

The sick of the palsy healed and his sins forgiven

by [Thomas Lynch](#) in the [November 4, 2020](#) issue

Engraving by James Newton after Charles Reuben Ryley, 1795

The graver's title tells it in reverse.

*So, which the greater miracle, we're asked,
to cleanse the soul or cure paralysis?*

The mercy hidden or made manifest?

The King James version has forgiveness first,
the sins' remission done invisibly,
and then, to quiet Scribes and Pharisees,

Arise! he says; Take up your bed and walk,
wherefore begrudgers and their begrudging talk
of blasphemy and sacrilege are hushed.

The palsied man stands up and saunters off,
bedroll and ropes gathered under his arm.

Behold, we never saw a thing like that!

The savior's claim, of course: it's faith that saves.

The boyos on the roof, like pallbearers
delivered of their corpse and coffin straps,
their thankless jobs, all heft and heave and lift,
done for yet another day, so they begin,
taking up their shovels, sods and tiles,
to mend the mess they've made of it again.