

The King's Garden

The Present Truth – July 25, 1901

E. J. Waggoner

HONESTY

Honesty is the name given to the plant in our picture. The seed-case is very pretty, and looks something like a pearl or silver coin. Bunches of these are sometimes used to ornament rooms.

We have chosen this plant because of its name, to stand for the flower of Honesty which springs from the reed of the eighth commandment—"Thou shalt not steal."

Everyone, even a very little child, knows that it is wrong to steal,—to take something that belongs to someone else. This is because God has put the seeds of His truth into the heart of every little child that is born. He writes His law in the members of our bodies, and so even the heathen who have never heard His name, know that they ought not to take that which is not theirs.

God gave to Adam and Eve the whole world, and everything in it except one tree, which He told them not even to touch. You think they ought to have been very happy and contented with a world full of beautiful things, and so they were for a time.

Then Eve began to long for the one thing that God had not given them. She looked at the forbidden tree, touched it, and at last "took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

They broke the law that God had written in their members, and they thought that they had gained a great deal. But, do you know that one "can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." We may try to get what God has not given to us, but this is the surest way to lose it altogether.

All that God sees is for our good, He will give us when the right time comes; for "your Heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of." So let us trust in Him, and then we shall never want to steal,—to get by dishonesty what He has not given to us. We may seem to grasp and hold it for a time, but "the wages of sin is death," and that means the loss of everything.

Listen to the advice which Paul gave to young Timothy: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment; let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare."

There are other ways of stealing, besides putting forth our hands, as Eve did, and taking for ourselves what is not ours. Did you ever hear Shakespeare's lines:—

"Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis some thing, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that flices from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

"A good name," God's Word tells us, "is rather to be chosen than great riches," so if by our words we steal away the good name of another, we are doing him a greater injury than if we took his money or any of his goods.

We can also steal the time of others, by giving them unnecessary work to do for us. When you are careless or untidy in your habits, or when you need constant watching in order to be kept at your work or lessons, you are stealing the time of your busy mothers, and older brothers and sisters, and robbing others of the work that they might be doing for them.

The Bible tells of those who "rob God." Perhaps you do not know how we can do this. God has kept for Himself one-tenth of all that He gives to man. He leaves it to us to give Him back a faithful tithe—a tenth part—of all that He gives us. So if we do not pay Him that which He plainly tells us is life [His?] own, what are we doing?—Robbing God.

He says that those who thus rob Him are "cursed with a curse," but those who bring Him all the tithes will not have room to receive the great blessing that He will give them. Would you not rather have nine parts with God's blessing, than to keep all ten parts and have a curse instead?

Besides the tithe, God has kept for Himself one of the seven days of the week. This—the Sabbath—He calls "My holy day." Then if we use this day for our own work or pleasure, are we not robbing God of His holy time?

But God says to us, "Thou shalt not steal," and His Word is Spirit and life, able to fulfil itself, and to keep us from doing anything that He tells us not to do. So when He says, "Thou shalt not steal," there to the same power in that Word as when He said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

His precious Word of power will keep out of our hearts every seed of the evil weeds of dishonesty, and fill them with the sweet, fresh flowers of honesty and perfect truth.

In the Woods

The Present Truth – July 25, 1901

E. J. Waggoner

God has made everything beautiful in its season. He has also fitted each thing perfectly for the surroundings in which He has placed it.

Watch the fish, how easily and swiftly they dart about in the water! This is their element, for God has made them to live there; but take one out of the water into the air, and how helpless it is, and how soon it dies.

The birds which float in the air would be just as helpless, and lose their lives just as quickly, if they were put under the water. Their light bodies and buoyant wings were made to fly in the open firmament.

There are some creatures that can live under the earth, like the mole, and the earthworm, because God meant that for their home.

It is a wonderful study that will last you all your life, to see how beautifully each creature is exactly fitted by God for its place in His kingdom.

“O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all,”

and we may learn wisdom by studying the wonderful works which God’s wisdom has planned and formed.

In this world of sorrow and death, where “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain,” all creatures are in danger of having their lives taken by others. It is a part of the curse that sin has brought, that instead of living as God meant them to, upon the green herbs, the animals prey one upon another, and there is a constant warfare between them.

But God has given to each creature a means of defending itself from its special dangers. You may have seen a little hedgehog rolled up into a prickly ball, which would make it very uncomfortable for anyone who interfered with it. And you have felt the sharp claws of your little kitty, if you have been too rough in your play.

Some insects secrete a fluid with a most unpleasant smell, which they can send over their enemies if they are attacked. There is a fish which can give a sharp electric shock to anyone who touches it, and another which can stain the water all round it an inky black, which hides it and gives it a chance to escape.

But there are some creatures which seem to have no other means of defence, that look so much like their surroundings that it is almost impossible to distinguish them. You have heard of the chameleon, which changes its colour to suit its surroundings; of caterpillars which are able to make themselves look just like

pieces of dry stick; and of insects which take the exact shapes of the leaves on the trees where they live.

Things quite as wonderful and interesting are going on at your feet and over your heads every day that you walk in the fields or woods. The busy bee goes buzzing loudly among the flowers, in full sight, for its sharp sting keeps other creatures from being free with it, as you may know to your cost, if you have ever tried it.

But the gentle, harmless butterfly flits silently from flower to flower, and though it can easily be seen when flying, it folds its wings and settles like a petal of a flower upon the grass or shrubs. Have you not often mistaken one for a flower leaf? And no doubt other insects and birds are often so deceived.

This morning when I was walking in the forest, I saw some deer whose light brown coats—a pretty contrast to the deep green foliage all around them—made it very easy to watch them. But how fleetly they bounded away among the trees when my footsteps startled them. Their light flying feet are their means of self-defence.

I sat down to rest at the foot of a tree, and presently heard a slight rustling sound about a yard away from me. Looking in the direction of the sound, I saw what I am sure I should not otherwise have noticed: the pretty head of a little brown mouse slightly raised from its hole, so that it could look round and see if it was safe to venture out. It was the exact colour of the ground, and would never have been observed by anyone who was not watching for it, as it waited "as still as a mouse," till it was satisfied that there was no danger. Then it came up out of its hole, and started in search of food, but catching sight of me, it scampered quickly home again, and did not come out as long as I was there.

A short distance farther on, I saw what I took for a tree-toad, that I had disturbed, dart into a heap of dead leaves. I searched for it carefully where I had seen it fall, but I had some difficulty in finding it, because it was so much like the leaves among which it lay motionless, as though it knew that its only hope of escape was in being mistaken for one of them. And indeed, its wrinkled yellow skin was a perfect match, and its mouth looked exactly like the curled edges of the dry leaves.

I lifted the toad gently several times with a stick, but it flopped limply back among the leaves without a sign at life, its tiny "hands" spread out like little bits of dry, yellow leaf stalks. When I had scraped away the leaves all round it, it gave one lively hop into the midst of another heap, where it lay as limp and motionless as before, and did not move again, though I waited for some time.

My way home led me past a pond in the wood, and as I walked down to the water's edge, about a dozen creatures darted at once from almost under my feet, and splashed into the water. Every step disturbed others, which hastened to join their comrades in the pond. I looked closely to see what it was that had escaped my notice, but at first could see nothing. Then I saw that what I had mistaken for green leaves floating among the green scum on the surface of the water, were the

heads of small green frogs, which had been lying among the grass, at the water's edge.

I looked for others, but could see them only when they moved, although I must have disturbed at least fifty in the space of a few yards. Both on the land and in the water their bright green bodies were so much like the grass and rushes and leaves among which they lay or floated, that it was difficult to see them, even when looking for them, until one's eyes became used to seeing them.

In any ordinary country walk you will, if you make use of the eyes that God has given you to read in His great Book of Nature, see much that will teach you of His love and wisdom in caring for His creatures, and lead you to put your full trust in Him.