

"In the Meadow"

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Have you ever carefully watched the busy bee at his summer day's work? If not, do so this year, and see how many interesting facts you can find out for yourselves. You will most likely notice many things that you will not understand, but you can enquire and find out the meaning of much that he is doing.

Of course you know what is the bees' object in their work among the flowers,—the search for honey and "bee-bread" for the little ones in the hive is probably all that they think of. They seem to be possessed by an absorbing desire for work, as though all they lived for was to fill the wax comb that is being built by the workers at home.

Those who keep bees for the purpose of selling the honey now provide ready-made comb, which they empty as soon as the bees have filled it. The bees then patiently set to work to fill it over again, thinking perhaps what a fine store they are gathering for use during the winter, when all the flowers will have faded.

Of course the bee-keepers see that they have plenty, but they sell all that the bees do not need. As so much of the bees' time is saved by having the comb made for them, they can spend more time out among the flowers gathering honey.

But this work of the bees among the flowers has a meaning and purpose of which they know nothing. They are being used by God to make the flowers grow to beautify the earth. They are unconscious gardeners working in the Lord's garden. For from each flower that they visit they carry away a little yellow dust which you may have seen sticking to them. Perhaps some of you know Miss Ingelow's pretty lines:—

"O velvet Bee, you're a dusty fellow,
You've powdered your legs with gold."

This gold-dust is very valuable to the flowers, for without it all their seeds would be useless. Then what good does the bee do by carrying it away, do you say?

If you watch him closely you will see that when he visits the next flower he dusts some of it off as he delves into the heart of the flower to take his toll of sweet honey. He leaves the dust in payment for what he carries away, and it is of much more value to the flower. It falls upon the ripening seeds, and makes them fertile and able to bring forth fresh plants and flowers to feed the next generation of bees. So the bee is working for the interests of his own race, after all, is he not, as well as for the good of the flower.

Notice the colours of the flowers that the bees visit, and now that you know what he is doing among them, you will no doubt be glad to see that he likes the same colours and scents that we do. A naturalist who has made a special study of this says that bees visit mostly the red, white, blue and yellow flowers. The colour and the fragrance are the guides that attract them, and so the most beautiful blossoms with the strongest scent are sure to be visited and fertilised, and thus the "survival of the fittest" is provided for.

You see then that the colours, the scent, and the sweetness of the blossoms each has its object, and is a part of the wonderful plan through which the Word of God is working to fulfil itself, and to cause the earth still to bring forth as He commanded it in the beginning.

But this is only a little glimpse into the wonders that are taking place all about us in everything that we can see. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

Solomon tells us how he sought out and found some of the wisdom which made him such a wise king and counsellor. He says: "I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things."

You may get some seed from one of the flowers in your garden, and keep it until the spring, and plant it, but find that the flowers which come from it are quite a different colour from the one that produced the seed. You will most likely already guess why this is.

The pollen or dust brought by the bee from another plant had given to the seed the characteristics of the flower from which it was brought. Sometimes the new flowers may be a mixture of both colours, the colour of the plant that bears the seed, and also of the one that fertilises it.

In this the flowers are like the little children, who may resemble either father or mother, or both parents. For the seeds are the babies of the plants, which are cradled in the ground until the strength of the life in them makes them grow and push themselves up from their earthy covering into the light.

You will see many butterflies too in the meadow. Suppose instead of chasing them, and trying to grasp them, and spoiling their beautiful, delicate wings with your clumsy little fingers, you should watch them carefully and see what you can learn.

Did you ever see one with its long tongue dipped down into the deep cup of a honey-laden flower? When it is satisfied and draws it out, you will wonder whatever it is going to do with it, and wherever it can keep it, until you see it beautifully curled up like the spring of a watch and packed safely away in its case.

But the butterfly is not so busy as the bee, for it does not store any honey, and it is such a dainty, airy creature, that it needs very little food. In its former state as a caterpillar it fed all the time, and we might think, to see how little it eats, that it then laid in a store of food to last all its butterfly life. The butterfly usually lives only a short time, and its chief work seems to be to provide for the increase of its race by laying a great number of eggs. . . .