

December 15

The Lord is my Shepherd. Psalm 23:1

THE Lord, in calling His people His sheep, chose a very significant emblem of the character He would have manifested in them. The most noticeable characteristics of

THE TRUE SHEEP WILL CAREFULLY LISTEN FOR THE FAINTEST ACCENTS

R5686 "Knowledge is the basis of faith and obedience. Without knowledge we could accomplish nothing. Knowledge shows us the will of God."

R4206 "As the mariner guides the course of his ship by certain charts which show hidden rocks and shoals, and by the stars in their courses, so the Christian is furnished with a chart which shows him the course which he should pursue, and the things which would be displeasing to God and injurious to himself. That chart is the Bible... The zeal which disregards the divine instruction is not approved; it leads to shipwreck."

E167 "Let us not accept the doubts and speculations of good people who are dead, or of good people who are living, nor yet our own. Let us remember the Apostle's declaration that the Word of the Lord is given with the intention-- "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3:17) Let us place our reliance wholly upon the Lord, and seek to know the meaning of what he declares respecting the holy Spirit, bringing every Scripture testimony into harmony; assured that the truth, and it only, will stand such a searching examination. So doing, prayerfully and carefully, our efforts shall be rewarded. To him that knocketh, the door of knowledge shall be opened; to him that seeketh, the knowledge of the holy Spirit shall be revealed. Isa. 8:20; Matt. 7:7,8"

Joh 10:27 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"

R5491 "The true sheep will listen intently for the faintest sound of the shepherd's voice. It will respond quickly to his call; it will watch for his guidance. Let us manifest all these most desirable traits of character, and ever keep close to our Heavenly Shepherd and Guide, dwelling under His loving care and watchful eye. Those who thus abide in Christ are safe."

TREASURE UP HIS WORDS IN THE HEART

(Joh 10:5 KJV) "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

R1535 "While there are thousands of voices calling, now in this direction and now in that, the Lord's sheep, acquainted with his Spirit and his Word, turn away from all save the well known voice of the Shepherd. In various ways our Shepherd speaks to his flock of sheep and lambs. His written words treasured up in the heart mark the way of truth continually; his special providences further shape the peculiar course of each individual; and the abiding presence of his holy Spirit makes manifest every intrusion

the sheep are meekness, docility and obedience to the shepherd to whose care they fully entrust themselves....The true sheep will carefully listen for the faintest accents of the voice of the Shepherd-- i.e., he will treasure up His words in his heart, he will

of any other spirit which seeks to beguile and to lead astray."

R5491 "Let us not stray...from the green pastures and pure waters to go browsing on the thistles and poisonous weeds of some bypath, or to drink of the muddy, polluted waters of human speculation and delusive theories of men."

CULTIVATE COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD

(Psa 91:1 KJV) "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

R1787 "This secret place of the Most High, Beloved, is the place of intimate communion and fellowship with God, through the blessed privilege of prayer and through faith in his precious Word and his promised providential care.

"When all around our souls give way,
He then is all our hope and stay."

Oh, how precious is this hiding place! What rest and refreshment we find in the midst of the commotion that is even now bestirring the whole world... Here we find rest, peace, light and joy, which the world can neither give nor take away."

R5989 "These dwellers in the secret place of the Most High are provided in these perilous times with a clear knowledge of the Divine Plan, with its times and seasons, which enables them to see both the necessity for the present method of Divine discipline upon the world and also the peaceable fruits of righteousness which shall result therefrom. In the midst of the storm and battle of this great Day of the Lord, they hear the commanding voice of the Lord of armies, and their hearts rejoice; for they have full confidence in His ability to bring order out of all the confusion. They realize that in the judgments of this Day it is the Lord that speaks from Heaven--from the high place of authority and control; therefore they give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness (Psalm 30:4) --of His Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power, which insure His doing all things well."

PSALMS 23:1

*"The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want."*

R3268 "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"
Psalm 23--Nov. 15.

JEHOVAH is my Shepherd, is the Prophet's sentiment, and our Lord's explanation of the matter further is that the great Shepherd's Son has been given full charge of the sheep. (John 10:1-16.) Not all mankind, however, are sheep, or have the Shepherd's care. In the present time only those who have heard the Shepherd's voice and responded to his call to become his sheep are of his flock, and his word on the subject is that it is a little flock, to whom it will be the Father's good pleasure eventually to give the kingdom in

study His providences, and he will cultivate that communion and personal fellowship with the Lord which are his privilege. Those who thus abide in Him can never go astray.

"They can never, never lose their way."
Z. '02-365 R3116:2

joint-heirship with his Son, their "Chief Shepherd." Then will come the time referred to by our Lord when "other sheep" will be found. The entire Millennial age, with all the forces and blessings of the heavenly kingdom, will be devoted to the finding of the other sheep. Our Lord's words are,--"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [not of the little flock of this Gospel age]; them also I must bring [in due time to a knowledge of the Truth and to the full privileges of sheep], and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16)..."

Applying the psalm to the little flock, all of its provisions fit most minutely. Because the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not want. Those who are proper sheep will submit their wills to the shepherd's will and trust wholly to his guidance, and so doing are relieved of that anxious craving so common to the children of the world and which is never satisfied, but the more it gets, the more it wants. The Lord's sheep appreciate the heavenly things more than the earthly, and their wants in this respect are more than supplied when they accept by faith the divine assurance that

"No good thing will he withhold

From sheep which stray not from his fold."

They have given up every earthly interest in exchange for the heavenly, and, realizing their own insufficiency and lack of judgment, they are trusting to the Lord to grant them such experiences, leadings, trials, difficulties, blessing, etc., in this present life as will be for their highest good, and as would work out for them a share of the glorious things of the future to which they have been called. The wants of this class are not of the kind after which the Gentiles seek, and for which they are anxious and strive. They in their hearts rejoice in the sentiment expressed by the poet, 'Jesus has satisfied, Jesus is mine.' -- Matt. 6:32"

R4157 "Many, indeed, might have been glad of the honor of being the Shepherd, the caretaker of the Lord's flock, but the test, the cost, was too great for them... The true Shepherd was willing to make the sacrifice and to lay down his life for the sheep. We may remark here that while there is but one Shepherd of the Lord's flock, he, in his absence, has made provision for his flock, that he would give them pastors and teachers who were to feed the flock of God and to watch for their souls, for their lives, to protect their interests.

It is in line with the Master's teaching that we find that he expects all who would be worthy of this position of feeding this flock, shepherding them, must have his spirit, his willingness to lay down their lives for the sheep, and in their defense, as his representatives, to protect them from the Adversary and his various snares and machinations and from the wolves in sheep's clothing who would make merchandise of them that they might bring them into bondage, into human pens separate and apart from the true fold opened by the true Shepherd and who would feed them upon the husks of human tradition, instead of leading

them to the green pastures of "Present Truth." As the true sheep know the true Shepherd and are known by him, so the true Shepherd should know the true under-shepherds and they should know the sheep intimately. Those who utter a voice or call of their own cannot be recognized by the true Shepherd or by the true sheep; the

faithful under-shepherd will speak not only the words but also in the tones, in the manner of the true Shepherd."

R2080 "Each sheep [is to] recognize as leaders only such as are found in full accord with the voice and spirit of the Chief Shepherd (Christ), and the under-shepherds (the Apos-

ties), and that each sheep see to it that he eats only "clean provender" and drinks only "pure water" as directed by the Shepherd. (See Ezek. 34:17-19) This implies the exercise of the individual conscience of each member of Christ's flock on matters of doctrine and practice, and tends to keep each one in sympathy and fellowship with the Shepherd..."

R3116 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)
"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"

⁽¹⁾THE LORD, in calling his people his sheep, chose a very significant emblem of the character he would have manifested in them. The most noticeable characteristics of the sheep are meekness, docility and obedience to the shepherd to whose care they fully entrust themselves. They are very true to the shepherd: they study his voice, watch for the indications of his will, and trustfully obey him. When they hear his voice, quickly, and without the slightest hesitation or faltering, they run to obey it. But the voice of a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.

What a lesson is here for the Lord's "little flock," over whom he is the good Shepherd. The weakest lamb in the flock knows his voice and hears him say, "This is the way: walk ye in it." And while there are thousands of voices calling, now in this direction and now in that, the Lord's sheep, acquainted with his Spirit and his Word, turn away from all save the well known voice of the Shepherd. In various ways our Shepherd speaks to his flock of sheep and lambs. His written words treasured up in the heart mark the way of truth continually; his special providences further shape the peculiar course of each individual; and the abiding presence of his holy Spirit makes manifest every intrusion of any other spirit which seeks to beguile and to lead astray. The true sheep will carefully listen for the faintest accents of the voice of the Shepherd--i.e., he will treasure up his words in his heart; he will study his providences; and he will cultivate that communion and personal fellowship with the Lord which are his privilege. Those who thus abide in him can never go astray.

"They can never, never lose their way."

They may not have much learning, and, humanly speaking, would not be able to grapple with all the sophistries of error. But, being so well acquainted with the Master's voice, they quickly perceive that such voices are the voices of strangers, and they will not follow them; for they are loyal and obedient to the Shepherd only.

In such an attitude of mind and heart is our only safety in the midst of all the difficulties and confusion of this evil day. And all such may confidently sing with the Psalmist--

⁽¹⁾ Dec. 15 Manna, Psa. 23:1

R4278 "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"
—PSALM 23.—NOVEMBER 15.— *Golden Text*:—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."—Psalm 23:1.

OF ALL the beautiful symbolic pictures which the Lord gave us through the Prophet David, none seems more forceful than that of the Psalm which constitutes our lesson. The eastern shepherd and his love and care for his sheep are given us as an illustration of our heavenly Father's care over us. It is true that our dear Redeemer was sent forth as the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, and by his death opened the door into the sheep-fold of divine love and favor and rest and peace. This was a favorite picture that our Lord Jesus gave us of himself: "I know my sheep, and am known of mine"; "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me"; "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger." The Apostle followed the same thought when speaking of our Lord's return. He refers to him as the Good Shepherd of the flock: "For ye were as sheep

going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Pet. 2:25.) The same thought is maintained when the elders of the Church are referred to as pastors and "overseers of the Church of God."—Acts 20:28.

But while it is refreshing for us to take a comprehensive view of the divine favor and care manifested in provisions made for our welfare as the Lord's sheep, it is well that we should ever keep in mind that the under-shepherds do not own the flock, and that their value to the flock as overseers consists in their faithfulness in making known to the sheep the message of the Great Shepherd and, to the extent of their ability, communicating his tone and his spirit with his Word. The faithful of these, like the Apostle, may urge, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord."—1 Thess. 1:6.

On the other hand the sheep are called upon to mark the spirit of the under-shepherds, whether or not it comports with that of the Chief Shepherd, so that they be

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down [to rest--the rest of faith] in green pastures [with abundance of satisfying food]; he leadeth me beside the still waters [deep, refreshing truths]. He restoreth my soul [reclaims it from death]; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake [because I am his child and bear his honored name]. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [The entire journey of life since the fall has been through a vale of tears, upon which rests the shadow of death], I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. [Thy word and providences discipline and guide me in the way]." Our Shepherd's providence not only disciplines the true sheep, but protects them from the "wolves" and other foes.

With the Prophet, we can also say, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies [for even while beset by Satan and Sin, we are sustained by the Lord's abundant provision for every necessity]; thou anointest my head with [the] oil [of joy], my cup [pleasure] runneth over [even while, as a pilgrim, I am beset with life's difficulties]." And, in view of the Lord's present and past leading, all, who continue to be truly his sheep, can certainly trust that--"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord [will be recognized as a member of his household, as his child] forever."

Let us seek to cultivate more and more the meek, docile and loyal character of the sheep, that so we may be abundantly blessed by the care of the good Shepherd. Such a disposition does not commend itself to the world--the wayward goat, the bold lion, or the stealthy bear, the subtle serpent and vicious vampire are more fitting emblems of their ideals, and are usually the emblems selected for their escutcheons. But let the world love its own, while we remember that we are not of the world, but are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, and that our safety and spiritual prosperity depend, not upon our own wisdom and sagacity, but entirely upon our diligent hearkening to, and patient following of, the voice of the good Shepherd, who will very soon highly exalt his little flock and crown them with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

not led astray. They are to try the spirits of those who pose as pastors or under-shepherds, to note whether they be of God or whether they speak of themselves; whether their words and deeds are according to love or according to selfishness. They are enjoined to note these under-shepherds who feed upon the flock, but do not feed the flock.

Examining our text critically, we perceive that the Shepherd is not any of the under-shepherds, nor even our Lord Jesus, but the heavenly Father. The Hebrew word here rendered Lord is Jehovah. This fact greatly enhances the value of the entire picture. While it is proper for us to love all the sheep and the "under-shepherds" and the "Good Shepherd" of the flock, it adds to our joy to know who is the "Great Shepherd" and to hear the "Good Shepherd," his Son, assure the sheep of the Father's love, saying, "The Father himself loveth you." How wonderful that the heavenly Father, surrounded by the sinless angelic hosts, should feel an interest and a care for his human sheep of

the earthly plane, who, through Adam's disobedience, were plunged into death; and how precious to us is the knowledge that at great cost he sent his Son to be our "Good Shepherd," and to bring back to the divine fold all of the sheep that are desirous to return!...

"MY SHEEP FOLLOW ME"

Our lesson relates, not to the flock of the future, but to the one of the present—the "little flock" which the Lord, during this Gospel Age, is now gathering out of every nation, people, kindred and tongue. It is the Father's flock, and his Son, our Redeemer, represents him, as he tells us, "As I hear, I speak"; "I came to do the will of my Father in heaven." Thus the Shepherd's Son fully and completely represents the Great Shepherd; as he says, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." And again, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me."

The wealth of our relationship to the "Great Shepherd" and his Son increases in our appreciation in proportion as we grow in knowledge. As our Redeemer said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."—John 17:3.

"No good thing will he withhold from sheep which stray not from his fold."

How comforting is the declaration, "I shall not want!" Our Lord illustrates this lesson by pointing out that a kind earthly father would not give a stone instead of bread, nor a serpent instead of fish, and so he assures us that our heavenly Father, much more loving and tender, will withhold from us nothing that will be for our good. We are to remember, however, that it is not as human beings that he does this, but as "New Creatures" in Christ Jesus. It is not the justified believer merely that is a member of this Little Flock at the present time, but the sanctified believer, fully consecrated to walk in the "Good Shepherd's" footsteps, to hear his voice and follow him. Our Lord informed us at the start that following him as his disciples, as his sheep of the Little Flock now being selected, must signify to us, as to him, worldly disfavor and opposition, not only from the prince of darkness, but also from those deluded by him and under the sway of his spirit of anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife, backbiting, slander, evil-speaking, etc. And in addition to these things we are to expect to contend with our own blemishes and weaknesses. Such a picture of the "narrow way" would indeed have terrified us had it not been for our Shepherd's assurance of succor in every time of need, and his assurance that these trials to the flesh rightly received would constitute a part of our development in the spirit and preparation for the "Rest that remaineth for the people of God."

"I shall not want" may be applied to the necessities of the present life. We are assured that "No good thing will he withhold from us;" but he specially means that we shall not want, not lack the disciplines, the trials, the instructions, the encouragements, the reproofs, and the assistance necessary to our attainment to all "The glorious things that God hath in reservation for those that love him." The only condition connected with this promise is that we shall abide in his love, abide in his flock, continue to hearken to his voice and to follow his directions. How dangerous then to all of the true sheep would be any measure of worldly

ambition, pride or self-esteem! How necessary that the heart should be right, desirous of knowing and obeying the Shepherd's voice! With what care should the sheep scrutinize the motives which actuate their daily conduct, their words and the thoughts of their hearts!

"GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS"

Professor G. A. Smith says, "A Syrian or an Arabian pasture is very different from the narrow meadows and fenced hillsides with which we are familiar. It is vast, and often virtually boundless. It has to be so, for by far the greater part of it is desert—that is, land not absolutely barren, but refreshed by rain for only a few months, and through the rest of the year abandoned to the pitiless sun that sucks all life out of the soil. The landscape the Psalmist saw seemed to him to reflect the mingled wildness and beauty of his own life. To him human life was just this wilderness of terrible contrasts, where the light is so bright, but the shadows the darker and more treacherous; where the pasture is rich, but scattered in the wrinkles of vast deserts; where the paths are illusive, yet man's passion flies swift and straight to its revenge; where all is separation and disorder, yet law sweeps inexorable, and a man is hunted down to death by his bloodguiltiness."

More and more as "New Creatures" we are learning to appreciate the barrenness of worldly hopes and ambitions and knowledge. And more and more we should be giving heed to the leadings of the "Good Shepherd," who is guiding his flock of "New Creatures" for their spiritual refreshment through the labyrinth of the "present evil world." Those sheep which keep nearest to the Shepherd secure the fattest and richest experiences and refreshments. On the contrary, the sheep which stray looking for pastures green on their own account, or following the voice of false shepherds, are the ones that are likely to become hungry and eat of the poisonous growths and fall into the pitfalls of sin and be devoured by the ravenous beasts of passion and worldliness. Happy is the sheep who learns to know the voice of the true Shepherd, and whose faith is such that he follows closely and not afar off!

LYING DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES

To lie down is to be at rest, to be happy. This is the privilege of all the Lord's true sheep. Outwardly they may be distressed and "on the run," assailed by the world, the flesh and the Adversary, but as "New Creatures" they may be at rest, at peace, because of their nearness to the Lord, the Shepherd, and because of their faith in his overruling providence, which is able to make "all things work together for good." "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend (stumble) them." These let the "peace of God rule in their hearts...and are thankful." It is to these that our Lord's words apply, "My peace I give unto you....Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

This rest, this peace of heart, is absolutely essential to our development as "New Creatures," even as the crystals are deposited from the liquids when they are quiet and not when they are in agitation. So the crystalline character which God is developing in us absolutely demands that a condition of

rest, peace, quietness of heart, shall be attained; and to the attainment of this condition patience, faith and love, the chief graces of the spirit, are necessary.

THE LABYRINTH OF LIFE

"A labyrinth is a species of structure full of intricate passages and windings, so that when once entered it is next to impossible for an individual to extricate himself without a guide. The one in ancient Egypt, near Lake Moeris, was composed of twelve great palaces containing, according to Herodotus, three thousand chambers and halls. The palaces were connected by courts, around which ran a vast number of most intricate passages. Around the whole was a wall with only one entrance."

"Some years ago," writes Hawthorne, "a minister was rambling in the famous labyrinth of Henry VIII, at Hampton Court near London, where the common children's puzzle is wrought out on a large scale by paths between high and thick evergreen hedges. He wandered about if for a time, but when the time for closing drew near, with all his efforts he could not find his way out, and he feared that he might have to remain all night. At last he looked up, and saw a man in the tower in the center of the labyrinth who had been watching him all the time, and waiting to catch his attention. The eye above could see all so hidden from the man within, and soon guided him out of his difficulties. Visiting this labyrinth with Deacon Olney, we purchased a chart for our guide, remembering my friend's experience. When the time came for us to find our way out, we took the chart, and by careful study and exactness in following the designated way, we threaded the mazes of the labyrinth with success. Life is such a labyrinth. No person knows enough to guide his course unaided. He cannot see where the paths lead. The picture of the future is a sealed book to all."

One of the important lessons for every sheep to learn is need of the Shepherd's care and guidance through the labyrinth of life. "Who is sufficient for these things," writes the Apostle. Then he declares, "Our sufficiency is of God"—in Christ. He who redeemed us has gone the way before us and directed that we walk in his steps. Those who become so wise in their own conceits that they fancy there are nearer ways and shorter cuts and more flowery ways to Paradise are deceiving themselves. If those who recognize the message and are walking in the Master's footsteps and are walking circumspectly, neglect these and become overcharged with the world and earthly ambitions and joys and toys, they are surely unwisely selling the glorious heavenly birthright for a mess of earthly pottage. On the contrary, he who carefully follows the Master, experiences the truth of the declaration, "He restoreth my soul." Some find their spiritual strength refreshed as they walk in the paths of righteousness in which the Lord leads. He leads them "for his name's sake." This is one of the considerations. Our Lord, the Shepherd, has undertaken to do a shepherding work; to gather a flock. His promise is involved; his honor is at stake! We may be sure that not only because of his love for us will he guide us aright, but because it would be a dishonor to him to make the slightest mistake in respect to our guidance. He is the Faithful Shepherd. The angelic hosts are watching and

learning lessons in respect to all this shepherding of the flock through the narrow way. "Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Pet. 1:12.

"THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH"

This valley was entered by our race because of our first parents' disobedience. We have been in the valley more than 6000 years. The shadow of death has been over the human family, and its accompaniments of sickness, pain and sorrow have extended to every creature, so that the Apostle truly said, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God"—waiting for the uplifting power of the Millennial Age, waiting for the sons of glory, Jesus Christ and his Church, to bring the promised Restitution and uplifting out of "the valley of the shadow of death" back to the heights of light and love and the divine likeness.

The fear of evil, of trouble, of disaster hangs over the world and is accentuated by its ignorance of God and of the future. Satan, taking advantage of this spirit of fear in the fallen race, has so terrorized mankind with horrible pictures of purgatory and eternal torment as to thoroughly separate the human heart, if possible, from its Creator, while feigning to be its Shepherd. Under the influence of "doctrines of devils," the Adversary has made God's character and his Book repulsive to mankind in general and well-nigh quenched their love, while fanning their fears.

Our text represents the true sheep as saying, "I will fear no evil." How appropriate; how true! Weak and poor and insufficient and surrounded by foes, we nevertheless need not fear, and the developed sheep does not fear what the demons may seek to do, knowing that "all power in heaven and earth" is in the hands of our Shepherd King, and that he is directing our ways, and has guaranteed that our every experience shall work out a blessing, and that in permitting trials he merely designs our correction and instruction in righteousness and to draw us nearer to himself and make us copies of his Son, to the intent that by the First Resurrection change he may take us to himself and give us a share in the Millennial Kingdom. Ah! how true it is that we do not fear—because the Shepherd is with us! We have his promise, "Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the age." And furthermore we have the light of his Word, showing that the Shepherd is to be present with his sheep and to care for them and develop them.

"THY ROD AND THY STAFF COMFORT ME"

The shepherd's rod or club was of hard wood, sometimes open and preferably of the shape of a golf stick, except that it was shorter and much heavier. With it the shepherd was prepared to defend the flock, combating every foe. The staff was lighter and more like a cane and longer, with a crook at the end. With its point the shepherd at times prodded the sheep that were careless, and with the hook he sometimes helped out one that had stumbled into the ditch, by putting the crook under its forelegs. Our Shepherd,

too, has a rod for our enemies and a staff for his sheep—the one for our protection, the other for our relief and assistance and correction. How glad we are to know that all power is committed unto him in heaven and in earth and that under his protecting care nothing shall by any means harm us! What a comfort is here! No wonder that under such circumstances the sheep may enjoy "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," resting themselves, comforting themselves in the assurance that all things shall be overruled for their eternal welfare!

"THOU PREPAREST A TABLE FOR ME"

The picture of the shepherd and the sheep has been gradually fading, and now is in the past. Instead of pastures and the water-brooks we now have the table and the cup. We hear the under-shepherds say, "This is the Bread which came down from heaven, and this cup is the blood of the New Covenant." He whose name is the Truth gave us his flesh to eat. He sacrificed his earthly interests that we might partake of them through faith and be justified thereby and appropriate to ourselves more and more the benefits of his sacrifice. He passes to us the cup of his suffering, his shame, his ignominy, his death, saying, "Drink ye all"—drink it all. By thus appropriating the merits of his sacrifice and participating with him in his sufferings we are his sheep; or, in another figure, we are the branches of the True Vine; or, under another figure, we are members of his Body and he the Head; or, under another figure, he is our Bridegroom and we his Bride. This provision is made for us in the presence of our enemies.

"Marvel not if the world hate you," said our Master. Yet even in the presence of the opposition of the world and our Adversary and all of the besetments of the hosts of demons, we are privileged to partake of these rich blessings and privileges! Yea, even in the presence of our besetments of the flesh, which are also our enemies, we can feast with our Lord and naught can make us afraid. All this has been true throughout the Gospel Age, but it is all accentuated now in this harvest time by reason of our Lord's presence in the consummation of the age.

In harmony with this promise of the Scriptures, to all who open their hearts to receive him, he comes in and sympathizes with them. Yea, he girds himself as a servant and comes in and serves us, setting before us rich things from his storehouse—things new and old. Under this service all the old truths become fresh and appetizing, refreshing and strengthening. And new truths are ours, fitting to the peculiar time in which we are living and the special trials and tests now due to come upon the Lord's faithful brethren. They are ushered into the eternal Father's presence, where is fulness of joy forevermore.

MY HEAD ANOINTED, MY CUP OVERRUNS

Let us not spoil this beautiful picture with any thought of anointing a sheep's head, etc., but rather take the higher and grander and nobler view that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed; and that his

anointing was typified by the anointing of Aaron with precious oil (which typified the holy Spirit), which ran down his beard and unto the skirts of his garment. Let us think of this as the holy Spirit of Pentecost, which has anointed all the sheep which have come into the fold and the Body of Christ. Let us appreciate this anointing and abide under it, allowing it more and more to be what the Apostle terms an unction from the Holy One, affecting our every talent and power and bringing them all into subjection to the divine law of love.

"Let my eyes see Jesus only;

Let my feet run in his ways;

Let my hands perform his bidding;

Let my tongue speak forth his praise."

"My cup runneth over." Our Master's cup was one of suffering, ignominy, shame and death. We partake of it. It becomes our cup also; but he promises us a new cup of joy and rejoicing, which he will share with us fully in the Kingdom. That cup of joy and peace and divine favor and blessing our Master partook of by faith. And we now also have the same cup full to overflowing; but we cannot appreciate it fully until we shall be changed and made like our Head and share his glory. By faith we can enjoy it now and realize that it is full to overflowing. And our joys in the eternal future will be exceedingly and abundantly more than we could have asked or thought.

"GOODNESS AND MERCY PURSUE ME"

"Surely goodness and mercy shall pursue me all the days of my life." This appears to be the stricter translation and it contains a beautiful thought. These sheep of the Lord's "little flock"—these "New Creatures" of Christ Jesus, instead of being pursued by fears and terrors and trapped and ensnared, are following the Good Shepherd and hearkening to his voice; and, according to his promise, God's goodness and mercy are pursuing them, keeping after them, watching over them, assisting them, caring for them, upholding them in trials. These are the messengers of the Lord, of which the Apostle wrote, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation?" Surely this is so. Looking back we can praise the way in which goodness and mercy have pursued us, never leaving us!

"Angels watch him on his way

And aid with kindly arm;

And Satan, seeking out his prey,

May hate, but cannot harm.

O, child of God; O, glory's heir;

How rich a lot is thine!"

The conclusion of the whole matter—the end of the journey, is what? To occupy a place in the heavenly mansions in our Father's house! What a glorious consummation to the grandest of all hopes! Why should we murmur or complain at the roughness of the journey which will bring us to such a glorious goal? Let us say with the Psalmist:—

"What shall I render unto the Lord my God for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Most High!"