

STILL WATERS! GREEN PASTURES BY THE EDITOR

YOU will find my text tonight in the 23rd chapter of the Book of Psalms, wherein you find that wonderful account written by the shepherd boy of Israel, of the Good Shepherd who guides and who guards His flock. The psalm begins with the statement: "The Lord is my Shepherd." David was undoubtedly thinking of the days of long ago, when he tended his father's flocks on the hills outside Bethlehem of old Judea. They were the fields where Ruth gleaned after the reapers of Boaz. They were the self-same fields where in later years the shepherds who were watching their flocks by night heard the symphonic melodies that came from the angelic choirs as the Christ Child was born in the manger in the village not far away. The fields seemed, to be filled with sacred memories. Peculiarly hallowed fields are they, for they played such a prominent part in the Old and New Testament stories. "*The Lord is my Shepherd!*" Was not the psalmist thinking of the day when as a shepherd boy he slew the lion by the power of the Lord? Did not his mind carry him back to the day when he conquered the bear in the strength that was given him from above? Yes undoubtedly these thoughts were surging through the soul of this man who in ecstatic praise, his very being vibrant with the power and the glory, and the joy of the Lord, exclaimed: "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*"

I cannot draw too much on my imagination when I say that the Psalmist was thinking of the guiding, guarding, protecting hand of the Lord, and of that careful, watchful eye that is always awake to the welfare of the sheep, because the Lord was his Shepherd, and He said, "You shall not want!"

If it was true in the days of the Psalmist, how true it is in the day in which we live. Peeling down the corridors of the centuries, we hear the bells of Heaven ringing, and amidst all the clanging of their noise, as they seem to ring our welcome home, we hear the voice of Jesus saying: "My God shall supply all your needs." "In time of trouble I will be with thee." "In time of adversity I will never fail thee." "When the scalding tears of sorrow fall I will uphold thee by the right hand of my power." "No water so deep but what I will carry you over." "No storm so frenzied but what I will see you through." Remember, my brother, and never forget, my sister, that if the Lord is your Shepherd you shall not want.

Look at this picture if you can, as you close your physical eyes for a moment and allow the eyes of your imagination to focus themselves upon the scene. Picture, I say, the beautiful pastoral scene where the sheep are laying in clover that is knee deep by waters that are still. "He leadeth me in green pastures and by still waters." How

beautiful the contemplation. How sublime the majesty of the thought: "Satisfied with Jesus Christ." Content in our experience; filled yet hungry; thirst satisfied and yet desiring more. Wonderful are all the great mysteries of the gospel of Christ. Did you ever in all your life see a crowd of skinny, hungry, emaciated sheep lying down in pastures that are green and sleeping contentedly by waters that are still? I never did, and I don't believe that you ever saw sheep of that description lying down when the clover was knee deep. They are generally browsing and feeding, anxiously endeavoring to satisfy their voracious appetites.

One of the great joys in this Christian experience when we are really led by the Good Shepherd is the fact that we are really satisfied with Jesus Christ. Christianity is not intellectual assent to dogma, it is not conduct, it is not subscription to ethical codes, it is not allegiance to moral laws; it is *Christ in you, the hope of glory!* When our hearts are heavy, when our lives are stained by sin, when our very beings and natures have become corrupt because of the contact with this sinful old world, like the sheep lost in the wilderness, we cry for the Good Shepherd. He picks us up and takes us direct to the shelter of the fold. Oh, the inexpressible joys of salvation! Oh, the abundance of the supply of God's redeeming grace! Oh, the power of the love that found us and the glory of the grace that keeps us!

Satisfied! Yes Satisfied!! Wonderfully Satisfied!!

Completely satisfied!!! Lost in wonder, love and praise in the joy of a real experience by *still waters* and *green pastures*. Did you ever hear the story that the great English preacher, Gypsy Smith, tells, of the man who came one time to his altar somewhere in Old England and found difficulty in praying to the Lord? As he was there on bended knee before the altar of the missionary, his body was shaking with hysterical weeping and his great frame was vibrant with emotion. He was in the dark and was groping for the light. At last the kindly, sympathetic Gypsy came down the pulpits steps and knelt beside the sobbing figure that was already on his knees. He prayed with him for a few moments and then the man said: "Gypsy it is no use—useless for me to pray—I am afraid I am lost—lost for ever! The black eyes of the Gypsy preacher looked into the tear-stained eyes of the penitent by his side. Slowly and gently his arm went around the poor man's shoulders and he said: "My brother, Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal." "Tell your story to the Good Shepherd, He will lead you into green pastures, your tears will be wiped away. You will be satisfied with Him and you will rest in sweet repose by the waters of His grace."

The sorrowing penitent turned to the gypsy and said: "Gypsy, it is impossible! Every time I pray the misdeeds of my past come up before me! Gypsy, my wife does not know, my children do not know, the world does not know that *I am a thief*. Fifteen years ago I was persuaded in an evil moment to embezzle some of the funds of my firm. I took money that did not belong to me to gamble on a sure thing, and the sure thing lost. I covered up my embezzlement by juggling the books, and the auditor passed it by. I have worked all these years honored and trusted by my employer and

the men who work at our place. I believe in restitution, Gypsy, and to make a confession would mean the grim gray walls of the penitentiary, and a home in a prison cell. No, Gypsy, my case is hopeless, there is no solution.” The gypsy interrupted him in his kindly way. “Bring your burdens to the Lord and leave them there. There is no tangle but what he can unravel; there is no problem that he cannot solve. Trust him, my brother, and in his own wonderful, marvelous way he will bring you through.” The promise was given and at last the man rose to his feet with the words of the gypsy evangelist ringing in his ears. “Tomorrow at ten as you are in the office of your employer, I will be on my knees before the Lord.”

The following morning came and as the owner of that great factory was busy in his office, the door opened and the figure of a man stole quietly in. “Well, John, what is your trouble?” “Come now man,” he said, noticing the hesitancy of the other, “pretty busy this morning. What is on your mind?” There was a moment of silence, a painful moment in which you could have heard the drop of a pin. The boss listened with amazement to the telling of the story. His face flushed red and then turned again to almost a chalky whiteness. “Give me a chance sir,” pleaded the man on the other side of his table. I will pay you back every penny of it. I know I don’t deserve any mercy, but for the sake of my wife, for the sake of my children—”. The man on the master’s side of the desk interrupted him and said: “Wait a minute; what is puzzling me is why you come here at this late hour after fifteen years to tell me your story. It never could have been found out, the books are buried in our archives. Why this confession, and the tears that accompany it?” The pallid faced culprit looked into the eyes of the man whose confidence he had enjoyed, and said: “Last night if you please sir, I went to Gypsy Smith’s altar, and while I was on my knees—” “Oh, that’s it” said the master with sympathy creeping into his heart. “That’s it—I see—I understand now—converted—eh—went to the altar did you? Well John you are going to pay it back; every penny of it, for that would be right; that is nothing but just! I will see you in the morning, get back to your desk.” The man who had called himself a thief felt a surge of gratitude rushing to his heart. An inexplicable joy came into his mind as he felt the presence of a third person in that room. As he went to the door his master called him back. “Before you go, John I just want to say this: I have been looking for a man to take charge of the department in which you now work, for the past six or seven months. I have been hesitating between you and two other men. Today has decided. You can take your place at the manager’s desk. I have known you for a good many years, and it seems to me I can trust you. A fellow who will be so honest with his God that he is willing to make a confession after all this time—after fifteen long years—. Never mind the thanks—the manager’s desk—good bye.”

The man grabbed his hat, tore down the street as hard as he could go into the hotel where abode the gypsy evangelist, and rushing into the gypsy’s room unheralded and unannounced, he cried out: “Oh Gypsy you are right. He has done it. Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.” The Gypsy rose from his knees with the praise of

the Lord on his lips and as he grasped the hand of the man who stood before him simply said: "It is just like Him." Pastures that are green; waters that are still!

If you have not come, my brother, if you have not been brought, my sister, into the realm of a living possession of Jesus Christ in your heart, the hope of glory; if you have not been satisfied you had better come tonight. Down the center of the pasture as we see it in the world today, there is a line fence fastened to stakes that are firmly driven into the ground. On the one side the clover is knee deep and all the promises of the Lord are there. There is the divine healing clover, the baptism of the Holy Spirit grass, and the Flowers of the hope of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The waters of divine grace are deep, and flow freely, and the sheep are happy, well cared for, sleek and fat. They jump around in the ecstasy of their joy; they bleat their confidence in the Shepherd who cares for them, while the sun from the Heavens smiles down upon them. The very air is fragrant with the perfume of the flowers. Hearts are happy, and lives are filled with praise.

But on the other side of the fence there are a lot of poor, weakly, emaciated, hungry looking sheep too weak to bleat an Amen; too emaciated to enjoy the pasture. As a matter of fact, there is no pasture for them to eat. There are the brambles of modernism, the thistles of higher criticism, and just the poor stubs of incredulity and unbelief. They look at the line fence with its rails of worldliness, self—consciousness and pride, and once in a while will look through at the happy people in the full gospel pasture on the other side. "Have nothing to do with that crowd!" preach the hirelings. "They seem to be happy, but they are just misled. They seem to be satisfied but they will be disappointed by and by. That divine healing clover is not divine healing at all, it is hypnotism grass and if you go over there you are bound to get poisoned. Peter, James, and John ate up all the baptism of the Holy Spirit clover a good many years ago and there is none left for the sheep of today. Come back! Be careful of that crowd down at the revival meeting, beware of the sheep on the other side of the fence!" Well I have seen you come, I have watched you in the meeting, I have seen you with that hungry expression in your eyes listening to the preaching of the word, and then I have given the invitation to come into the pastures that are green. Never in all my experience have I found *one* sheep that was sorry he jumped the fence when we came to that sacred moment, the moment of the altar call, the moment that the Lord called, the moment when the Good Shepherd would really feed you and satisfy your hungry heart. I have seen you back up and take a little run. Oh I know it costs you an effort, but over the fence you jump and kneel at these altars, and commence to feed on the good things of the Lord. It is not very long after that before you are bleating the praises of God, and ere many days you too are lying in pastures that are green and by waters that are still.

The psalmist was speaking from experience when he said, "He restoreth my soul." As I look into your faces an assurance comes to my heart that many of you are

yearning for the deeper things of God. Numberless as the sands of the sea shore, countless as the stars of the heavens, are the blessings promised by the Shepherd of the sheep to all who gather within the safety of the fold.

There is not a broken heart but what He can heal, not a tangle but what He can unravel it, not a miserable life but what it can be made happy again, not a problem but what he can solve it. Have you, my brother, lost the joys of salvation? Do you remember the happy days when first you started to serve Him? Do you remember the joys that were yours when He first led you in the way, and how happy that experience? But you have grown cold and formal and worldly, and the joys of real salvation seem to have taken the wings of the morning and have left you where you are today. If you received from the Lord just what you merit, if you were to obtain just what you deserve you would pray in vain; but it is the mercy of the Lord and the unspeakable love of Jesus Christ that makes me tell you tonight that He will restore your soul. When a wandering sheep has left the fold and strayed down into the fields of unbelief, lost in the bleak, barren, desolate mountains of sins He will leave the ninety and nine and go after the sheep that is lost.

“Lord whence are the blood drops all the way,
That mark out the mountain’s track?
They were offered for one, who had gone astray,
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.”

When you are too weak to walk He will carry you. No criticism, no words of condemnation, but just the tender love of the Shepherd who will carry you back to the safety of the fold. Ah, backslider, you who have lost out in your experience, He will restore your soul. Oh brother, you who have been bearing the Cross until your shoulders are bowed with its weight, He will lift the burden from your back tonight, and restore the joys of salvation unto you. And you, my sister, with your aching heavy heart, come and feel the touch of the Shepherd’s hands and hear the sweet whispering of the Shepherd’s voice as He calls you by name, as you enter into the gates of His love. He restoreth my soul! Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Just a moment and I am through. The fourth verse of this wonderful psalm tells us that though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we will fear no evil. Death has lost its sting and the grave has been robbed of its victory because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord. To the Christian heart there is no death, to the redeemed the mystery of death is merely transition. We say, “Good night” here, but “Good morning” up there. We merely change our address. We have a new number on one of the Hallelujah Avenues of the Eternal City. As we face the portal we realize it is but the doorway from corruption to incorruption, the gateway through which we pass from a land of heartache and misunderstanding to the place where God wipes away the tears from every eye. Though we go through the valley of the shadow how can we fear evil when He is still with us? His rod and staff will comfort us then, as they have comforted us in the days of the past. His hand has led us thus

far along the pilgrimages over mountains, and through the valley. Sunshine and rain, storm and calm, through the things we understood and through the maze of misunderstanding, still kept, still led by a power divine, He will not fail us when the sun sinks over the western hills. Will He deny us His presence when the golden sunlight falls in beauty on the harbor bar as our ship comes sailing home? 'Will the Pilot of Galilee not be the Pilot of our barque when we near the other side?

Yes, my brother, you have felt His presence up to now; you will feel His presence then. "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee." When we are in the valley of the shadow His arms of love will still encompass us and His mighty power will still uphold us. When Catherine Booth lay dying someone pulled down the blinds and the room was darkened. With her customary courage, the wife of the founder of the Salvation Army turned her head and said, "Pull the curtains up." Somebody whispered, "But you are dying, Mrs. Booth; God has called you home." The dear old face was illumined with a heavenly smile and feebly she answered, "Yes, I know, the waters are rising, but so am I. I am not going under; I am going over. Praise the Lord!"

Heaven to me is real, real as the town in which we live. It is no condition, it is a place, and some day in the providence of God, the Great Shepherd of the sheep will lead us through the gates of pearl into that eternal sheepfold, from whose shelter we shall never more wander afar. It is the land where God wipes the tear from every eye, the land that needs no sun to illumine its streets and to light its jasper walls, for Jesus, the Shepherd of the sheep, is the light thereof. It is a country where there will be no healing meetings, for cancers and tumors, and sickness will be a thing of the past. The little crippled boy will have thrown away his crutches, and the little crippled girl will no longer be in the cruel braces of steel. And, methinks, that when we stand by the glassy sea and the choirs of Heaven are singing as the angel harps are playing, that we shall raise our voices in a great oratorio of thanksgiving as we sing the praise of Him who hath redeemed us by His blood. All we like sheep once went astray, but the Good Shepherd found us and on His back He bore us to the fold where the ninety and nine safely lay, where the ransomed sing and hearts rejoice in the goodness of the Lord, and the angels echo around the throne, "Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own." He is looking for you tonight, my brother; He is searching for you tonight, my sister. How I wish that every lost sheep in this great audience would just cry out to Him and I can assure you with all my heart that He will find you.