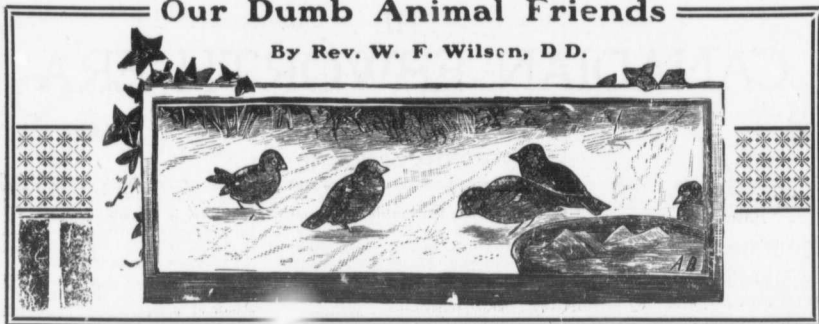


Our Dumb Animal Friends

By Rev. W. F. Wilson, D. D.



ANTHROPOLOGY, or the history of man, is interesting; astronomy, or the story of the stars, is thrilling; geology, or the records of the rocks, is impressive; botany, or the study of the flowers, is beautiful; but to me, zoology, or natural history, is one of the most instructive and fascinating of all studies.

As God has graciously revealed Himself through Christ, and the heavens declare His glory, so in the realm of creation we see His marvellous wisdom and power manifested in the web of the spider, fin of the fish, wing of the bird, fur of the beaver, beauty of the horse, and the fleetness of the deer. How we are very greatly indebted to the insect, bird and animal kingdom for many of the luxuries as well as the necessities of life.

We too often think of the hornet and the hawk, forgetting the honey bee and domestic hen. We despise the common grub, but forget the caterpillar that spins our silk. Why, even the despised fish worms are worth countless millions to the agricultural interests of our land. From the Bible we learn how the various species of the animal kingdom were created, with some of the strange peculiarities that characterize their lives. It speaks of the strength of the lion, swiftness of the horse, innocence of the sheep, cunning of the fox, industry of the ant, cruelty of the eagle and affection of the hen.

GUARDIANSHIP NOT LICENSE.

Although God has given man dominion and sovereignty over the brute creation, this does not imply license, but rather guardianship, which means kindness, care and protection, otherwise man would be a heartless tyrant, thoughtless and cruel.

Our late beloved Queen Victoria, of cherished memory, in her capacity of Patroness of the Royal Humane Society of England, uttered the noble words, "No civilization is complete which does not include the dumb and defenceless of God's creatures within the sphere of charity and mercy."

I believe people are more thoughtless than cruel. It's the so-called amusement and excitement that has caused the death of many a singing bird and harmless animal, for

"Evil is wrought
By want of thought,
As well as want of heart."

Hence to defend the dumb and helpless of either beast or man is noble. The virtues of kindness and mercy are Christlike, and were beautifully illustrated in the sublime teaching and example of Jesus, who called Himself the Good Shepherd, willing to give His life for the sheep. I suppose many of us have thoughtlessly and perhaps intentionally killed a spider, never thinking that they are among the most wonderful little creatures ever created. With their peculiar-looking bodies and piercing eyes they can do many strange and difficult things.

They are architects, building their houses, and hunters, catching their food, and engineers, constructing their bridges. It is said the spider's web suggested the carriage wheel and cantilever bridge to the mind of man. Thus we see they are great teachers of science and skill, and while many house-keepers do not like them, yet they have their places and rights and deserve consideration in the great family of God.

THE SPARROW SPEAKS.

"Please don't kill me," says the little sparrow. "I'm an emigrant in your country, and was brought here against my will. However, now that I am here I am fairly well satisfied and behaved. I build my house, provide for my family and keep my little grey coat neat and clean, besides I don't destroy your corn like the crows, your chickens like the hawks, or even your cherries like the robins. Indeed, for my size I help you as much by destroying many insects that would spoil your fruits and vines as any bird that lives.

Besides, I am almost the only bird that stays with you all the year. If you don't imprison the robins, canaries and thrushes they fly away to the south land, but I'm with you." Now remember the birds are the flowers of the forest, whose plumed and varied beauty charms the eye, and whose trilling



music cheers the heart. So let us be kind to those forget-me-nots of God, for He seeth the sparrow when it falls.

"Maker of earth, and sky, and sea,
Creation's Sovereign Lord and King,
Who hung the starry worlds on high,
And furnished alike the sparrow's wing,
Bless the dumb creatures of Thy care,
And listen to their voiceless prayer."