

ranks, be the occasion one of joy or of grief. When a nation, great and glorious, rang with the plaudits of a people glad to find vent in a still echoing huzza for the benefits and blessings—the peaceful accumulation of fifty golden years—the voices of many thousands of children swelled the vast chorus. When another nation, equally great and glorious, wept over the bier of a loved and revered president, the children came in crowds to place upon his grave their leafy tributes wet with the tears of sorrowing eyes. They—“these little ones”—bring with them an added presence, an indefinable something clinging to them, since that sunny day so long ago when they ascended in crowds to receive the blessing of One whose heart was tenderest towards the sweet blossoming flowers, the helpless animals, and the innocent bright faced children. And when we think of them there it seems not only right but imperative that they should occupy an important place in the furthering of a great movement, but one the need of whose existence is a blot upon our civilization; and all who are fair-minded must shrink with a feeling of shame and pitiful humiliation from the sorrowful truth that it is absolutely necessary to have societies whose chief object is to protect the helpless and innocent from “the noblest work of God.”

Such, however, being the truth, it was necessary to decide upon the best means of effecting this protection and of affording opportunities by which all who desire to do good in this particular could exercise their good will to its best and fullest extent. With this end in view, then, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was formed, and finding that here was another “great movement” whose progress would be greater and whose influence would be more widely felt when the children were interested, “Bands of Mercy” were formed for them, of them, and by them.

Here in St. John are a number of these Bands, each one connected with some particular Sunday-school, it being rightly decided that in this way the organizations would be more successful and the ability for a faithful rendering of the service for which they are designed much greater than if they stood alone. Would not greater advantages and more faithful results mark their progress if “Band work” were introduced in the every day life of the public schools? There, where the faculties are keener and more susceptible, where all teaching tends toward the highest elevation of the soul, the use of the Society whose watchwords are “kindness to animals,” would be made so familiar that kindness would become part of life—an attribute and not an added virtue donned on and for especial occasions.

This “kindness to animals” does not only mean the care and attention given to home pets by the little ones whose charge they so often are, nor is its entire meaning to be found in that ready sympathy and just indignation that allows a warmly clad man or woman to strike a homeless cat, or exclaim against the heavy burden of a shivering, half-starved horse; but patience, forbearance and loving kindness toward one another.

Many mothers raise the objection—and justly too—that therein the children are asked to report acts of cruelty towards animals committed by the hands of play-mates and school-fellows. This is neither fair nor prudent. A tale-bearing girl or boy is looked upon by companions with horror and distrust; and, moreover, a boy or girl who could carry such a tale even to a Band of Mercy would not be far behind in similar unkind actions. The first duty of the president, then, is to instil into the minds of the children, gentleness, patience, and forbearance, to teach them that hasty words, quick blows, and ugly looks are as much “unkindness to animals” as it is to rob the nest of a bird.

Man is at best only an animal, and whatever tends to prevent the higher and more artistic side of his nature from developing its best and greatest possibilities is doing an unkindness to the whole animal kingdom. To do one's very best in the little world in which he is placed, to fulfil honestly and sincerely all the conditions of life, are all that can be reasonably expected of one, and to neglect to do so is to put a stumbling-block in the way of nature's progression. Let the children understand this fully and the need for S. P. C. A.'s and for Bands of Mercy will have ceased.

It is to be hoped sincerely that these Bands will not make a mistake so often made by the anxious and interested members of other beneficial institutions. How often one is told that the work of reform is making favorable progression, and has the full jails, the crowded reformatories and asylums, the list of cruelties reported in the daily papers, pointed out as true evidence of this reform! If empty jails, reformatories and asylums, and no list of barbarous atrocities could be shown, then would reform be complete and perfect, then would man feel that some progress had been made towards the ideal life as possible to-day as when the Christ walked upon the Galilean shore preaching the simple doctrine of good will toward all men.

It is pleasant to think of the children who are akin to the flowers and animals and all the tender innocent things of earth, being among those who are working to bring about that golden age, when

“Man to man as brothers shall
Each to each be bound.”

And when from the most remote corners of the world eager hands and voices will welcome the progress first led by a little child.

M.

St. John.