



## **IN PLEASANT PLACES**

**by Ruth Hindmarsh**

I had staked an imaginary claim in a hollow just below the crest of the hills a couple of miles from our house. “If that area ever gets settled,” I told myself, “that hollow up there is where I will live.” I often wondered what was on the other side of that barrier. I mused over the view of the mountains the valley and the city that I would have from that particular site.

One day I decided I would find out exactly what it looked like from up there. I jumped into the car and drove toward it until I ran out of road. Parking as near my “claim” as I could I began climbing the hill. Soon my daydreams of a pleasant hike became a nightmare. I tore my slacks and scratched my legs when I picked my way across a patch of stinging thistles. (I didn’t notice the beautiful purple blooms). Trying to make up for lost time I hurried over meadowy patches and grumbled about the dust. (I was oblivious to the bluebells and buttercups). I cursed when I twisted my ankle in a gopher hole, but I ignored the chirping animal, sitting up, looking at me inquisitively. I stumbled over a rock hidden in a tangle of ugly grey scrub-brush. Whatever made me think this was a beautiful hill? It certainly wasn’t what it had appeared to be from my kitchen window! But I was determined to reach the top of the hill, and nothing was going to stop me! After what seemed like hours of slipping and sliding into valleys, and struggling and trudging up inclines I was convinced that it wasn’t worth the effort. I was cross, dirty, tired and sore, and even bleeding from scratches and scrapes, when finally, I made the last effort and reached the summit. Immediately all discomfort vanished, for there before my eyes was the “other” side. It sprawled endlessly, this peaceful ranching country dotted with hills. Lazy streams sauntered and sparkled in the sunlight. Turning, I saw the city. What a view! It was like a faceted gem nestled in the valley, and guarded round about by a sentry of mountains standing shoulder to shoulder, dressed in gleaming white snow caps. What grandeur! How perfect! So peaceful! Only the trill of a meadowlark and the sigh of a breeze broke the stillness. How quickly I forgot the struggle of the climb. I felt free. Not a worry clouded the glory of that moment.

Below I could see my car, and between it and me was that miserable path I had climbed. But where was it now? Where were those thistles and the choking dust? They were gone, and in their place I saw masses of purple, yellow and blue. The tangled grey scrub-brush had turned to silver. The delicate perfume of wild roses lingered in the air, and I forgot the thorns. The curl of a whirlwind playfully teased the grass for a moment and then twirled away. I laughed at its mischief. How pleasant it was!

How could the miserable place so quickly become a pleasant place? It happened when I saw the panorama from a different perspective!

Where, in life, are the ‘pleasant places’? Even though we may not see it that way at times, Jesus leads us in green pastures and beside still waters..... in pleasant places.