September 2014 Signs of the Times Newsletter

The *Signs of the Times* newsletter is a collection of stories and quotes from past issues of *Signs* and *These Times*.

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“I am my own master!” cried a young man proudly, when a friend tried to persuade him from an enterprise which he had on hand. “I am my own master!”

“did you ever consider what a responsible post that is?” asked the friend.

“Responsibility—is it?”

“A master must lay out the work he wants done, and see that it is done right. He should try to secure the best ends by the best means. He must keep on the lookout against obstacles and accidents, and watch that everything goes straight, else he will fail.”

“Well!”

“To be master of yourself you have your conscience to keep clear, your heart to cultivate, your temper to govern, your will to direct, and your judgment to instruct. You are master over a hard lot, and if you do not master them they will master you.”

“That is so,” said the young man.

“Now, I could undertake no such thing,” said his friend; “I should fail sure if I did. Saul wanted to be his own master and failed. Herod did. Judas did. No man is fit for it. ‘One is
my Master, even Christ.’ I work under God’s direction. When He is Master all goes right.”—By Bacon, Signs of the Times, February 27, 1893.

Quote: “The widow’s heart was full when her purse was empty.”—By Charles G. Bellah, Signs of the Times, March 4, 1930.

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It is said of the great sculptor, Michelangelo, that when at work, he wore over his forehead, fastened on his artist’s cap, a lighted candle, in order that no shadow from himself might fall on his work. It was a beautiful custom, and spoke a more eloquent lesson than he knew; for the shadows that fall on our work—how often they fall from ourselves.—Unknown, Signs of the Times, October 6, 1881.

Quote: “Always have a good stock of patience laid by, and be sure to put it where you can find it.”—By H. E. S. Hopkins, Signs of the Times, June 13, 1900.

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“What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

Leo Tolstoy tells the story of a poor Russian farmer who heard of a far-off region where land could be secured very cheaply. This man, Pahoum, left his family and went many days’ journey to the land of the Bashkirs, and there he sought out the chieftain. The
corpulent, good-natured chief said, “Choose whatever land you like, the price will be one thousand rubles. Large or small, the price will be the same.”

It was finally agreed that the land should comprise such portion as Pahoum could encircle on foot between sunrise and sunset. At intervals he was to dig a hole with his spade for a marker, and the Bashkirs would later follow the line with a plow until the boundaries were marked out. “But,” warned the chieftain, “you must return to your starting point ere the sun sets, or both money and land will be forfeited.”

Pahoum agreed, and started out the next dawn. The Bashkirs were there to cheer him along. He was fresh, and the air was cool, and Pahoum made marvelous progress. He did not stop for three miles. By this time the sun was high in the heavens and hot on his back. He refreshed himself from his flask of water and moved on. By noon he knew it was time to consider his return, for he must not make his circle too wide. But the farther he went the richer the land seemed to him. He saw a stream he wanted to include. To cut back now would make his land lopsided, so he goaded himself on to complete the circle.

The going began to be difficult. He panted heavily and barely found strength to dig the markers, but he did not dare to stop and rest. At last he could see the Bashkirs waiting for him on the hill where he had begun the journey. They were waving and cheering him on, but the sun was sinking rapidly and his strength was almost gone.

Pahoum gathered his last remaining strength, ran a few hundred yards, and fell. He wished now that he had omitted the rich valley land—he could have done without it. Now he stood to lose both his land and his money. He staggered to his feet and moved on. The sweat blinded him. It was growing dark. He fell again and crawled forward on his hands and knees. The sun dropped behind the hill, but the Bashkirs continued to call and wave. Then he realized that he was in a depression. The Bashkirs were on a hill and could still see the sun. There was still time. He ran frantically, with heaving chest, the rest of the way, plunged headlong into the crowd, and fell flat on his face.

“Ah,” said the chief admiringly. “He is a strong and determined man. He has won much land today.” But Pahoum did not rise. They turned him over. They saw his eyes were open and fixed. Pahoum was dead!

The Bashkirs made clicking sounds indicative of pity. Then they took his shovel and dug a grave for him—it was only six feet long from head to heels. But then, how much land does a man need?—By Godfrey T. Anderson, These Times, December 1972.

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Quote: “One morning a pastor found this note scribbled at the bottom of a list of sick folks for whom he was to offer prayers: ‘Dear Pastor, Old Jim. . . is getting rich. Kindly remember him in your prayers this morning.’”—From Sunday School Times, These Times, March 1967.
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A man once asked a king whether he could tell him how to avoid temptation. “Yes,” was his answer, “I can tell you.” The king then directed him to take a vessel brimful of oil and carry it through the streets of the city without spilling one drop.

“If one drop is split,” he was told, “your head will be cut off.” As he set off on his fateful walk, two executioners, with drawn swords, were ordered to walk behind him to carry out the royal order.

A fair was going on in town, and the streets were crowded with people. However, this man was very careful, and he returned to the king having successfully completed his test.

“Did you see anyone while you were walking through the streets?” asked the king. “No,” answered the man. “I was thinking only of the oil. I noticed nothing else.”

“Then,” the king told him, “you know how to avoid temptation. Fix your mind as firmly on God as you fixed it on the vessel of oil, and allow nothing to distract it. You will then be able to resist temptation.”—By George S. Ashlock, *These Times*, September 1952.

Quote: “When you look at your neighbor’s melon patch, brethren and sisters, you can’t keep your mouth from watering, but you can run.”—An Unknown Preacher, *These Times*, September 1952.

If two goats meet each other on a narrow path above a river, what will they do? They cannot turn back nor pass each other. If they were to butt at each other both would fall into the water. What will they do? Nature has taught them, one to lie down and let the other pass over it. So should one man do to another, yield where he can conscientiously, rather than quarrel.—Unknown, *Signs of the Times*, April 19, 1877.
Quote: “Don’t waste your mornings in anticipating your afternoons, nor waste your afternoons in regretting your mornings. Decide quickly, act promptly, and improve the time and opportunity within your reach. Lost time can never be found. Neglected opportunities do scarcely ever return.—Unknown, Signs of the Times, April 19, 1877.

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In a London church, Sabbath school had closed and the regular church service was about to begin. Someone came in and reported a flight of airplanes coming. All stepped out to look. “They were a beautiful sight,” the pastor told me, “glimping in the sun as they came.” He called all quickly back to their places. They prayed and committed themselves and dear ones to God, and comforted their hearts in song. Quickly, overhead, came the sound of a bomb let loose. They were singing:

“Under His wings, under His wings,  
Who from His love can sever?  
Under His wings my soul shall abide,  
Safely abide forever.”

The bomb struck just in front, between the chapel and the street. It buried itself in the earth—and never exploded.

Always, in telling of special deliverances, we are to thank God for these mercies, but to keep in mind that His love and care are also over those who may lay down their lives in times of peril. We cannot say why James, the brother of John, had to lay down his life at Jerusalem, while Peter was delivered for the time being. Whatever may come, our trust is to be in God.—By W. A. Spicer, Signs of the Times, February 4, 1941.

Quote: “Every really deep scientist must necessarily have religious feeling.”—By Albert Einstein, Signs of the Times, January 6, 1931.

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If you were busy being kind,
Before you knew it, you would find
You’d soon forget to think ‘twas true
That someone was unkind to you.

If you were busy being glad,
And cheering people who are sad,
Although your heart might ache a bit,
You’d soon forget to notice it.

If you were busy being good,
And doing just the best you could,
You’d not have time to blame some man
Who’s doing just the best he can.

If you were busy being true
To what you know you ought to do,
You’d be so busy you’d forget
The blunders of the folks you’ve met.

If you were busy being right
You’d find yourself too busy quite
To criticize your neighbor long,
Because he’s busy being wrong.—By Rebecca Foresman, These Times.

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Compiled by Dale Galusha. Please pass this newsletter on to others.