

## **HIS TOUCH HAS STILL ITS ANCIENT POWER**

by

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### **CHAPTER SIX -**

#### **HIS SHEEP**

**"Come, and let us return unto the Lord; . . . He hath smitten, and He will bind us up . . . revive us; . . . raise us up, and we shall live in His sight" (Hosea 6:1, 2)**

"BET you daren't!"

"I bet I dare!"

The speakers were two girls in their teens. They were standing outside a Salvation Army hall. Betty had said to Mary,

"Ever been to one of those meetings?"

"Yes, many a time."

"Well, I bet you daren't go in and walk to their 'penitent form' at the end and pretend to be 'saved'?"

"I bet I dare," repeated Mary.

A third member of the party, a quiet girl, said "You'd better be careful, Mary, GOD might take you at your word."

"What nonsense," replied Mary, "nobody has to get 'saved' unless they want to," and, turning to her friend, she said, "Come on, Betty, what d'you bet me?"

"A ticket for the dance next Tuesday."

"Done, come on in."

The three girls went in, laughing, whispering, full of high spirits. As the speaker gave his message, and spoke of the great GOD coming to earth and going to the Cross to die for men and women, Mary was suddenly brought to her senses. It was this Great GOD, the One Who had done all this for her, that she had planned to mock. How could she have contemplated such a thing? At the end, the invitation was given for any who wished to accept CHRIST to come to the

penitent form. Mary sat still. Then a nudge and a mocking whisper from Betty, "Windy, eh?" galvanized her into action.

She got up and walked slowly to the front. She left her seat a lost soul, but before she reached the 'penitent form' she had yielded her heart and had accepted the "Great GOD" as her personal SAVIOUR.

"Well, I didn't think you had the nerve," said Betty. "Now about this dance ticket."

"Don't worry about the ticket, said Mary, "I shan't be going."

"Not going to the dance; why?"

"I'm going to that young people's meeting they announced for next Tuesday."

"You don't mean to tell me that you were serious when you went to the front?"

"I wasn't when I made the bet, but after that address, well, it just altered everything; So it's the meeting here for me next Tuesday, thank you."

Mary threw herself whole-heartedly into Christian work. She became a Sunday School teacher, and spoke at various meetings. After a few years a test came. Bill Parker wanted to marry Mary. He didn't think as she did about "religious things," but, said he, he could go his way and she could go hers; he wouldn't interfere. Mary thought about it. She was very much in love, and she stifled her conscience by telling herself that perhaps if she married Bill, he might in time come to think as she did.

They married. Mary continued her Christian work and Bill went his way. It was some years before a crisis came.

"I'm coming home early to-night, Mary, and I'm taking you to the pictures."

"But, Bill, you know it's against our Army rules."

"Look here, why can't you be a bit broad-minded? I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll come to the pictures with me, I'll come to your meeting with you to-morrow." Mary hesitated.

"No, Bill, I can't," she said.

Bill became enraged and waxed eloquent about hypocritical Christians in general, and those who wouldn't do a little thing to oblige their husbands in particular. He banged out of the house leaving Mary to spend a miserable day of indecision. Was it her duty to compromise? Would it help him to give in to him?

In the end her mind was made up. She discarded her uniform, and said quietly to Bill, "I'm coming with you to-night after all."

"Splendid," he replied. "I thought you wouldn't let me down."

The next day, true to his promise, he accompanied her to her meeting. But the pictures had fascinated Mary. She went again, and again, and thought of little else. "I can go to my meetings as well," she thought. But although this might have been possible for some people, Mary could not do both, and before long all taste for meetings was gone. Her Bible Class, which had been her main interest, became a nuisance and a tie; gradually she went less and less to meetings and one after another gave up all her Christian activities.

Now she and her husband were one in ideals and aims. He was prospering in business, and they had great plans. They were to buy a house and have a holiday on the Continent. But Bill was struck down with pneumonia. His illness was severe, night and day nurses, doctors and specialists failed to cure him. The illness used up all their savings. When he died Mary was filled with bitterness and black despair.

She felt she could not turn to GOD in her trouble, having turned her back on all that, and now she didn't believe that a GOD Who sent such trials and sufferings into her life could really be a GOD of love.

The bright financial prospects faded. The large salary was gone, and Mary had to work to keep herself and her children. She did not mind working, it kept her from thinking, and think she dare not. The evenings were dreadful, unless she could fill them with a visit to a cinema or music hall. Lurid detective novels filled odd moments. She grew more and more desperate as she faced the future.

Life was unendurable to one in her state of mind. She must get out of it. She must end it all.

She obtained some poison, poured it out, and with glass in hand, stood in her kitchen, about to take her own life.

Suddenly her sister, who lived at some distance, came rushing into the kitchen. Warned by some sixth sense she dashed the glass from Mary's hand. "Quick, Mary, Helen's had a serious accident, and is in hospital dying. She's asking for you."

Helen was their youngest sister. Mary went as quickly as she could to her bedside.

"Oh, Mary," said Helen, "I'm so glad you've come. I know I'm dying; I haven't long to live now. You've always been the religious one of the family. Tell me how to get right with GOD."

"I can't help you, Helen," said Mary brokenly. "I'm not right myself." She could not bear to see her sister pass away, knowing that she was powerless to help, so she hurried from the hospital. Later, she heard that a Christian nurse had been able to point Helen to the SAVIOUR before she died, and together they had prayed that the Good Shepherd would restore the wandering sheep.

From that time it seemed as though the Lord had begun to draw Mary back to Himself. Mary thought she was lost, that the Lord had long since relinquished all claim on her. But His sheep, even though wandering, are still His sheep, and no one can pluck them from His hand. He sometimes allows them to wander away to the furthest limit, but He is above all, overruling and guiding.

Mary's own health began to give her cause for anxiety, and her eleven-year-old daughter, Gladys, was very delicate, so when an invitation came to them to live in the country with a niece, she decided to accept it. But how she hated the prospect of living in the country. No cinema, no shops, no bustle of the town. Nevertheless, they at length settled in the village of Rockford.

Although delicate in body, Gladys was intelligent beyond her eleven years. She was worried about her mother. Why was mother so unhappy? She could remember when her mother sang about the house, and now she was always miserable. Gladys thought it out. Yes, she could remember the days when her mother had children's meetings in their own kitchen, when they used to go to services and sing lovely hymns, the kind of hymns they sung at the children's meetings at the Baptist Church here in Rockford. That was what her mother needed. Gladys was determined to bring her mother to a service, so with great guile she took her for a walk one Sunday evening just as the service was beginning. The strains of that very well-known hymn, "Tell me the old, old story," were coming through the door of the church.

"Come on, mother, let's go to the service."

"No, dear; we don't go to things like that, now."

"But why not, mother?" "Because we don't," replied her mother with the unanswerable logic of the grown-up.

Gladys was very subtle. "Well, mother, if you want me to grow up a bad girl like Mary Connor, I suppose I must, but don't blame me if I do so!"

No mother could be proof against that sort of attack.

"I'll tell you what, Gladys, we'll go sometimes to the women's meeting they have on Wednesday afternoons." Gladys was too delicate to attend school all day, so an afternoon meeting presented no difficulty. They went every week - Gladys saw to that. Her mother did not seem any happier, but all cures take time.

A week's evangelistic services had been arranged at which I was to be the speaker. Gladys was determined that her mother should come every night. Each evening Gladys washed the tea things and put out her mother's hat and coat ready for her. It was a triumphant Gladys who arrived at the meeting night by night, pushed her mother into a corner seat, and then sat like a little dog on guard, giving me a look as if to say, "Now do your stuff!"

It was the last night of the services. Mary had listened each night, as if her soul depended on it, and this night she got up to go home, and went slowly to the door. As she reached it (she said afterwards) she felt as if the Lord was saying to her, "Come back to Me now, or I may never call you again." She turned round, and came back not only into the church, but right back to the Good Shepherd.

Some months later I was asked to officiate at Gladys' funeral. There was no bitterness this time. Her bereaved mother was able now to say, "**The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;**

**blessed be the name of the Lord."**

It was not long after this that we proved that Gladys' influence was still being felt; She "**being dead yet speaketh.**" Her two older brothers, with whom she had many a time pleaded to trust the SAVIOUR, both put their trust in Him.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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