyes. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."—John 10. 3, 4, 5, 14.

At Bethlehem I witnessed a pastoral

(Continued on next page.)

of the "Dies Irae": "Quaerens me sedisti lassus,"

"Seeking me thou sattest weary," words which Dr. Samuel Johnson never could read without tears.

Sometimes the Shepherd is represented as leading or bearing on his shoulders a kid or goat instead of a sheep or lamb. This apparent solecism has been thought a careless imitation of pagan figures of the sylvan deity Pan, who frequently appears in art in this manner. It is more probable, however, that it was an intentional departure from the usual type, as if to illustrate the words of our Lord, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," and to indicate his tenderness to



CHAMBER IN THE CATACOMBS, WITH FREScoes OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD IN THE VAULTING AND THE PANEL.