

HOME & SCHOOL

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The Ministry of Flowers.

God's ministry of flowers is one of the most delightful evidences of His love. The economy of nature might, doubtless, be maintained if the flowers were both scentless and colourless. But with what a profusion of beauty and fragrance has God clothed the world! All things rejoice in the loveliness of Spring. But there are many—the prisoners of pain in sick homes and in hospitals—who cannot go abroad to behold this beauty and inhale this fragrance. What better thing can happy, healthy boys and girls do, who have flowers in plenty, than carry them to those who are pining for the sight and smell. In many American cities, the Sunday-schools have organized a Flower Mission, gathering from the gardens or the woods flowers for the sick, and sending them, week by week, every Saturday, to the hospitals. Young people will find that such gifts will bless him that gives as well as him that takes. Often a message of the love of God will glide into the heart of some sick sufferer with the fragrant breath of some beautiful flower. Even the poorest may go flower-gathering in the woods, and gladden the sick-room of some neighbour with their bright presence. The Saviour Himself points to the flowers as evidences of the love of God: "Consider the lilies how they grow." And many a devout heart, wandering at this glad season in the garden or meadow, exclaims:



THE MINISTRY OF FLOWERS.

As if on living creatures,
Where'er my eyes do fall,
On blue bells and on daisies,
I say, God bless you all!

Listen to the beautiful verses in which the poet Longfellow describes the ministry of flowers:

Make full well, in language quaint and olden,
One who dwelleth by the castled Rhine,
When he called the flowers, so blue and golden,
Stars, that in earth's firmament do shine.
As they are, wherein we read our history,
As astrologers and seers of old;

Yet not wrapped about with awful mystery,
Like the burning stars, which they beheld.
Wondrous truths, and manifold as wondrous,
God hath written in those stars above;
But not less in the bright flowerets under us
Stands the revelation of His love.

Bright and glorious is that revelation
Written all over this great world of ours;
Making evident our own creation,
In these stars of earth—these golden flow-

And the Poet, faithful and far-seeing,
Sees, alike in stars and flowers, a part
Of the self-same, universal being,
Which is throbbing in his brain and heart.

Gorgeous flowerets in the sunlight shining,
Blossoms flaunting in the eye of day,
Tremulous leaves, with soft and silver lining,
Buds that open only to decay;

Brilliant hopes, all woven in gorgeous tissues,
Flaunting gaily in the golden light;

Large desires, with most uncertain issues,
Tender wishes, blossoming at night!

These in flowers and men are more than seeming;
Workings are they of the self-same powers,
Which the Poet, in no idle dreaming,
Seeth in himself and in the flowers.

Everywhere about us are they glowing,
Some like stars, to tell us Spring is born;
Others, their blue eyes with tears o'erflowing,
Stand like Ruth amid the golden corn;

Not alone in Spring's armorial bearing,
And in Summer's green emblazoned field,
But in arms of brave old Autumn's wearing,
In the centre of his brazen shield;

Not alone in meadows and green alleys,
On the mountain-top, and by the brink
Of sequestered pools in woodland alleys,
Where the slaves of nature stoop to drink;

Not alone in her vast dome of glory,
Not on graves of bird and beast alone,
But in old cathedrals, high and hoary,
On the tombs of heroes, carved in stone;

In the cottage of the rudest peasant,
In ancestral homes, whose crumbling towers,
Speaking of the Past unto the Present,
Tell us of the ancient Games of Flowers;

In all places, then, and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings,
Teaching us, by some persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things.

And with childlike, credulous affection,
We behold their tender buds expand;

Emblems of our own great resurrection,
Emblems of the bright and better land.

THERE is no fame so intoxicating or so transient as that of mere oratory. Some of the most accomplished orators whom America has produced have died within a few years in mid-career and left scarcely a ripple on the surface.