

## **“The Work of the Leaves”** Part 2

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We were talking last week of the wonderful work of the green leaves,—how in them the food that the roots draw up out of the earth is cooked by the sun and prepared for the use of the plants. But the plants and trees need other food besides what they get out of the earth, and this the busy little leaves gather and prepare for them.

You will wonder perhaps what this food can be, for you do not see them feeding, nor anything for them to feed upon. Yet the leaves are covered with tiny little mouths, which are generally open all day when the weather is favourable, and through them they take in a supply of food *out of the air*.

Plants cannot take “solid food,” it has to be all dissolved for them. What the roots take from the earth is dissolved in water, and passes through them in what we call the sap; what the leaves take from the air is also dissolved, and is in the form of gas or vapour.

You have learned about the poisonous carbonic acid gas which we breathe out into the air. The oxygen that is in the pure air when it is taken into our bodies, passes into our blood, and burns up the carbon that a great deal of our food is made up of. The carbon uniting in this way with the oxygen, makes what is called carbonic acid gas, which passes out of our bodies through our lungs into the air.

If we had to breathe this gas over and over, and could not get a fresh supply of pure air, we should die. But see how wonderfully and beautifully God is working to purify the air and prepare more food for us.

This gas which is so poisonous to us, is the very thing that the plants need for their food. It is drawn through the little mouths that we spoke of, and by the help of the sunlight the carbon and oxygen are separated again. The oxygen is given out into the air for us to breathe, and the plants keep the carbon and form it into food for us again.

Some plants make the food that they take from earth and air into grains for our use,—corn, rice, oats, barley; others into beans and peas; some into vegetables such as potatoes and turnips; some into fruits and nuts. Some build it into hard wood that is so useful for making our houses and furniture and fuel. And perhaps you know that coal,—so necessary to those who live, in cold climates like this to in the winter,—is pure carbon, which the leaves of the tree have taken from the air in the way that we told you of.

Think of other useful things that we get from the plants,—oil, cork, India-rubber, cotton and flax for making our clothing, and many other things.

At night the green leaves shut their little mouths and sleep as you do. The plants do not feed at night, but even then they are not quite idle. Like you they breathe and grow, using up the food that they have gathered and prepared during the day.

Remember whose breath it is that the plants breathe,—the same breath that is breathed into you, the breath of God. And the life that they have is just the same life as yours,—the life of Jesus. It is He who is doing all these wonderful things for us through the plants which He has commanded the earth to bring forth. It is His wisdom working in them that guides them in all their work, and His love which in them is ministering to the needs of all His creatures.

Are you wondering how we are going to get pure air through the winter months when the fields and trees are bare? God has thought of this too, and provided for it. He blows the poisoned air away from us to places where there are many plants needing it to feed on, and He blows back to us the air that they have purified. Think of this when the strong, cold winds of winter are blowing about you,—how through them God is providing you with sweet, pure, life-giving air, and carrying away what would be harmful to you.