

THE KIND DEEDS MESSENGER

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Were I an educator, I would endeavor to make my influence along the lines of humane heart training my chief service to my pupils. The rules and principles and even facts that are taught them will, ninety-tenths of them at least, by and by be forgotten, but by bringing into their lives this higher influence, at once the root and the flower of all that is worthy of the name "education," I would give them something that would place them at once in the ranks of the noblest of the race. I would give not only special attention and time to this humane education, but I would introduce it into and cause it to permeate all of my work.—Ralph Waldo Trine in EVERY LIVING CREATURE.

St. Francis of Assisi's Thanksgiving

By E. M. S. FITE

HAVE you boys and girls ever heard of St. Francis of Assisi? He would be a Kind Deeds Club member were he alive today. I think that perhaps he would be the Supreme Head because of the wonderful love he had in his heart for all of God's creatures, whether human, or of the four-footed kind, or the feathered tribe. There have been other beautiful souls, men and women, whose names have been honored in the past, but who have been forgotten because they had no such great love in their hearts as had St. Francis. His name has come down to us through all the centuries from 1181, when he was born in Assisi, Italy, just because he looked upon all that live as his brothers and sisters.

St. Francis dwelt quite alone in a poor little hut, because he did not want to have things for himself. All that he had he shared with his little friends of the air and his friends of the forest, as well as with human beings who needed help. Sometimes he begged for these; and he often received much gold, but it all went to those in need. St. Francis tried hard to help these by teaching them how to work, and so help themselves. He said: "He who will not work ought not to eat, and each must work at what he can do."

Many beautiful legends grew up about St. Francis, and, whether or not exactly true to fact, all are true to the spirit of this wonderful man. One of these tells how he won the love of a wolf. This wolf was said to be very wild and vicious and was causing great trouble in the country where he lived. Men had failed to find and kill him; mothers feared to let their children play out of their sight. So one day St. Francis went out to meet this wolf, and when they came face to face he made the sign of the cross and told the wolf to lie down. St. Francis said: "Brother Wolf, I command you, in God's name, that you do not harm me or anybody." And from that day the wolf loved St. Francis and became one of his best friends, and followed him just like a dog wherever he went. St. Francis taught the little children to play with this wolf that they had all feared, and they, too, loved the wolf greatly and were very, very sad when he died.

The story shows how, through his example, St. Francis taught the children great love, and what it can do; because of the love in their hearts there was no room for fear, and it was cast out.

I can see you smile when I say that I shall tell you about St. Francis' Thanksgiving, for you are thinking

that there was no day celebrated as Thanksgiving Day when St. Francis lived. But just listen to this:

The lovely stories about St. Francis were told to Virginia one evening before bedtime, so that when she crept into bed her head and heart were filled with thoughts and pictures of him and love for his friends. So it is not surprising that St. Francis stepped right into her dreams, and the first thing that she knew she was walking hand in hand with him through the forest and he was speaking to her. It seemed to her that he said: "Yes, child, we can go to America if you will it hard enough."

So Virginia shut her eyes very tight and clung to St. Francis' hand and willed hard that they go right away to America so that she might be at home in time



This illustration is made from a poster sent in to the Latham Humane Poster Contest by Charlotte Mendel of the Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, San Jose, Calif.

for Thanksgiving. And there she was, so quickly that it almost took her breath away. It seemed very strange to Virginia that St. Francis didn't know what Thanksgiving Day was for. So she tried to tell him as best she could, and he said: "That is an idea after my own heart, but all must show how thankful they are by living it every day."

Virginia found as she walked with St. Francis that the birds flew about them; they chirped and cooed at St. Francis' feet or alighted on his shoulders and head. All of the cats and dogs they met rubbed against him and followed wherever they went, so that she discovered they were forming a regular procession. It must have been a strange sight, but it did not seem unnatural to Virginia. Children, too, followed St. Francis; they felt drawn to him, and loved to be near him.

Virginia found herself walking with St. Francis along the city streets and they kept on until they came to where the roads led into the country. Just on the edge of the city they saw a little cabin, and when they came near they heard a voice, a most unhappy, quavery voice, saying over and over again:

"Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving! I've nothing to be thankful for; I've nothing to be thankful for."

Virginia looked up at St. Francis and wondered what he would do or say. There he stood with his sweet, kind face, clad in his long monk's gown, which was a little soiled with much going about. His feet were bare and his head was bare, and the birds and beasts surrounded him. St. Francis stood quite still for a moment, and it seemed to Virginia that she saw a light shine all about him; it seemed to come from within him, and it spread and spread until it filled the little cabin through the open window and reached the lonely old woman who rocked back and forth in her chair. Quick as a flash Virginia ran around the corner and in through the open door, and sang out:

"Hi, Granny, see whom I have brought you!" In her dreams she seemed to know this old woman whom she called Granny. "Here is St. Francis, and the birds and the animals; they have all come to bring you love and thanks for all the Kind Deeds you have done in the past. Isn't it wonderful that you have so much to be thankful for? It is love that makes your whole house shine inside. Oh, Granny, you must be rich with happiness this Thanksgiving Day!"

Old Granny's face was bathed in happy tears when through the doorway she saw the sweet face of St. Francis, and with him all of the birds and animals he called brothers and sisters. She had quite forgotten the many Kind Deeds she had done in the past to living creatures, whom she had always loved; and now, just as she was thinking she was old and forgotten and had nothing for which to be thankful, came the love and tender care of all these, both great and small. It seemed almost too good to be true. The room was still filled with the light which seemed to come from St. Francis, who sat down near Granny. The birds and animals were in and out at the door, and Virginia, like a busy little housewife, flew about and set the cabin to rights and made a cup of tea for Granny. She heard St. Francis saying: "The wild creatures are not hard to understand if we love them enough; they understand us much better than we understand them. They know when they need not fear. Right here in your own city you have a lake where the ducks come every year in

very great numbers, and children and grown people may go right up to them. They have no fear of being hurt because they know there is no cause for it; they know that no duck has ever been killed or hurt who has come to this sanctuary. But these same ducks become very wary as soon as they leave your lake, for they know then they may be killed at any time. Out in the duck marshes these wise birds post a guard of old drakes to stand watch while the flock feeds and sleeps. It is hard to deceive my sisters, the ducks; it isn't easy to slip past that guard."

Virginia listened to St. Francis as she worked, and in her mind the words rang: "Each of us children can be a little St. Francis; each one of us can be a little St. Francis." And with the words she decided to be a little St. Francis on her own account, but this was only in a dream which trailed off into the words: "Little words of kindness, little deeds of love." And that was all she remembered of her dream.

But the next morning when Virginia awoke she remembered a good deal of it and she felt that she could not get to school quickly enough to start the plans which she had in mind as a result. Thanksgiving Day was just two days off, so she would have to work fast. At recess she got her classmates together and told them her dream. She said she thought it would be fine if all of them would try to be little St. Francis and show by their deeds how much love they had in their hearts for humans, birds and beasts. Of course there were two or three members of the class who were not interested, but the rest of them were eager to try what they could do, and thought it a fine idea.

A few things that these little volunteers did within the next two days, earnestly and quietly out of the love of their hearts, follow.

They rescued the stray cats and dogs of the school neighborhood and fed them and tried to find homes for them; those they could not find good homes for they took to the Humane Society. They filled two boxes with many good things for Thanksgiving dinners by putting together their small savings, but when they came to pay for the groceries the grocer would take no money. He said that he would like to contribute his share and be that much of a St. Francis himself. The children delivered these boxes themselves in a small hand express wagon borrowed from one of their young brothers, and the needy families to whom they went were most grateful. The boys and girls provided meals for the birds, most plentiful ones, which the birds came in great numbers to enjoy. The faces of these Little St. Francis Juniors were happy and shining when they were going about in the spirit of love. They fairly glowed with light. The children nearly forgot that they were expected to eat their own Thanksgiving dinners. In doing things for others they found themselves happier than they had ever been before. Wherever they went they filled the air with the true spirit of Thanksgiving. After the day had ended, Virginia and her classmates decided to keep up with the Kind Deeds idea, so they formed a KIND DEEDS CLUB.

We know that even smaller children than Virginia can do Kind Deeds, too. Any child who is old enough to think and walk can do a little deed of kindness. The following suggestions as to how and when children can do a Kind Deed come from Anna Harris Smith, who is President of an Animal Rescue League in Boston, and whose whole life has been spent in getting others to

appreciate all that animals feel and suffer. Whatever she says is worth reading and thinking about:

"Children can be kind to one another. There is no happiness in loud, cross words, or in teasing, and one unkind word leads to another. They can be kind to every living thing, for every creature that lives may suffer more than we think if not kindly treated. Did you ever consider that your cat and your dog feel unhappy when spoken to in a loud, harsh, cross voice? A dog will shrink and hang his head at a cross word, and wag his tail and look up happily into your face when you speak kindly. The cat will run away and hide when anyone of the family is scolding her, but will purr and be very happy if someone touches her gently and speaks a soft, pleasant word to her.

"It is very sad indeed to hear boys and men shouting to their horses when they are trying to pull a heavy load up a hill or over a rough, hard piece of ground. A horse has a hard life. Taken from the fields while still a colt, he is often kept at work until he dies. He does not have vacations as we do, or any pleasure planned to make his life less weary. Boys can do many little kindnesses to the horse.

"Children can be kind to birds. They can feed them whether they are in the city or in the country.

"There are men and women who would give a great deal today if they could blot out from their memory some cruel deed they did when they were children. An act of cruelty leaves a scar on the character and a sad thought in the mind. An act of kindness never dies, but its influence for good will go on forever. It makes us happy to be kind. It makes us unhappy to be cruel. Children who are kind to animals will be kind to one another, and humane children will make humane men and women."

QUESTIONS

1. Who was St. Francis of Assisi, and where was he born?
2. What did he do to make people, birds and animals love him?
3. Were birds and animals afraid of him? Why not?
4. Tell the legend of St. Francis and the Wolf. What does it teach?
5. Tell of Virginia's dream.
6. In the dream, what was it that caused the great Light?
7. Do the wild creatures understand us better than we understand them? How do they show it?
8. What did Virginia do as a result of her dream?
9. What made it such a happy Thanksgiving Day?
10. What are some of the Kind Deeds that Children can do?
11. What do you learn from the life of St. Francis of Assisi?
12. Is the world better for good, kind people living in it?
13. Would you rather have people think of you as kind, or think of you as cruel?
14. What can you yourself do as a little St. Francis this year?

KIND DEEDS CLUBS

Many school superintendents in writing to us are referring enthusiastically to Supt. David E. Martin's fine talk on Humane Education at the California Superintendents' Convention in October. Supt. Martin laid especial emphasis, we are told, on the great ethical value of our KIND DEEDS CLUBS. It should be

noted that he spoke from experience, not theory, Humane Education having had a three-year trial in his schools (Alameda County).

It seems almost needless to mention that the Latham Foundation takes an appreciative interest in hearing of new KIND DEEDS CLUBS that are formed as well as of the present activities of older clubs. Word has come to us from San Francisco of a KIND DEEDS CLUB recently organized at the Washington Irving School. Mrs. Agnes Weber Meade, Superintendent of Schools of Yuba County, California, tells us that last year's clubs are going on, the children being "enthusiastic and anxious to keep up their past records," and that new clubs are being formed in other places. Such a report is a testimony to a fine energy.

FROM OTHER STATES

Several hundred KIND DEEDS MESSENGERS are going this year to North Dakota and to South Dakota, both of which states, like California, have statutes providing for the teaching of Humane Education in the public schools. Many encouraging letters are coming to us. A county superintendent from South Dakota writes: "I appreciate greatly the opportunity of getting in touch with the material offered by the KIND DEEDS MESSENGER."

A county superintendent from North Dakota says: "I am intensely interested in Humane Education and wish to tell you how earnestly I appreciate what you are doing for our humble brothers who cannot plead their own cause. As state chairman of this work for the P.T.A. I am constantly on the alert for assistance and suggestive material."

A KIND DEEDS CLUB IN EUROPE

Someone has told us of a society which will interest members of our KIND DEEDS CLUBS. It is in Rumania, which those of you who already study geography know is a country in Southeastern Europe. Perhaps some of you can find Rumania on the map. This society is called by a long and to us strange-sounding name, which means in English THE SOCIETY OF GOOD CHILDREN. It already has over 6000 members, among them being the Rumanian boy king. The founder, a Rumanian newspaperman, wrote stories and then books about a little black dog whom he loved. So many boys and girls sent letters telling him how much they liked the stories that he had a fine idea. It was to form all the children into a worthwhile society whose members would promise to be kind to one another and to all animals, to do kind deeds, and to try to prevent cruelty of every sort. That seems very much like the purpose of our KIND DEEDS CLUBS, does it not?

We hope to learn more about this society and also what its members are doing.

THE PUZZLE

Although some fair guesses have been made, the entirely right answer to the PUZZLE has not yet been received. It will be given in next month's KIND DEEDS MESSENGER.

Some Hints on the Proper Care of Animals

By CLARA V. WINLOW

WATER—See that your home animals have access at all times to plenty of fresh, clean water. This is necessary for their health. Animals suffer extremely when thirsty, just as you would if you were without water. It is best to place the water in a heavy vessel so that it is not easily spilled.

FOOD—Regular meals are important for you; they are quite as important to animals. Enough food should be given them, but if they are cats or dogs, take away what they leave; if still fresh it may be given with the next meal. By doing this you will avoid over-feeding, which is not desirable. Moldy, musty, stale, unclean food is bad for you and it is bad for animals and may make them sick. You like a change in what you eat once in a while, and it is good for you; so do they, and it is good for them. All animals of a kind do not eat exactly the same food. Note any especial dislikes and do not feed them on that food alone. What is eaten with distaste does little good, although some animals will gradually learn to eat new things, just as people do. Remember that meat-eating pets must have vegetables, too. Try to arrange it so that your animals are not disturbed at meal time.

SHELTER—We have no right to have home animals unless we care for them properly. Next to water and food is the need of shelter. This should mean both safety, and protection from the weather. No animal should be turned loose at night. We owe that to the animals, to ourselves, and to our neighbors. Cats and dogs that are not kept confined at night are in great danger of being killed or stolen, and are often a source of annoyance to persons who are poor sleepers. Shelter should include a bed of some kind, so that sleep may be restful. This bed need not be elaborate, but it should be clean, dry, without lumps, and sufficiently warm.

EXERCISE AND REST—Exercise helps to keep you in good health; it is just as necessary for the health of animals. As a rule, animals that work for us get enough; sometimes they get too much. We owe it to them that they do not get overtired. There is something mean and miserly about anyone who overworks animals. Many, however, of our home animals do not get exercise through work, so we must see that they get it in other ways—and preferably out of doors—or they will lose energy and even get sick. They do not want to exercise or work all the time; it is not good for them. Let them have rest when they need it.

TRAINING—Grown people as well as children have had to learn many things regarding what they should do or should not do. Animals also must learn certain things so that they can take their right places as social beings. One of these may be cleanliness. Both dogs and cats, for instance, can be taught to be cleanly in their habits. Another is respect for the rights of

others, if the animal already hasn't such an instinct. This includes not chasing or frightening other animals, such as a dog chasing a cat. You do not like to be taught roughly. If anyone should question you it is very probable that you would say that you learn most from those who are gentle and kind and patient with you. Animals are exceedingly like you in this. Some are even more sensitive than you are. It is necessary for their own sakes that they should be taught those few things essential for their protection; and it is necessary for the sake of other animals, that they should learn to be gentle and friendly where no harm is intended. To employ cruel methods in teaching them is to place ourselves far, far below them. Let us not forget, too, that if we can teach them some things, they can also teach some to us.

AFFECTION—Animals have feelings just as we have. They can suffer and they can rejoice. Those that live with us crave affection. They thrive best where they get it, and they often return much more to us than we give. A really fine person values this love. Many great persons have testified to their appreciation of animal friendship. Every time you consider an animal's feelings, every time you make one happy, you will be happier yourself.

QUESTIONS

1. Is fresh, clean water necessary for the health of animals?
2. Do animals suffer from thirst?
3. How can you sometimes tell when animals are thirsty?
4. Give some reasons why it is not well for animals to be given spoiled or unclean food?
5. Why do people have regular meals?
6. Why are regular meals important for animals?
7. Is food better digested when one enjoys eating it?
8. Name some of the things that different animals like to eat. Are some of these better for them than are others?
9. If you and one of your home animals were very hungry at the same time, can you think of a good reason why you should feed the animal first?
10. Which needs warmer shelter, old or young animals? Strong or weak animals?
11. Why is it wrong to let an animal run loose at night?
12. What might you be able to do if you saw an animal shivering?
13. How do you feel when you have rested badly? Can you study or work as well as when you have had a good sleep? How does poor sleep affect animals?
14. Should we blame animals with bad habits, or should we blame the owners of such animals?
15. Is it wrong to let one animal frighten or hurt another? Why?
16. Can animals be taught their duties toward other animals?
17. Name some fine things you have found in animals that you have known.
18. Are your home animals happy? Is it at all your fault if they are not?
19. How would you describe a person who attended to an animal's needs only when it suited him?
20. Should one make a study of the proper care of one's home animals?
21. Are you happier when those around you are happy?



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