

## **“In the Pond”**

*The Present Truth* – January 11, 1894

E. J. Waggoner

When our eyes are once opened to behold the wonders round us, we shall be surprised to find the most commonplace little pond turned into a veritable school of learning with teachers innumerable.

There are the newts with beautiful “crimson-stained and undulating crests,” and eyes “gleaming like fiery topaz,” with their curious habits and strange, baby ways.

Swarms of water-beetles may be seen, the most interesting, perhaps, a “living, diving bell” with wondrous swimming-legs and set of strongest suckers.

Then there are the whirlwig [whirligig] beetles with their water telescopes; each one has four eyes, two above and two below—two to see below the water and two to see above it, each eye, of course, being composed of many little eyes.

Numberless water-boatmen float on their backs and row themselves along with their oar-like legs.

The curious larva of the dragon-fly “propels himself forward by squirting water backward, having within him a ‘direct action’ propeller.” See! How the dragon-fly eats. His mouth opens four ways at once!

May flies, many species of caddis, and swarms upon swarms of the larva of gnats and other flies are found there besides aquatic crustacean almost without number, and hundreds of other creatures fully as interesting as these.

## **“Insects”**

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“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.” Prov. 6:6.

By reading the above verse, we find that God wishes people to study even the little insects. Although some are so small that most people never notice them, they can teach us many useful lessons; they are all wonderful, and many are really very beautiful.

If you notice carefully, you will see that there are two kinds of insects, those having jaws or mouths, like the ants, bees, beetles, and grasshoppers; and those having sucking-tubes, like the butterflies, moths, flies, and mosquitoes. A full-grown insect always has six jointed legs, and two horns or feelers. They have a row of breathing tubes along their sides, and most of

their bones, instead of being on the inside of their bodies, are on the outside, like a soldier's armour, to keep them from getting hurt.



No kind ever had a better or more beautiful armour than the Tiger Beetle, or Sparkler. Its suit is light but strong, allows the insect to move in any direction, and yet covers every part of its body; it shines with more than steely brightness, and looks as though it were trimmed with gold, and dotted with sparkling stones. This beetle even folds up its wings when not in use, and lays them carefully away in a stout little case on its back.

How delicate and beautiful are the wings of insects! Look at the common fly. Its wings are so thin and clear that you can see through them, and yet they are so ribbed, like a leaf, that they are quite strong. If you move them in the sunlight you see all the colours of the rainbow dancing over them. The most beautiful of all insects are the butterflies and moths. And yet these things of beauty were once but creeping caterpillars! Then let us not despise one little creature that God has made; it may not appear beautiful to us, and we may not know that it is good for anything, but we may be sure that it is, or God would not have made it. The more we study about them, the more we wonder and admire.

The eyes of insects are very wonderful. They are often smaller than the hole made by a tiny pin, and yet they are really often composed of thousands of little eyes or facets. Some ants have about fifty, the dragon-fly 12,000, and some beetles and butterflies as many as 25,000, while the common house-fly has two eyes, each made up of 2,000 little eyes. It is thus enabled to see in almost all directions at once.

The tiniest insects have tools as perfect as those belonging to the larger creatures that God has made. The little breathing holes along the sides of the fly have fine sieves to keep out dust. The bottom of its foot has two strong hooks and some small suckers with which the fly can hold on the wall and even walk on the ceiling. The saw-fly has a saw and glue, and one kind of bee has a boring tool and a cutting instrument with which it can cut leaves to fit its nest as well as you could with the scissors. The mosquito has a pump, the earwigs, pincers, and the baby glowworm has a brush with which to keep itself clean. The honey bee has a honey bag, and the fire-fly carries a lantern under his wings; the wasp has a paper mill, and the silk worm a spinning machine.

Although so small, insects are very useful. The Burying Beetles bury in the ground every dead bird, mouse, or small reptile that they find, and thus keep them from making the air impure. Lady-birds kill the plant lice that get on our flowers and plants. The bright reds and pretty pinks in pink, water paints, wool, and silk, are made from the dried bodies of the Cochineal Insects. The Lac Insects give out a reddish brown substance that is used in making sealing wax, varnish, and cement. And who has not seen, yes, and eaten, the many little six-sided rooms full of sweet honey, made by the busy bees? When you put on your shining ribbons and silk clothing, do you ever stop to think of the little worms that worked hours and hours in spinning those silken threads?



A silk worm hangs itself by its hind feet and, for seventy-two hours, spins away until it has a fine unbroken thread of silk eleven miles long wound round its body!

It is no wonder that God thinks that sluggards (lazy persons) might learn something by watching the ants. The farming ants of western Texas clear a piece of land four or five feet wide round their city, take away all plants, stones, and rubbish, sow a certain kind of grass, tend it carefully, keep it free from weeds, and when ripe carry the seeds to their nests. If the seeds are found too damp, they are carried out, laid in the sunshine until dry enough, and housed again. In South America, the Leaf-cutting Ants build nests about two feet high and often forty feet across; and in one instance it was found that they had dug a well one foot across and thirty feet deep, so that they might have water. The White Ant often builds its houses sixteen or seventeen feet high, and, although hollowed out into many rooms, it is strong enough to hold up heavy cattle. There are many other things which you must find out for yourself.

What wonderful insects, wonderful birds, and wonderful water-animals! And they were all made on one day! No wonder that the One who is kind-hearted, powerful, and wise enough to do that is named "Wonderful." Isa. 9:6. Let us show Him how much we thank Him, by treating every creature that He has made with gentleness and kindness, and by learning the lessons that He would have us learn from them.

1. Do you like to work?
2. What does God say that lazy people should do? Prov. 6:6.
3. Why does He wish them to watch the ant?
4. Can you think of some other little creature that is always very busy?—The honey bee.
5. Where does it find the honey that it gathers?
6. In what does it carry it?
7. Where does it store it?—In little six-sided rooms that it makes itself.
8. How can it do such fine work in the dark?—It uses its feelers.
9. Do you think of anything that you can learn from the bee?
10. What strange thing is done by the Burying Beetles?
11. Name some other things for which insects are useful?
12. Out of what do wasps make their nests?—Some use clay, others use paper, while others use hard white shiny cardboard.
13. Where do they get their paper and cardboard?—They make it out of fine bits of wood.
14. What can a fly do that you cannot do?
15. How does he manage to walk on the ceiling without falling off?

16. Name some of the strange tools that insects have.
17. What kind of clothing do insects wear?
18. Which are the most beautiful of all insects?
19. Then should we despise the caterpillar and other insects that do not at first appear beautiful or useful? Why not?
20. How do insects breathe?
21. How many kinds are there?—Two: those having jaws, and those having sucking tubes.
22. How long would it take a man to make one of these smallest insects?
23. How long was God in making all the insects, all the birds, and all the water animals.
24. What new name have we learned by which He is called?—"Wonderful."
25. Do you not think that a good name for Him?
26. How can we show Him that we thank Him for His great goodness in placing around us these wonderful creatures?