

"The Gospel of the Spring. The Birds"

The Present Truth – March 23, 1899

E. J. Waggoner

"The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; and the time of *the singing of birds is come*." What a sweet, bright, joyous time is the Spring-time, is it not? The very air seems to be full of the new life that is to be seen everywhere.

The birds feel it, and after feebly chirping and twittering through the cold, dark months of winter, they join in the general rejoicing and burst out in the Spring-time into full, sweet song, and so help to make this the happy season that it is.

How busy they are, too; for this is a most important time for them. Of what, do you suppose, are they thinking, as they sing so merrily while they are busy gathering the materials for their nests, and skilfully weaving them together in the way that God has taught them to do?

These nests are not for themselves; the birds do not build nests for a home and shelter for themselves. They are thinking lovingly of the treasure that the pretty warm nest will soon hold the precious eggs, which, if all goes well, will hatch into dear little baby birds, to be fed, and cuddled under their wings.

There is an ancient saying, "Everything comes from the egg; it is the world's cradle." As far as we have gone in these lessons we have found this to be true. Even the plants come from the egg, for the seeds that they spring from are really the little eggs of the plant. And the eggs that the bees, butterflies, spiders, and birds lay, are really the seeds from which new bees and butterflies and spiders and birds will at last come.

So you see that the seed and the egg are really the same thing; the egg is the seed, and the seed is the egg.

Remember now what we learned is the real seed,—*"The seed the Word of God,"*—and then you will know what is the power working in these wonderful and beautiful little eggs, which changes them into living creatures like the parent birds.

It is the Word of God, that is hidden in them, just as it is in the seeds that we sow in the ground, making them grow up into beautiful living plants like those from which they came.

For when, in the beginning, God made "every winged fowl after his kind," and "saw that it was good," He "blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply," and, "let fowl multiply in the earth."

"The Word of God is living and active;" it lives and works. And so this word that He spoke in the beginning, when He put His blessing upon all the birds that He had

made, is still carrying on His great work of creation, causing the birds to “multiply in the earth,” just as He said.

And every Spring-time, when their life seems the fullest and brightest, the birds feel the working of this Word of life within them. Because of it, and by the power of it, they bring forth the eggs, which they tend so lovingly and carefully, so that the Word of God may be fulfilled, and they themselves may be multiplied.

As you see them about this Spring-time, so busily and happily building their [nest] to make a safe shelter for the eggs which they know are coming, think of the meaning of these things, and of this wonderful Word that is working so powerfully after all these ages.

Then I am sure you will not want to take any of the pretty eggs you may see in their little nests, but will leave them where the Word of God can carry on its perfect work in them, so that the birds may be multiplied in the earth, to teach us of God, their Creator and ours, and to make us happy with their sweet songs.

“The Bird’s Egg”

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All of you have seen the inside of an egg, and know that it contains the yolk and the white. If you look at the yoke carefully you will see on the surface of it a little transparent speck of jelly.

This small lump of jelly is really the young bird, or what will turn into it. All the rest of the egg is for the nourishment of this little speck, just as the greater part of the seed is usually for the nourishment of the tiny speck that gradually unfolds into the new plant.

The wisdom and skill of the Creator is beautifully seen in the arrangement of the bird’s egg. The yolk is lighter than the white, and so it floats in it, and is suspended in such a way that however the egg may be rolled the chick [is] always uppermost, so as to come the nearest to the mother bird’s body, and get the most heat from it.

At the end of the second day after the mother bird begins to sit, the life of the tiny bird begins, for then the heart starts its quick and regular beating, which will go on as long as its life, so wonderfully developed, shall last.

On the sixth day the bird begins to move, but it is not until about fifteen days from the beginning, that the first cry is heard from the perfect little living bird, while still within the shell.

As long as it remains in the shell, the bill is so soft and fleshy that it would not be able to cut the way out, if God had not provided it with a special little instrument for this purpose.

This is a sharp little growth on the top of the bill, which pierces through the hard shell, and, when the bird turns, cuts the end of it right off, leaving an opening through which the little creature makes its way out into the world. As there is no further use for this, it soon drops off.

The Word of God, that can change an egg into a beautiful bird full of life and power, just what He meant it to be, can work in your heart to make you exactly what He wants you to be. Ask Him to do this, and "let the Word of God dwell in you richly."

"The Eider Duck"

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You all know what eider-down is, don't you? Some of you no doubt sleep every night under a warm coverlet made of it. I am going to tell you where it comes from, and how it is obtained.

The eider duck is a tame bird that lives in the North of England, and Scotland, and in the Orkney and Shetland Islands. The female lays five or six eggs in a nest which she lines thickly with the beautiful soft down plucked from her own breast.

The collectors of the eider-down get it by robbing the nest; they steal the down, and take away the eggs as well, so as to make the duck line the nest again for a fresh supply of eggs. This she does, again plucking down from her breast to make a soft bed for her dear eggs, but this time she lays only three or four.

But the greedy collectors come again and rob the nest, taking eggs as well as down, so that she will have to line it a third time. She has now no down left to pluck from her own body, so she calls plaintively to her mate, the drake who is her partner, to come to her help, and he willingly plucks the soft feathers from his breast to make a new line for the nest.

"For wear the brown duck stripped her breast
For her dear eggs and windy nest,
Three times her bitter spoil was won
For woman, and when all was done,
She called her snow-white piteous drake,
Who plucked his bosom for our sake."

If there is a third cruel robbery, the pair go away and never come back to that place, but seek one where they can be multiplied in peace and safety.

The sorrows of any of His creatures touch the loving heart of the Creator and Father of all. He sees and notices everyone, for "not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice." Do not forget this, but learn, dear children, to be kind and pitiful to all, "that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." Let us be always careful

"Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

"A Strange Egg"

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The little eggs in their cozy nest, that are found there only in the Spring season, are the birds dearest treasures. Some of them will suffer almost anything themselves, rather than have any harm or damage done to these.

There is a bird that is found in the North of England and Scotland called the Guillemot. It has been given the name, "Foolish Guillemot," because it will allow itself to be taken captive rather than desert its egg.

It lays only one, unless this is stolen from it, when it sometimes lays a second, and even a third, but it never has more than one at a time, and this one is very precious to it.

There is something I want to tell you about this egg. Notice, and remember, because it will help you to see how wonderfully and beautifully God has made all His works to fit just a place He made them for.

You know that the usual shape of an egg is a sort of oval,—what we call an "egg oval," or "egg-shaped." But instead of being this shape the egg of the Guillemot is much longer than is usual for a bird's egg, and one end is very wide, while the other is very narrow, for it tapers down gradually from the wide end almost to a point.

Put your peg-top, which is wide at one end and pointed at the other, on the table, and blow it hard, or push it gently, and you will see that instead of rolling off the table it rolls round and round in its own circle.

Now the Guillemot makes no nest, but lays its egg on the bare rock overhanging the sea, usually on a narrow ledge, sometimes not more than six inches wide. If it were the ordinary shape, the high winds would be sure to blow it off the rock where there is nothing to hold it, into the surging sea below.

And now you see why the Creator has made this egg-shape,—so that it may be quite safe in just a place where He has taught the Guillemot to lay it; for instead of being blown off the rock, it only rolls round on it.

Is it not sad, children, that when God has shown such tender mercy and loving care for the egg of this poor bird, men should be constantly on the watch to steal it away from her? One man tells with seeming pride, instead of the shame that should be felt, that he carried away in his boat over two thousand of these eggs from a certain part of North America. Remember that each bird has only one egg, and think what this would mean to two thousand sorrowing mothers.