

**THE POWER OF AN  
ENDLESS LIFE; AND OTHER  
SERMONS. FIFTEENTH  
AND SIXTEENTH SERIES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649677320

The Power of an Endless Life; And Other Sermons. Fifteenth and Sixteenth Series by John W. Chadwick

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**JOHN W. CHADWICK**

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THE  
POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE  
AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

JOHN W. CHADWICK

AUTHOR OF "THE BIBLE OF TO-DAY," "THE FAITH OF REASON," "THE MAN  
JESUS," "A BOOK OF FORMS," ETC., ETC.

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*FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH SERIES.*

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BOSTON  
GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET  
1891

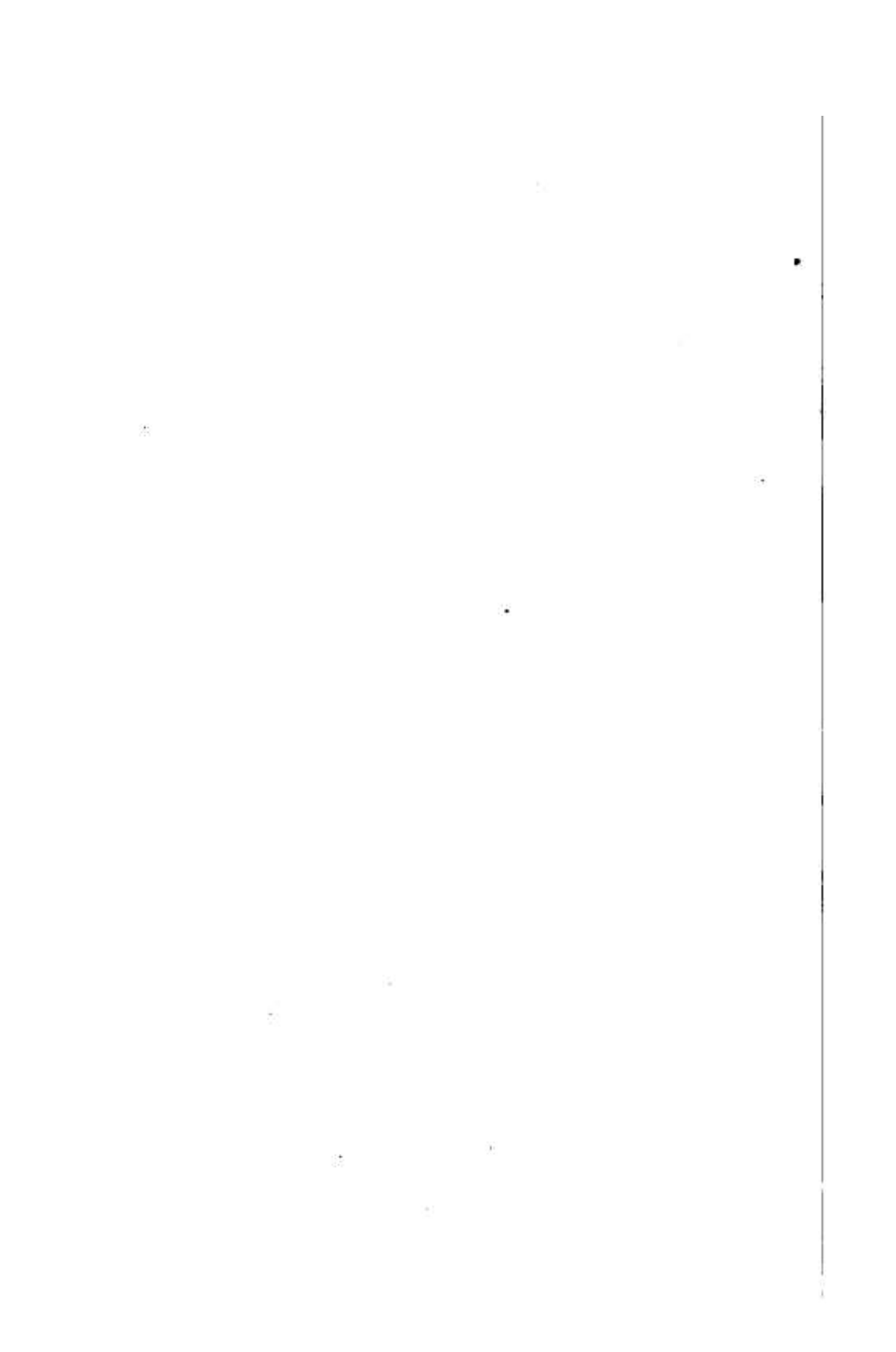
## CONTENTS

### FIFTEENTH SERIES.

I. GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS . . . . .	1
II. ENDURING HARDNESS . . . . .	15
III. THE BLESSED MOTHER . . . . .	27
IV. TWENTY-FIVE YEARS TOGETHER . . . . .	41
V. AN OLD TRANSLATION . . . . .	83
VI. THE UNKNOWN GOD . . . . .	95
VII. CREED REVISION: WHITHER . . . . .	109
VIII. THE GREAT COMMANDMENT . . . . .	125

### SIXTEENTH SERIES.

I. THE REJOICING HEART . . . . .	1
II. FREDERIC HENRY HEDGE . . . . .	13
III. PUBLIC WORSHIP . . . . .	33
IV. THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE . . . . .	49
V. WHY I AM A UNITARIAN . . . . .	67
VI. AND BUT FOR YOU . . . . .	79
VII. WORDS FITLY SPOKEN . . . . .	93
VIII. THE TWILIGHT OF GOD . . . . .	107



## Green Pastures and Still Waters.

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THERE is no other portion of the Old Testament that has so much endeared itself to human hearts as the Twenty-third Psalm,—“The Lord is my shepherd.” The dearest verse in this, no doubt, is that which runs, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil”; but hardly less dear to many, tired and overborne with life’s intolerable day, and to many others, however generally happy, in special moods of weariness and languor and disgust, the verse which reads, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” The psalm in its entirety is one that sentiment has yielded, or will yield, to criticism very grudgingly. If sentiment could keep one word, one psalm, and but one, for the Shepherd King, it would be this, its tender words a reminiscence of the time his father’s tinkling sheep were round about him in gray dawns and purple eves, and beneath the stars that gave to him another psalm, or when the noon lay broad and clear on the Judean hills. But the psalm loses nothing of its beauty when its Davidic authorship is successfully impeached. The freebooter David never could have written it; only a poet into whose heart had passed the beauty of the shepherd’s life and grown into a symbol there of eternal guidance and almighty love and care.

The summer which is ending as we gather here to-day \* has been such a summer of green pastures as few of us had ever seen before. No wonder that my neighbor’s cows have straggled home with dripping udders from the luxurious feast. I went back to Marblehead, and the Lower Division,

\* September 22, 1889, first Sunday after the Vacation.



of which I still know every nook and hollow better than I know our city streets, and which often I have seen so parched that hardly one green blade of grass was visible, was like an emerald for greenness, high and low; while our Chesterfield pastures kept till the September drouth, which lately has been drowned, as fresh as when I saw them on my arrival in the early summer. One doesn't have to be a silly sheep or munching cow to know what pasture-sweetness is. A man may know as much. The punishment of Nebuchadnezzar — who was turned out to grass, you will remember — has always seemed to me a punishment that was as little disagreeable as any could well be. I count that man unfortunate who has never had a pasture-side to his experience in boyhood, youth, or prime. But there are pastures and pastures, as there are deacons and deacons, in the proverbial phrase. Those of my boyhood and my youth were, for the most part, of the simplest elements, the thick, hard turf almost unbroken save by the ledges cropping from it all about, whose harvest of crinkled lichens I used to gather with remorseless hands,—since bitterly accused,—for my grandmother to steep into a golden dye. But Salem Great Pasture was another matter,—resinously sweet with savin and with bay, with ground-vine tangle for our feet, and blackberries, low and high, to teach me self-denial if I would, robbing my mouth to heap the shining pail. If I should try to tell you of the beauty of our mountain pastures, I should want a language characterized with moss and fern, with trees and shrubs more numerous than our common alphabet, with glorious outlooks on the hills beyond the river. They are beautiful with such rare and glorious beauty that the poet or the painter who could put them into picture or into song would do for them what the presence of Emerson (as Father Taylor said) would do for hell,—I don't mean "change the temperature," but "cause the emigration to set that way."

If this has been a summer of green pastures, it has not been a summer of still waters. The floods have been abroad.

Even the streams, which generally are all peace and quietness, have had their sense of seasonable times confounded by the rush of many waters, as if the March or April torrents had come back. For once, our clearest stream, whose pure transparency no ordinary rain can mar, has worn a troubled look. The river into which it flows, whose general habit is so leisurely that it seems loath to leave our narrow valleys for the wider down below, has sometimes gone hurrying forward with a maddened rush, as if woe were unto it until it mixed itself with the embracing sea. There are who find a pleasure in this haste and tumult which the more quiet moods of brook and stream and river do not yield. Indeed, for almost every one there is a minimum of quietness beyond which the aspect does not please. There are those who have not thought so highly of the Concord River — the Musketaquit,— since they read that Hawthorne lived for several months upon its bank without discovering which way it was flowing. As between the Dead Branch of the Westfield, as its sluggish motion names it in rude farmers' poetry, and the East Branch, which is all hurry, ripple, laughter, flash, and gleam, I am sure all lovers of the brooks and streams would choose the latter for companionship and praise. Indeed, I should not wonder if the still waters that the Psalmist had in mind were not such as were glass or satin to the eye, but such as by their pleasant murmur made the silence audible. Such, at any rate, are the still waters that I love the best; and, in "a land of streams," with such I have had many an hour of gentle satisfaction as the summer wore away. Those that chatter loudest with their gleaming pebbles are not without their "cool dark pools and crinkling bends," to which "leaf-shade and sun-fleck lend their tremulous, sweet vicissitude." Stillness is a relative term. The noisiest of my mountain streams is generally still enough compared with rushing torrents and the roar of smiting seas.

\* The thing I greatly feared has come upon me. It was that I should clean forget the spiritual signification of my

text in its suggestions of material things. But, then, I dearly love material things. They are a lovely manifestation of the Eternal God. And they are the trellises on which Memory and Association climb, to which they cling, and fling out their fragrant blossoms, sometimes wet with tears. Where one sees only water, trees, and stones, another sees the form and faces of long-lost or living friends, renews the rapture of moments long since added to the irrevocable past, and listens to unutterable words. Nevertheless, I have not forgotten utterly the spiritual significance of the green pastures and still waters of my text. They stand in men's imagination generally for the freshness and the quietness of life, and therefore stand for that which many consciously desire, and many others sorely need. They are no adequate symbols of the general tendency and aspiration of our modern life. 'Freshness and quietness are not the qualities of life which men so much desire as stir and noise, excitement, push, adventure, the fierce competitions of the forum and the market-place. Still waters! No; but waters fretted by a thousand busy keels, on which the ocean steamers break each other's records, with much shifting satisfaction to their friends; waters that the mill-race captures in its snare and the great turbines tear to shreds and tatters; waters that convert in a few years the green pastures and the greener meadows of Holyoke and many a rival city into a huge aggregation of factories very wonderful to see. Green pastures! Yes; if they can fatten sheep and oxen for the shambles at a paying rate. The arrival of his *Herald* is the brightest spot in many a summer tourist's day, the quotations of the Produce and the Stock Exchange more interesting than any sight of woods or waters. The city *fauna* appeals to him as does not the country *flora*. He likes the bulls and bears. A major part of all who leave the city for the seashore and the mountains in the summer go in search of some more keen excitement than their city life affords. That they go for rest is a delusion by which no one is deluded for an hour. If all this is not a railing accusation, if it is substantial truth and