

"The Work of the Leaves"

The Present Truth – September 21, 1899

E. J. Waggoner

Now the green leaves for whose first appearance we watched so eagerly in the Spring, are already falling from the trees; and making a soft rustling carpet over the ground. Some that are still upon the trees show by their bright garments that they are preparing to leave. Their work, which can only be done in their green dresses, is now over, and they put on their holiday clothing for a little while before they leave us altogether.

Have you ever wondered why the leaves fall off as they do in the Autumn, and the trees are left standing so bare all through the Winter? It is because the work of the trees is over for the year; they do not work at all in the Winter, but go to sleep and rest all through the cold weather.

As most of the work of the tree is done by the leaves, these busy little hands are not needed any more. When the work is over, they dropped away, and helped to nourish the ground and prepare it for another Summer's work.

Perhaps you never thought of the leaves as the hands of the tree. In a beautiful figure of speech which the prophet Isaiah uses, he says, "All the trees of the field shall clap their hands;" and in this he seems to refer to the movement and the sound that the leaves make when they are stirred by the breeze.

But what about the work that these little hands have to do? You did not know they are so busy, for their work is done so quietly; and yet every green thing upon the earth, even every little blade of grass, is busily working all through the sunny day.

One very important work that the leaves do is to prepare the food that the tree or plant needs. The raw food is sucked up from the earth by the roots, and carried by the sap into the leaves, and until it is there prepared and changed and cooked at the sun fire, it cannot be used by the plant for food to build itself up, and store in grain or fruit, according to the nature of the plant.

For besides its own growth, there is something else for the plant to do before its year's work is over, and for this it is preparing all the time. Even the beautiful blossoms which have pleased us so much during the summer, are only a part of this preparation. It must multiply in obedience to the command of God.

Every plant must obey the Word which said: "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and fruit tree bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed thereof."

The seed, as you know, is formed in the flower, but the flower depends upon the green leaf to prepare all the food it needs to produce the tiny baby plant, and store

the seed with nourishment which will last until it can put forth green leaves of its own to do this work for it.

Remember now what God said to man about these plants bearing seed and fruit, which He commanded the earth to bring forth, "To you it shall be for meat."

For whom, then, are the green leaves working? Not for the plants on which to grow only, but for you,—to prepare a store of food for you which shall last until another season brings a fresh supply. This is what the green leaves of the fruit trees, the nut trees, and the waving fields of green corn, have been busy doing all through the Summer. And all this is the fulfilling of the Word of God,—the working out of what was in His mind when He created every green thing upon the earth.

Not only for us, but the whole animal creation, the plants prepare the food that is needed, and there is no other source of supply for any living creature. For to the animals God said, "I have given you every green herb for meat."

The insects feed upon the flowers, the little squirrels and monkeys upon nuts, the rabbits upon lettuce leaves and other vegetables, the birds upon fruit and seeds, the elephants upon rice and other grains. Think of all the animals that you know, and the food that God has provided and prepared for them in the plants. Even those which feed upon other animals only get second-hand the food which the animals they eat got from the plants.

How important, then, is the work of the leaves! Will you not look with more interest and love at these fellow creatures of ours, and think of the kind work that God is so lovingly doing for us and all His creatures by them? Next week we hope to tell you more about this work.

"The Lily's Clothing"

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How is the lily clothed? It has a beautiful garment of white and green and various other colours. Solomon in all his glory, arrayed in his royal apparel, must have been a wonderful sight. The Queen of Sheba came a long way to see the glory of Solomon, and when she saw it her heart fainted. "The half was not told me," she said, "and I could not believe what I did hear."

Who would not go a long way to see one of the kings of the earth, although he might not be arrayed as gloriously as Solomon was? and in order to see this sight one would trample underfoot a score of the lilies without noticing them. If one should place before him a stalk of modest lilies, he would consider them very plain.

“See the glory and all the magnificent array of Solomon!” Yes, but Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these lilies, for the royal apparel of Solomon was something that could be put on and taken off; and when he took it off, nobody would know, to look at him, that he was any different from other men. But the clothing of the lily is the life of the lily. It is not something that is put on, but something that comes from within; it is the inner life that the lily draws from God’s great storehouse in the air and in the earth, manifested in the beautiful green, the delicate white, and all the variegated colours—the manifestation of life in its freshness and brightness,—that is the clothing of the lily. It is God’s own clothing, such as God Himself wears,—His own life shining forth in making this beautiful garment. Now what does He say? “If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall He not much more clothe you?”