

Hand in Hand

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The Mission of Children.

As you wander about the summer fields or along the pleasant lanes, or perhaps through your own fair garden, do you ever think what a holy mission is the mission of the flowers? Not a mission of usefulness or of sweetness or of beauty only, but a mission so to live their beautiful and sweet and useful lives as to lead our hearts to God.

"Consider the lilies," said our Lord, as He sat upon the green hill-side where the wild flowers grew at His feet, bidding us consider them in order to learn of them a lesson of our Maker's skill and our Heavenly Father's care. Yet to teach us this lesson the lilies had neither speech nor language; they had but to live their lives in perfect obedience to God's will, and by that means they drew to Him the hearts of those who "considered" them.

Now does not it appear to you that the mission of children is very much like the mission of the flowers? Let me tell you a story—it shall be a true one—to show you what I mean.

Long ago, some hundreds of years indeed, there went to India a certain holy man to preach the Gospel. He found it in a certain city extremely difficult to reach the hearts of the peo-

ple, who led very wicked lives and had no desire to lead better: but he felt that if they could once be brought to see the beauty of holiness there might be hope.

After much prayer he did as follows. He went about the city day after day with a bell in his hand, and ringing this as he went, in order to attract attention, he called loudly to all fathers who heard him to send their children to him that he might teach them.

None objected to this; they knew the missionary to be a good and wise man, so that they were quite willing that their children should be instructed by him; while the children themselves, partly out of curiosity, partly out of liking for the stranger, who was very gentle towards them, crowded around him.

Then the good man would daily lead his young flock to the church and there instruct them in the Christian faith and life.

The little ones listened with interest and delight; learned to believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and soon they loved Him, and trying to please Him, they became by degrees so gentle and kind and modest and humble in their lives, that those amongst whom they lived felt that Christianity was a good thing.

Then many hearts were softened, and, by-and-by, the whole city seemed changed: people came in crowds after awhile to listen to the good man's preaching, and at last repenting with tears, they gave up their evil ways and lived as Christians.

The lives of the little children had drawn these hearts to God.

Do you see now the mission of children is so like the mission of flowers?

It is not for little children, who themselves require teaching and correcting, to go about teaching and correcting others; it is for them, like the flowers, to live sweet lives,—that is what they have to do for God.

Such we may suppose was the childhood of our blessed Lord in His home at Nazareth. Holy Scripture tells us of no sayings or doings of His childhood excepting upon one single occasion; and then He was meekly seated as a learner at the feet of the teachers, whom He left, however, in instant obedience to His mother and Joseph. All beyond this that the Bible tells us of that holy childhood is that He led a faultless and lovable life; it had already foretold that He should grow up 'as a tender plant,' and had compared Him to two fair flowers,—“the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley.”

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