

A
LESSON IN THE GARDEN.



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A LESSON IN THE GARDEN



ON a fine mild day early in the spring, little Joseph was permitted to walk with his father and his sister in the garden, a pleasure of which he had long been deprived, owing to the frosts and damps of winter. The crocuses looked gay, the violets smelt

sweetly, the primroses began to peep, and the buds of the fruit-trees were bursting into blossom.

“ Well, father,” said the little boy, “ we have done with winter now ; and I am glad of it.”

Father. You reckon too fast, Joe, winter will not be done with yet a while. It is very pleasant to see a little sunshine, and feel this fine mild air, but we must look for some more frost and sharp winds before we can expect settled weather.

Joseph. I am sorry for that, father. I was thinking that we should soon have summer and ripe fruits.

F. Everything in its season, Joe. You could not work or learn all day long and all night too, without taking any rest, or if you did, it could not last long ; your strength would soon be spent. The trees, too, after bearing a fine crop of fruit as they did last year, want time to recover their strength, which the winter months are designed to

afford them. And I have generally remarked that after a very short and mild winter, when the spring is unusually forward, that either the blossoms receive a very severe check, and so the quantity of fruit is much lessened, or else that if early ripened, it is very poor in quality, and will not keep.

J. Yes, father, I do remember it was so the year before last ; you said the apples were as tasteless and watery as turnips, and the pears were sleepy, I think you called it.

F. I have seen some children too, Joe, who when very young were considered exceedingly clever and promising ; they were ready to chatter on every subject before they had time to learn and examine into any ; and I have known people laugh at and repeat their impertinent remarks, as if they thought them really wonderfully sensible and clever. But I scarcely ever knew one of these grow up a man of sound judgment and solid learning. No, no ; a great deal of conceit, and a very little learning ;

outside show, and nothing substantial, is what they generally attain to, and rest contented with. While others, who did not make half the show at first, by steadily plodding on and gaining knowledge by regular and close application, have proved far more respectable and useful characters.

J. Well, father, I will endeavour then to do things in their right time, and what I do learn to learn thoroughly; and that makes me think I had better look over my task again, for fear I should not remember it perfectly. Look, father, how busy the bees are, already sucking the honey out of the crocuses.

F. Yes, my boy; they have so much to do through the summer in providing for their young ones, and laying up a store of honey for winter use, that they cannot afford to neglect the first fine day that allows them to work. When the sun shines, they never think it too soon to begin, and they have no time to be idle. You may learn a lesson

from them here, Joe. Though with you it is early in the spring of life, it is not too early to be employed about something useful; nor too early to begin minding religion, which will be a rich store to you through life; "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." But remember, if you do not improve the earliest opportunities afforded you, both life and opportunity are uncertain. If the bees were to neglect one sunshiny day, perhaps the next might be rainy, or at least dark and cloudy.

J. I was thinking, father, that if I was to learn a verse from the Bible every morning as I sit at breakfast, it might be of great use to me. I know poor George Bird used to do so, and when he lay ill so long, and was not able to read, he said that all those texts came into his mind so fresh and comfortable.

F. Yes; there is nothing like the truths of the Bible to guide us in life and comfort us in death. I would have you by all

means begin your plan and pursue it steadily; it will be a treasure to your mind that



neither poverty, nor misfortune, nor sickness, nor blindness can deprive you of.

J. O, look, father, at that bed you dug up only a few days ago; the seeds are coming up already!

F. Ah, my boy, the ground is always more ready to produce weeds than flowers. Those are not the seeds you saw me sowing, but some worthless weeds which must be

rooted up, or else they will choke what is valuable and prevent its growth.

J. What a pity, father ! Shall I help you to pull them up ?

F. No ; not yet awhile. It requires much skill and care to weed a bed like this. But we will endeavour to make the weeds of some use, by remarking, that thus we are sometimes grieved to find, that notwithstanding all our endeavours to sow the seeds of good instruction in the minds of our dear children, they are still too apt to discover the weeds of perverseness and ill-temper. Think of this, my dear boy ; and as you feel disappointed at finding weeds where you expected flowers, be careful to spare us a much greater disappointment. But we must not remain out much longer ; run about briskly for a few minutes to make yourself warm, then we will go in-doors ; and in the evening you shall read a chapter in the Bible that tells how weeds first began to grow.

Joseph came in the evening to his father, who said to him ; “ My dear boy, when our first parents became sinners, they were driven out of the garden of Eden, where there were no weeds, into a world full of them. Weeds spring up of themselves, and so does sin in the heart of man. How soon do children show the evil of their nature, just like the beds of weeds ! O my dear boy, remember that none but Christ can root them out of your heart. He died for our sins ; and if we believe on him, he will not only pardon us, but give us his good Spirit to make us holy, to destroy the weeds of sin, and to plant the good seed of grace, wisdom, and goodness in our hearts. Oh may you thus become a plant of the Lord’s right hand planting !”

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COME, let us join the hosts above,
Now in our youngest days ;
Remember our Creator's love,
And sing our Father's praise.
The humble songs of children
rise,
And reach the King of kings,
Whose goodness never will de-
spise
The day of feeble things.
He loves to be remember'd thus,
And honour'd for his grace ;
Out of the mouths of babes like
us
His wisdom perfects praise.