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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Selections.

John Ploughman's Talk.

HOPE.

Eggs are eggs, but some are rotten; and so hopes are hopes, but many of them are delusions. Hopes are like women, there is a touch of angel about them all, but there are two sorts. My boy Tom, has been blowing a lot of bird's-eggs, and threading them on a string; I have been doing the same thing with hopes, and here's a few of them, good, bad, and indifferent.

The sanguine man's hope pops up in a moment like jack-in-the-box; it works with a spring, and does not go by reason. Whenever this man looks out of the window he sees better times coming, and although it is nearly all in his own eye and nowhere else, yet to see plum-puddings in the moon is a far more cheerful habit than croaking at everything like a two-legged frog. This is the kind of brother to be on the road with on a pitch-dark night, when it pours with rain, for he carries candles in his eyes, and a fireside in his heart. Beware of being misled by him, and then you may safely keep his company. His fault is that he counts his chickens before they are hatched, and sells his herrings before they are in the net. All his sparrows-eggs are bound to turn into thrushes, at the least, if not partridges and pheasants. Summer has fully come, for he has seen one swallow. He is sure to make his fortune at his new shop, for he had not opened the door five minutes before two of the neighbours crowded in, one of them wanted a loaf of bread on trust, and the other asked change for a shilling. He is certain that the squire means to give him his custom, for he saw him reading the name over the shop door as he rode past. He does not believe in slips between cups and lips, but makes certainties out of perhappes. Well, good soul, though he is a little soft at times, there is much in him to praise, and I like to think of one of his odd sayings, "Never say *die* till you are dead, and then it's no use, so let it alone." There are other odd people in the world, you see, besides John Ploughman.

My neighbour, Shiftless, is waiting for his aunt to die, but the old lady has as many lives as nine cats, and my notion is that when she does die she will leave her little money to the Hospital for Diseased Cats or Stray Dogs, sooner than her nephew Jack shall have it. Poor creature, he is dreadfully down at the heel, and lays it all on the dear old lady's provoking constitution. However, he hopes on, and gets worse and worse, for while the grass grows the horse starves. He pulls at a long rope who waits for another's death; he who hunts after legacies had need have iron shoes. He that waits for dead men's shoes may long go bare-foot; he who waits for his uncle's cow need not be in a hurry to spread the butter. He who lives on hope has a slim diet. If Jack Shiftless had never had an aunt he might have tucked up his shirt sleeves and worked for himself, but they told him that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and that made a spoon of him, so that he is no more use at work than a cow at catching hares. If anybody likes to leave Joan Ploughman a legacy, he will be very much obliged to them, but they had better not tell him of it for fear he should not plough so straight a furrow; they had better make it twice as much, and take him by surprise. On the whole, it would be better to leave it to the Pastors' College or the Stockwell Orphanage, for it will be well used in either case. I wish people would think less about windfalls, and plant more apple-trees. Hopes that grow out of graves are grave mistakes; and when they cripple a man's own energies, they are a sort of hangman's rope, dangling round a man's neck.

Some people were born on the first of April, and are always hoping without sense or reason. Their ship is to come home, they are to dig up a pot of gold, or to hear of something to their advantage. Poor sillies, they have wind on the brain, and dream while they are awake. They may hold their mouths open a long while before fried ham

and eggs will come flying into them, and yet they really seem to believe that some stroke of luck, some windfall of golden apples, will one day set them up and make gentlemen of them. They hope to ride in their coaches, and by-and-by find themselves shut up in a place where the coaches won't run over them. You may whistle a long while before goldfinches will hop on to your thumb. Once in a while one man in a million may stumble against a fortune, but thousands ruin themselves by idle expectations. Expect to get half of what you earn, a quarter of what is your due, and none of what you have lent, and you will be near the mark; but to look for a fortune to fall from the moon is to play the fool with a vengeance. A man ought to hope within the bounds of reason and the promises of the good old Book. Hope leans on an anchor, but an anchor must have something to hold by and to hold to. A hope without grounds is a tub without a bottom, a horse without a head, a goose without a body, a shoe without a sole, a knife without a blade. Who but Simple Simon would begin to build a house at the top? there must be a foundation. Hope is no hope but sheer folly when a man hopes for impossibilities, or looks for crops without sowing seed, and for happiness without doing good. Such hopes lead to great boast and small roast; they act like a jack-o'-lantern, and lead men into the ditch. There's poor Will at the workhouse, who always declares that he owns a great estate, only the right owner keeps him out of it; his name is Jenyns, or Jennings, and somebody of that name he says has left enough money to buy the Bank of England, and one day he is to have a share of it; but meanwhile poor Will finds the parish broth poor stuff for such a great gentleman's stomach; he has promised me an odd thousand or two when he gets his fortune, and I am going to build a castle in the air with it, and ride to it on a broomstick. Poor soul, like a good many others he has windmills in his head, and may make his will on his thumbnail for anything that he has to give. Depend upon it, ploughing the air is not half so profitable as it is easy: he who hopes in this world for more than he can get by his own earnings hopes to find apricots on a crab-tree. He who marries a slovenly, dressy girl, and hopes to make her a good wife, might as well buy a goose and expect it to turn out a milch cow. He who takes his boys to the beer shop, and trusts that they will grow up sober, puts his coffee-pot on the fire and expects to see it look bright as new tin. Men cannot be in their senses when they brew with bad malt and look for good beer, or set a wicked example and reckon upon raising a respectable family. You may hope and hope till your heart grows sick; but when you send your boy up the chimney, he'll come down black for all your hoping. Teach a child to lie, and then hope that he will grow up honest; better put a wasp in a tar barrel and wait till he makes you honey. As to the next world, it is a great pity that men do not take a little more care when they talk of it. If a man dies drunk, somebody or other is sure to say, "I hope he is gone to heaven." It is all very well to wish it, but to hope it, is another thing. Men turn their faces to hell, and hope to get to heaven; why don't they walk into the horsepond, and hope to be dry? Hopes of heaven are solemn things, and should be tried by the word of God. A man might as well hope, as our Lord says, to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles, as look for a happy hereafter at the end of a bad life. There is only one rock to build good hopes on, and that is not Peter, as the Pope says, neither is it sacraments, as the old Roman beasts' cubs tell us, but the merits of the Lord Jesus. There John Ploughman rests, and he is not afraid, for this is a firm footing, and gives him a hope sure and steadfast, which neither life nor death can shake; but I must not turn preacher, so please remember that presumption is a ladder which will break the mounter's neck, and don't try it as you love your soul.—*The Sword and Trowel.*

Miracles.

A miracle is the exertion of divine power, to counteract or suspend a common natural

law, and thus to produce an effect different from the usual operation of such laws. It is not a violation of law; but it is an act of Jehovah, the lawgiver of the universe, who in this and similar cases, works by a law or by forces unknown to us. And in these extraordinary cases, he thus works that he may display his power, may deliver his servants from danger, or may attest the character of his special messengers, and thus give authority to the statements they make, or to the doctrines which they announce.

But we are told that miracles are impossible. Is this assertion any thing more than mere assumption? Has any one ground for asserting that miracles are impossible, except he will go further and assert that there is no God? And then, must he not go further and ignore the facts of science? Is not creation a miracle? Geology decides that this miracle has been performed more than once or twice. And the being who has performed this miracle, can perform any other, either directly or through such agents as he pleases. We should not believe miracles without satisfactory evidence that they have been performed; but they are as capable of proof as any other fact which we either witness ourselves, or receive on the testimony of others.

To convince us of the truth of a miracle we need five things: 1. That the miracle be performed in the presence of credible competent witnesses. 2. That it be palpable to the senses. 3. That it be instantaneously performed. 4. That it cannot be fairly accounted for in a natural way. 5. That the fact be published near the time when and in the country where it was performed. All pretended miracles will fail in one or more of these points. There were no witnesses of the journey which Mahomet alleged he made to heaven and back again. Roman Catholics say that the words of consecration, uttered with intention, by a priest, change the wafer and the wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, but this change is not palpable to either of the senses. Remarkable cures which are gradually effected, are not miracles. Events which are uncommon in their character, but which may be fairly accounted for without any supernatural action, may not be miracles. And statements, first made at a distance from the place where the miracle is said to have been performed, or a long time after its alleged performance, are necessarily liable to suspicion.

But all the requisites for conviction are found in connection with the miracles recorded in the Bible. We have as decisive proof that these miracles were performed, as we have of the occurrence of any fact which is recorded in history, and in numerous cases the evidence for miracles is much stronger than is the evidence for events which are generally believed to have occurred, and which no one thinks of disputing.

ZETTES in N. Y. Examiner.

Theological Cemetery!

A young preacher from Princeton was once introduced to his colored audience in the following extraordinary manner: "This gentleman is from the Theological cemetery—he don't know nothing—he don't mean to know nothing—but Jesus Christ and him crucified."

We presume that the humble brother who did the honors of the occasion meant to cast no unfriendly reflections upon that famous school of the prophets which has its seat at Princeton—and that the young prophet soon recovered from the shock of so sepulchral an introduction, and spoke with something of the earnestness of one indeed risen from the dead. But subsequent meditation upon the above singular announcement has suggested to me that perhaps the term innocently, and in this instance wrongly applied, might not altogether be inapplicable in certain cases. Certainly our theological seminaries ought to take warning, and beware of becoming theological cemeteries. We speak of young men burying themselves for several years in college or seminary; there may sometimes be too much truth in the phrase. We have listened to graduates of such institutions, whose lifeless manner was suggestive of a cemetery, rather than of a place where living men were

taught by living instructors to preach the truth of the living God. They would seem to have just come out of their graves, or to be rapidly on their way to them.

A pulpit is the last place for a dead man to be exhibited. The preacher ought not only to be alive, but on fire with his great themes. Sydney Smith said that the Church of England was dying of dignity! which would make that Church to be a national cemetery. Any church will die which has not a "live" man in its pulpit. Oh, for tongues of fire, in these days when the multitude seem to be doubly dead in trespasses and sins. Pertinent are the burning words of Gossner to his missionaries: "Believe, hope, love, pray, burn, waken the dead! Hold fast to prayer. Wrestle like Jacob! Up, up, my brethren! The Lord is coming, and to every one he will say, 'Where has thou left the souls of these heathen?—with the devil?' Oh, swiftly seek these souls, and enter not without them into the presence of the Lord."

Colleges and Theological Schools sometimes become as cemeteries to aspiring students, through the criminal neglect of physical exercise. They study themselves to death. When they come forth to take their place in the arena of action their life is all spent, and they can only linger out, a feeble pastorate in sadness and discouragement, or else resort to some temporal business in the hope of recovering their exhausted strength. Let theological professors look after this matter. The world, bustling, intensely alive in the ways of sin, rushing on to ruin, needs strong, courageous men to breast this fearful tide, and compel attention to the question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—*Id.*

Morning Prayer.

In the morning the mind is calmed; the temptations of the day have not beset you; the duties of the day have not filled your mind and begun to vex you. Before you go to the duties of the day, to its cares and anxieties, and temptations, begin the day with prayer. Temptations you certainly will meet; trials of virtue and patience will overtake you; and many times before night you will need the aid of your Father to shield you. Go to him, and ask His counsel to guide you, His power to uphold you, His presence to cheer, His Spirit to sanctify you. Then will you have done what is equivalent to half the duties of the day, when you have thus engaged His care and assistance. And when the evening comes, when you have done with the duties of the day, the body is wearied, and the mind is jaded, when the world is shut out by the shades of night, when you come to look back and review the day, when you see how many deficiencies have marked it, how many imperfections still cluster around you, how many sins stare you in the face, how little you have done for yourself or for others, or for God, the day past, *this* is the hour of prayer. It will be sweet to feel that you have One to whom you can go, and who will hear you; One who will forgive you, if you are penitent, and ask in the name of Jesus Christ; One who will accept your evening sacrifice, and give you strength for the morning, and gird you with his righteousness. This hour, if rightly improved, will be like the cheering countenance of a most beloved friend. Take care that nothing comes between you and these hours devoted to God. "Think of Daniel, prime minister of Persia, with the affairs of one hundred and twenty provinces resting on his mind, yet finding time to go into his chamber, three times a day, that he might pray and give thanks to God." Think of Alfred, with the cares of monarchy; of Luther, buffeted by the storms of Papal wrath; of Thornton, encompassed with a thousand mercantile engagements, yet never allowing the hurry of business to intrude on his regular hours of devotion."—*Dr. Todd.*

The London Times.

The reading-matter of the London Times is furnished by twenty-two law reporters nineteen Parliamentary reporters, twelve police reporters and an indefinite number of miscellaneous writers, known as "penny-a-liners"