

A sturdy wolf I saw, narrowly watching and closely following the track of the sheep, evidently longing to devour any unhappy wanderer or careless loiterer on the road. I saw too, with extreme interest, one poor sheep attended by a little lamb, who was first inclined to loiter on the way. She seemed deaf to the roar of the hungry wolf, and to have forgotten the precipice, the guernion, the avalanche, and the gaping abyss, all too ready for the destruction of careless travellers. The voice of the good shepherd, who still watched the erring one, was fast becoming unheeded. Again and again he called, but that voice, once so joyfully and intelligently obeyed, was now as the voice of a stranger, whose own the sheep are not. The little feeble lamb at her side so entirely absorbed her, that the voice of love and warning, and the almost certain destruction which awaited herself and her tender one were alike unheeded in her foolish, indiscriminating fondness. Every moment I expected to see the prowling wolf seize on the helpless, undefended lamb, but the good shepherd seemed to exercise a mysterious power which I could not understand. Again and again was the enemy about to make the fatal spring, but the glance of the guardian shepherd stayed him like a spell, and he fell back with a savage growl of hatred and disappointment.

The dangers increased as the darkness thickened. The sheep was surely lost, I thought. But no! the good shepherd leading the flock sought the wandering one, and, in tones I can never forget, he said, "It is not my will that this little one should perish." He stooped, and gently gathered the lamb in his arms, and carried it in his bosom.

Oh! how closely and lovingly the mother clung to the Shepherd! The little one was removed from her sight now, but she knew it was safe from the dangers into which she had led it, and was happily resting on his bosom.

Doubly dear was the Shepherd who had taken her little one; and for the rest of the toilsome and dangerous way, she was the one who clung most closely, and followed most lovingly, and enjoyed the double portion of the Shepherd's tender care. There was nothing to separate her from him now. I believe nothing could have tempted her to turn from the path he trod, or to loiter in the dark valleys. A turn in the track now hid them from my view. I awoke, and behold it was a dream.

Could any words of man's wisdom, however eloquent or well-chosen have shown me half so clearly where my sin had been, which made it necessary for my child to be taken from me? Could anything have taught me so clearly the sin of my rebellious, murmuring spirit, as the lesson I learnt from the restoration of "The wandering sheep?" God says, "They that err in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmur shall learn doctrine."—*English Sunday School Teachers' Magazine*.

LESSONS IN NATURAL HISTORY.—(Continued.)

2. THE MASON-BEE.—"The ancients, not content to admire the wonderful instincts and qualities of the hive or honey-bees, gave them credit for some to which they had no just pretensions. Seeing bees flying about, laden with little gravel-stones, the older naturalists thought they did so to prevent their being carried away by the wind; but there can be little doubt, that they mistook the honey-bee for the mason-bee.

"Lumps of mortar may sometimes be seen adhering to the garden wall, when it is exposed to the sun. These have not been formed, as would at first appear, by a careless bricklayer who has left some of his material to disfigure the wall. Any attempt to remove it will prove it able to resist the impression of the strongest knife. This lump is the work of care, and is a house which has been reared by the mason-bee. It contains eight or ten cavities or cells, in each of which is deposited an egg, with the supply of food which the young grub will consume, from the time it is hatched until it is ready to go forth into the world, and seek its own fortune.

"The mason-bee selects with skill a site suitable for its future habitation. Then it sets about collecting the material for building. This is composed of sand made into mortar. The insect knows very well that all kinds of sand will not make a good cement; the grains must neither be too large nor too small. The little creature therefore, selects with the greatest care such as will suit its purpose, only a few such grains being contained in a heap of sand, if we may judge by their actions.

"A French naturalist says: 'I could not understand why the bee did not take the whole of its load from that part of the gravel-walk on which it first settled. Having collected a few grains in one spot, it flew to another. The whole walk was covered with the same kind of sand, and I could not discover the slightest difference. Hence, I infer that this insect possesses some sense which leads it to detect advantageous peculiarities, which elude human observation, in the form of the sand.'

"The bee does not carry off the sand grain by grain; but collects a sufficient quantity to form a heap of the size of a small shot, and cements this mass together with a glew which it ejects from its mouth.

With the gravel and cement it mixes a little earth, which makes it firmer. This little pellet of well-tempered mortar is then carried by the bee to the spot selected for its nest; where the foundation is soon formed by a regular, circular succession of such little balls. On this foundation, it proceeds to raise a round tower of very small dimensions.

"Every time a fresh supply of mortar is brought, the insect may be seen to twist and twirl it between its teeth and first pair of legs; it is then laid in the place destined for it, and moulded to its proper shape.

"As the tower increases in height, the bee may be seen thrusting its head into the cell, as if to examine it, and to see if the interior is perfectly smooth, as it will come in contact with the unprotected skin of its cherished offspring. On this account, it is smoothed with all the skill and assiduity the tender parent knows how to exert. The outside, being intended for no such purpose, is left rough. Each cell is separately formed; and then the whole is enveloped in a common covering made of sand.

"After the cell has reached its desired height, and before it is quite finished, the mason-bee, like the carpenter-bee, goes in quest of pollen, which it deposits as a support for its future young. It enters the cup of a flower, covers itself with pollen, and then flies home to its nest, where the dust is brushed neatly off, and mixed with a quantity of honey which the bee disgorges from its honey-bag. Thus it makes the necessary bee bread. When a sufficient quantity of this has been prepared and nicely packed away, an egg is laid, and the cell is closed; and when all are thus filled, they are covered over, and the labor of the mason-bee terminates. The scene of its industry and the object of its unwearied care seem to be at once forgotten. The purposes of nature have been answered; the perpetuation of the race is provided for, and the insect dies.

"In the habits of the mason-bee, we see an illustration of a maxim which prevails to a considerable extent among men. 'Might makes right,' say the strong, and the weak are obliged to yield. It is no uncommon thing for the mason-bee to appropriate to itself the home of another, and usurp its rights.

"Notwithstanding the great strength of their habitations, the mason-bees suffer much from their insect enemies, some of whom steal into these stony towers, and devour the offspring of the industrious mason, in the very recesses of their home.

"But, of all the enemies of this insect, the most destructive is the ant. When one of these strolling marauders has discovered the hidden treasure of the bee, information is at once given to the whole tribe of the prize and they repair in long files to obtain the booty. The poor bee makes every effort to resist its foes, but, fatigued at last, disheartened, and unable to drive off the advancing host, it gives up in despair, and abandons the produce of its labors to unrelenting enemies.

"The eggs, which are left inclosed in their stony prison, undergo the usual changes, and the young eat their way through the hard substance without the aid of their mother! Dr. Hamel put one of the nests of a mason-bee under a glass; the opening he covered with a piece of gauze. He saw three young bees, which had pierced through three inches of their nest, unable to cut the gauze which prevented their escape, and so they perished.

"The mason-bee adds another to the long catalogue of seemingly insignificant creatures, which display, by instinct, powers of forecast almost silencing the boast of man as a reasoning being."

3. THE HUMBLE BEE.—"There are many kinds of bees whose history seems less wonderful, perhaps, but not less curious, than the hive or honey-bee. Some of these live in societies, but their limited number, rudeness of their habitations, when compared with the populousness of the order, and architecture of the hive, make us feel as though we were contemplating a village, after having seen a large and thickly-settled city. The contrast, however, is interesting; just as it is well for one, who has marked the manners of civilization, to enlarge his knowledge by observing the habits of simple rustics, or even the rude customs of the savage.

"The *Humble-bee*, so well known in the country, may well be called a villager. It makes no pretensions, and passes no sleepless nights, to fill a station, or act a part never designed for it. The communities vary from twenty to three hundred. Like true rustics, they are all born to labor.

"Here is no queen, attended by a numerous guard, who live but for her, and die if she is removed,—no idle males, subsisting upon the fruits of others labor,—but all, male and female, share alike the common efforts for maintenance.

"Alone, and unattended, the female lays the foundation of her future little village, and its inhabitants are all her own children. The *humble-bee*, so truly named, raises her dwelling from the foundation. There is nothing to attract attention in the exterior; a tuft of moss a few inches high and buried seemingly in a clod, conceals all that is dear to those little creatures. Examined more closely, the mossy filaments will be found to be interlaced, and so carefully put together, that not a grain of dirt is intermingled with the texture. The slight vault, although two or three inches thick, is hardly able to protect