

“Why Men Love the Lark”

The Present Truth – May 28, 1896

E. J. Waggoner

The lark is happy in singing, and winging his way toward heaven, but just as happy, when, weary, he closes his pinions and drops to his lowly nest in the greensward [grass covered ground].

There is an ecstasy in all high endeavour and great achievement,—a certain rapture of lofty loneliness in the altitude which removes the heroic actor in exceptional scenes, from the humdrum daily life of the ordinary multitude. Yet, after all, the test comes to him who has borne his part in great enterprises when he returns again to the common level of home life. It is the petty details of every day existence that try men’s souls, and prove their metal.

The exultant cloud-song of the lark does not detract in the least from the sweetness of his roundelay by the side of his mate in the heather. So it happens that the plain little bird, which is equally at home in the sky or on the meadow, appeals to the heart of the world. The skylark's ambition to pour out his morning song at the very doors of the sun, as they open to its earliest beams, does not lead him to forget that the gates of heaven are just as near his own home nest. And so mankind loves the lark.

But men love the lark not because, in its ambitious flight, it loses its joyous voice and tiny form in the far blue heavens, but because, in the midst of its wildest enthusiasm of song, and from its loftiest heights, it drops with plummet swiftness to the level of home cares and domestic life. And because it brings to its home, and to us, the song of the sky with all its brightness, and purity, and sweetness. If every morning the lark climbs above to renew its song and fill its heart anew at the fount of heavenly melody, it is with the intent to return and bless the work-a-day world all the day long with its mission of heavenly music.

So the value of lofty impulses and heroic deeds is proved by their application to the affairs of daily life, on the common level, and among the multitude. The poet who sings only in the sky has no vocation either for man or angels. The hero whose noble deeds are done only among the clouds, and who never imprisons his lightning and brings it down to serve his fellow man, is only a tinsel hero after all. Our great Example brought Godhood, and the angelic, from heaven to earth, to the service of man. In following Him, though the path be very humble, is the highest and divinest heroism known to man. But he who brings the message of heaven to man must mount daily to heaven's gate in prayer and song, and return with joy-filled heart to live and work among his fellows as the singing, soaring lark returns to the meadows and to his mate.

“Crumbs from the Bread of Life”

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A missionary of the Pacific Islands has related a touching and suggestive story. As he passed along the road a poor crippled leper, from whom both hands and feet were gone, raised himself on his knees, and, reaching his mutilated arms toward him,—instead of begging, blessed him that he had brought the light of the Word of God to that dark island. The missionary, surprised, and confident that he had never seen the man before, stopped and talked with him. He found the poor man knew the story of Christ well, and understood perfectly the saving power of Divine grace. More astonished still, he said to the poor fellow, "But where have you learned this? I have never seen you at My preaching, and besides it would be too far for you to go who can only creep on your knees."

"Ah," said he, "when the people come from your preaching, I sit on the side of the road and say, 'Please, give me a word that the teacher has said,'—and one tells me one little thing and another tells me another, and then God who told you to come and tell it to us helps me to put the little stories altogether, and so I know."

Thus this poor, helpless beggar had fed from the crumbs which fell from the Master's table. Of what value may be the least morsel when it falls in the reach of a hungry soul! Who knows but that the tiniest crumb may feed and nourish a soul for eternity, as did this;—or perhaps it may fall into the Master's hands and, like the loaves, be broken to many thousands.