

# THE KIND DEEDS MESSENGER

The Latham Foundation Story Service  
for the Public Schools

## AT THE PORTAL

A PLAY IN ONE ACT FOR CHILDREN

By EMMA-LINDSAY SQUIER

(Written especially for use in the public schools during "Be Kind to Animals Week." No permission is necessary for the use of this play. The author will be glad to have it used by anyone at any time.)

THE author of this play is a famous writer of nature stories; her "Autumn Trails" was a "best seller" for a long time after its publication. This play is unusual and one of the best ever written for the purpose. It lends itself easily to performances by school children and requires very simple setting. Grey curtains may be substituted for the background indicated in the illustration if desired, and the very clever suggestion of Miss Weller for indicating the animal spirits is original and novel and will be found easy to make

breathes. And here I stand upon the road that leads from the world of men into that shadow realm that men call death. I know, because I am the guardian of the Portal, that there is no death. That everything lives, and goes on living. There is no soul in all the



*Do you see why this animal soul comes with a lighted candle? She learned the supreme lesson of love!*

with the aid of stiff cardboard and crayons or water colors. The animals may be cut out in two parts and glued together, leaving space to run the candle through. To prevent the wax running down on the child's hand, small glass rings may be purchased for a few cents and the candle run through them as indicated in the single drawing of the cat. It may be well to confine the candles to two colors.

Should the speeches be found too long, or some of the words too lengthy in some instances, the teacher can do a little editing and substituting of simpler words; this is but a suggestion for the younger grades. "Be Kind to Animals Week" will start with Humane Sunday, April 15th.—Ed.

The scene is an indefinite open place, not too brightly lighted. An arched portal may be indicated at the extreme left, or a light may be used as a symbol of the Life Beyond. The right of the stage should be as completely shadowed as possible.

The Spirit of Life stands at the left of the stage as the curtain rises to the soft, slow music of McDowell's "Wild Rose." (Use only first 16 measures.) When she begins to speak the music dies away. The Spirit of Life is dressed in shining white garments, with a long silver staff in her hand.

Characters	Costumes
SPRIT OF LIFE	White
THE WOMAN SPIRIT	Greyed Purple
SPIRIT OF A DOG	Blue
SPIRIT OF A CAT	Lavender
SPIRIT OF A HORSE	Rose Grey
SPIRIT OF FIRST SONG BIRD	Sand Color
SPIRIT OF SECOND SONG BIRD	Warm Yellow

The Spirit of Life—I am the Spirit of Life. My home is in the heart of everything that lives and

world that does not pass into a new and better life. Alas for those unhappy ones who have not learned life's earthly lesson! They must take the shadow road that leads them painfully and slowly to the truth.

There comes now a soul upon the path that leads from earthly life. How arrogantly she comes! How sure she is of going through the portals.

(Music accompanies woman's entrance. A woman spirit enters, proudly and haughtily.)

The Woman Spirit—Guardian of the Portals, I have just come from life. I wish to go on, quickly.

Spirit of Life—A moment, friend. You bear no lighted candle? You come without the light of kindly deeds in your hand?

The Woman Spirit (haughtily)—I do not know what you mean! Perhaps you do not know that I am wealthy—very wealthy!

Spirit of Life—Indeed? And where is all this wealth?

The Woman Spirit—I had to leave it behind—

naturally. But surely my earthly possessions will count for something here.

*Spirit of Life*—Earthly possessions? Yes; but possessions that would have made your heart strong and kindly, your thoughts courageous, and would have put a lighted candle in your hand. Look beyond the portals, friend, it is dark out there. You will need light, or you will be lost. How can you trust yourself to those shadows—alone?

(The woman looks fearfully out into the shadows, past the Spirit of Life.)

*The Woman Spirit*—I—I didn't know I would need a light. What am I to do?

*Spirit of Life* (speaks sternly)—It is a little late to ask what to do. Your life was given you to learn your lessons from it. Have you learned nothing of kindness, loyalty, friendship, or love? Do you know what sacrifice means? Answer me! What have you learned from your fellowman on earth?

*The Woman Spirit*—I lived alone; I had no friends; I wanted none. I was busy in adding to my fortune.

*Spirit of Life* (sadly)—The fortune that you could not bring with you. Well, then, it seems you had no human friends. You learned nothing from mankind. What of animals—and birds? Did you have a dog?

*The Woman Spirit*—Heavens, no! Filthy beasts, all of them! I set out poison for them whenever I could. And cats, too; I had my gardener shoot any who ventured on my grounds. As for birds—their singing drove me wild! I had their nests torn down, and I set out bird lime to snare them when they came into my garden.

*Spirit of Life*—Oh foolish, unhappy spirit! To have learned nothing from these other children of God! To have set your hand against them, who are so weak, and whose lives are at the mercy of human beings! Stand back, stand aside from the portals! Let your heart be humble and attentive, and you may yet learn how much you have missed in life. Look! Do you see those spirits who come up the path from life? Do you see the glimmering of their candles? Prepare to be astonished, you who turned your hand against God's creatures! Those who come now are not human beings—they are the souls of birds and beasts passing from life on earth into a new life beyond the portals!

*The Woman Spirit* (looks outright astonished)—Birds and beasts, you say? Those spirits out yonder? But they seem to have human forms! They are no different!

*Spirit of Life* (very slowly and solemnly)—You are seeing them now as they look to God!

(The spirits of birds and beasts enter, from right, to music, and each one has a lighted candle.)

*Spirit of Life*—Welcome, friends, welcome to the Portal. (They stand timidly in the background. Music stops.) Come, are you afraid? Forget your fear. You have left that behind on earth. Come forward, you in the lead. Your candle is very bright. Tell me, what were you on earth?

*The Dog Spirit* (coming slowly forward)—Not much of anything, great Spirit. I was only a dog,—a very common dog.

*Spirit of Life*—Your candle shines uncommonly bright. Tell me, how did you happen to die?

*The Dog Spirit*—It was in the winter time, and the little boy I belonged to went skating. He went alone,

and against his mother's wishes. I knew, somehow, that he ought not to go, but I had no power of speech—on earth. I stayed on the bank and watched him as he skated out,—and out. Oh, it was only a moment when I heard him scream, and heard the cracking of the ice! He sank through the ice, crying out to me. I ran out and took hold of his collar with my teeth. He almost pulled me under, because it was so slippery I couldn't brace myself properly. But I held on, keeping his head above water. Once I let go of him and barked loudly, despairingly, hoping to bring someone to help us. He sank when I let him go, and I jumped in after him. He put his hands around my neck, and I tried to crawl up on the ice. I could have gotten up alone, but I wouldn't leave him, or bite him so as to make him let go of me. I swam around and around, barking, and at last, when my voice was tired and weak, I heard someone coming. With my last strength I managed to get my forepaws on the ice and clung, so as to keep my boy's head above the cold water. I felt them taking his arms from around my neck—but I slipped back into the water. I died there—if you call it death. My boy lived. That makes me very happy.

*Spirit of Life*—Pass on through the Portals at will, my friend. You have learned the nobility of sacrifice.

(The dog retreats slowly, making room for the rest of the spirits to move up.)

And you, who seem so timid, what were you in your earthly life?

*The Cat Spirit*—I was even more humble than my brother who has just spoken. I was only a cat—just a common alley cat. My story is hardly worth telling, I am afraid. I lived in an old barn, and, although no one made a pet of me or paid any attention to me, I was quite happy with my kittens. There were three of them, very small, and pretty—I loved them so much! In the night I smelled a terrible new, smoky smell. And I awoke with a great crackling all around me. There was a red hot light that blinded me! I ran out into the open air, and I was safe. Then I thought of my little kittens who were too small and helpless to save themselves from this terrible unknown danger. I ran back into the heat and glare. I picked up one of my kittens, who was mewling so plaintively, and I brought him out into the cold night air. I had been badly burned, but I knew I must go back to save the other two. I ran back in, and the place where I had left them was all ablaze. I could hardly breathe because of the smoke, but I did manage to pick up another of my babies, and I came out somehow—I don't remember how. I was tired, and my feet burned. But there was one more kitten—I had to go to him! Again I went back, and found him crawling towards me. I took him up in my mouth and started out. A piece of blazing wood fell on me, but I wouldn't drop my baby. I crawled the last few feet and someone took the kitten out of my mouth. I heard a voice say, "Oh, she has saved all three of them! We will take care of them for her!" Then I didn't know anything more—I think that was death.

*Spirit of Life* (turns to the woman)—Do you see why this animal soul comes with a lighted candle? She learned the supreme lesson of love! (To the cat)—Pass on at your pleasure. May your path be bright!

(The cat moves backward to allow the horse to come forward.)

*Spirit of Life* (to the horse)—And who are you, the next in line? Tell me, what were you in your

mortal life, and how did you pass from earth to the entrance to the Portal?

*The Horse Spirit*—We are all commoners here, are we not? I was common, too, just a horse—the kind of a horse you see every day in the city, hitched to a junk wagon. I always drew a load too heavy; I never had all I could eat. I knew what it was to be cold in wintertime—the man who owned me did not think it necessary to cover me with a blanket—and in the summertime I used to envy the horses whose masters put hats on their heads with cool, moist sponges inside.

Still, I always did the best I could. I never balked or kicked. I did my humble duty willingly and patiently. There was a winter day when it was very slippery. I had no ice shoes and I slipped every time I went up a hill. My master beat me and tried to make me go faster. I did the best I could, but, in trying to go faster, I slipped and fell. My master was thrown out of the wagon and became entangled somehow in the reins. I struggled to my feet, even though my leg was broken, and I heard him saying, "Don't move, Grayfoot! Whoa! Be quiet!" I was terribly frightened and wanted to run. But from his voice I knew something dreadful was the matter. People came hurrying and took him out from under the wagon. I heard them say that if I had moved he would have been dragged and killed. They shot me that same day. I was glad. It was the first merciful deed I had ever known in my life.

*Spirit of Life*—My poor friend, your life will be easier here. (To the woman): Are your eyes opening? Do you understand what you have just heard? The lesson of duty, patiently done, and of obedience?

(The horse moves back. This brings the birds first in line.)

*Spirit of Life* (to the birds, who have stood close together during the other speeches)—And you two, standing so close together, what of your life and death? How is it that your candles are so brightly lighted?

(The two birds move toward the Spirit of Life and remain standing close together during their entire speeches.)

*First Song Bird*—We were song birds, my mate and I, the kind of song birds that human beings see about their homes every day, and yet rarely take the trouble to feed, or water, or give nesting materials to. Whenever we found anyone who would throw out crumbs to us, or put out a bird bath where we could refresh ourselves in the hot summertimes, we were grateful and sang our sweetest songs to thank them.

*Second Song Bird*—But we made the mistake, my mate and I, of building our nest in a tree that grew in the yard of people who hated birds. It was my mistake. I should have known better.

*First Song Bird*—No, indeed, the fault was mine. I distinctly remember that I picked out that tree because its branches were so thick and cool. I thought our nest would be quite safe there. We were very proud of our nest and of our baby birds, even though we did have to work very hard to get enough for them to eat.

*Second Song Bird*—When they were still too young to leave the nest, the boys of the house came out and climbed up into the tree. I tried to fight them off but one of them struck at me with a heavy stick and I fell fluttering to the ground.

*First Song Bird*—When I saw my mate lying hurt on the ground I flew down at the boys, trying to take their attention from her, but it was no use. They tore

down our nest and killed our poor little baby birds. Then they thought it rather sport to tease my mate, who could not escape them because of her broken wing. I kept flying down at them.

*Second Song Bird* (to the first)—You could have gotten away, you were quite unhurt.

*First Song Bird* (to the second)—You know I would not leave. How could I be so faithless? No; it is better as it happened. They struck me, too, with a heavy stick and I died beside my mate. Since we could not live together it is better for us to be here—together.

*Spirit of Life*—The lesson of faithfulness lighted your candles, my friends. Pass onward, all of you. May the shadow world be kinder than the one you have just quitted.

(To slow, soft music, the spirits of birds and beasts move across the stage. The birds first, dog second, cat third, horse fourth.)

*The Woman Spirit* (to the Spirit of Life)—And now, what of me? What shall I do?

*Spirit of Life*—What is in your heart that you would like to do?

*The Woman Spirit*—I think I would like to try again, to learn from humanity, from birds and beasts, the lessons I missed before. I would like to live again.

*Spirit of Life*—You shall, many times. Each earthly life is but a day at school that teaches some one lesson. Death is the night between the school days, a

rest, a relaxation—nothing more. Go back, my friend, into life. Carry with you something of

what you have seen and heard. There are so many ways of helping these lesser brothers, who, in their earthly life, cannot speak for themselves or make their wants known. Put out water for thirsty dogs; give crumbs to the birds, and have a kindly feeling for those poor gaunt stranger cats. The greatest lesson of all, my friend, is that we are all brothers; that the life in us all is from the same great source. And we owe to these lesser brothers the same duties we owe to each other—justice, kindness, fair play. Go back, my friend, and when you come again to the Portal let your candle be brightly lighted!

(The woman goes to the right, to the accompaniment of the music. The Spirit of Life stands, watching her.)

(Once the woman looks back, and half stretches out her hand. The Spirit of Life shakes her head sadly, and points out right. The woman lifts her head bravely, and exits.)

(The Spirit of Life then turns to left and raises her hand in encouragement to the bird and animal souls.)

(The music continues until the curtain falls.)

## Redwood Kind Deeds Club

By ETHEL E. ISMERT, Teacher

Here is an excellent report of the activities of a Kind Deeds Club in a one-room school from which other clubs may gain helpful suggestions—Ed.

ONE of the things our school enjoys the most is our Kind Deeds Chart. At the beginning of the school year the children discussed and decided upon the topics best suited to our needs. A chart was made, the children finding pictures to illustrate the topics. This hangs in the front of our room to remind us that kind deeds are a part of our daily work. The titles are:

- Feed and water our pets.
- Be kind to stray animals.
- Keep pets clean.
- Learn to care for pets' injuries.
- Help at home.
- Help at school.





Try to be kind in all we say and do.  
Do a kind deed each day.  
Find a current event about an animal.  
Find a current event about a kind deed.  
Protect wild birds and animals.

At one side of the chart are pockets opposite each title. The children put their cards in the pockets opposite the topics they have done. This is done before nine o'clock and the report is for the previous day.

The older children are constantly finding articles about caring for pets and animals. These are read at our weekly meetings. Even the smallest ones are careful to take care of their pets before coming to school. The current events are especially interesting. We are saving these for a scrap book.

We report on the chart at our weekly meetings. Anything of especial interest the secretary writes in full in his report. The children try hard to do everything on the chart every day, but it is not always possible.

## Kind Deeds Club of the Palomares School, Hayward

By GEORGE COLLHO, *President*

"Kind deeds are silver slippers,  
That cover willing feet,  
And do acts of kindness  
To all they chance to meet."

WE MEMBERS of the Palomares Kind Deeds Club wish to report on our work and some of our Kind Deeds. Our meeting day is every Friday in the month. A great many kind deeds have been reported. Here are a few of the best ones:

1. Mateo Garcia, while in Hayward one day, gave a poor man some money with which to buy food.
2. Antoinette Perry found some baby kittens that were to be sent to the pound. She brought them to her home, where they have been made happy.
3. Joe Acevedo found one of the ranch horses caught in some barbwire. He released the animal and treated the cuts.
4. Albert Vosconselles' dog was run over, receiving a broken leg. Albert fixed the leg with splints. Although the dog is still lame he hopes he will recover.
5. Clarence Upham's dog broke his leg. He bound up the injured foot and the dog is getting along nicely.
6. Richard Vane saw a boy about to shoot at some birds with a sling-shot. He asked the boy not to do it.

## Kind Deeds Club, Garfield School, San Francisco

By JIMMIE LAINO, *Secretary*

LAST week a crippled dog entered our school yard. Rough boys in the neighborhood threw rocks at him to make him run just because he was lame. Three of our classmates picked up the dog and carried him home. Ruth Cuneo offered him cookies in a friendly way. The dog did not want these. I guess he was afraid. The dog's leg was placed in splints and bandaged.

## Kind Deeds Club, Miss Genevieve Farmer's Class, Roosevelt School, San Francisco

By JACK MOYER, *Secretary*

FOR a writing lesson we wrote pledges to be kind, and have made a book of them. In our room we have a corner for our Club's work.

(Thirty-one members of this Club have earned the Buttons. And 31 members of The Kind Deeds Club in Miss Noonan's room, Marshall School, have earned their Buttons. —Editor.)

## Being Brothers

By DORIS BURNS

THESE verses were written by a KIND DEEDS CLUB member last autumn when she was a pupil at the Summit School, Alameda County. She is now at Edendale, and has ever been a serious and interested young worker in behalf of the "Little Brothers":

"Are we not all brothers  
In this world so large—so small?  
Should we not help the other  
If the weaker one should fall?  
Let us help the little creatures  
Who our language cannot speak.  
We are brothers, we are helpers,  
Strive to help the dumb and weak.  
Love can always conquer shyness,  
Kindness bring forth love so true,  
Let us always love each other  
Being brothers, they and you."

## Kind Deeds Club, Low Second Grade, Coloma School, Sacramento

HERE is the youngest Kind Deeds Club of which we have record, Low Second Grade, Mrs. Horton, their teacher, reports that "they fed many stray cats and dogs and put out crumbs for the birds every day of vacation, and they made a large scrap book for the shut-in children in Sutter Hospital." This is indeed a fine record for such small members and we are proud of them. We think that they will be claiming their Kind Deeds Buttons very soon.

## Kind Deeds Club, Central School, Grass Valley

MARY AGNES PARSONS, *Secretary*

FROM way up in Nevada County we have the report of a Kind Deeds Club, eight members of which have earned their Buttons. One of the Kind Deeds done by Julius Mazzanti was taking a cat out of a trap.

In that county many traps are set to catch wild animals, and, alas, many of the gentle house pets are caught and suffer in these cruel traps as well as the wild animals.

## Four Cash Prizes

THROUGH the courtesy of THE OUTLOOK we are publishing the Puzzle given below. For the answer giving the correct words needed to fill the blanks and make the verse complete, there will be a cash prize of \$2.00. For the next three answers giving words nearest in approach to correct words there will be three prizes of \$1.00 each.

This contest is for school children only, and in sending in your answers write your name and address of school, grade and teacher's name, and mail to The Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Humane Education, Inc., Latham Square Building, Oakland, California, by May 1st.

### PUZZLE

Among the ——— of Scotland green  
The ——— can wander at their will,  
Till man appears with ——— keen  
And ——— his arms, intent to kill.  
The ——— sort of man is he  
Who kills for sport, it seems to me.



The Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Humane Education, Inc.,  
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