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THE USE OF NATURE STORIES
IN THE CHRISTIAN NURTURE OF PRIMARY CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

THE USE OF NATURE STORIES IN THE CHRISTIAN NURTURE OF PRIMARY CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem

1. The Problem Stated and Justified

In observing the children's literature field in nature subjects, two aims of nature stories may be discovered. Some nature stories emphasize scientific knowledge, while others emphasize moral and spiritual values. Worth was seen in the use of high quality nature stories for the Christian nurture of primary children. A need for the type of nature story which combines scientific knowledge with moral and spiritual values was noted.

In order to establish the contribution of such a story toward a more effective Christian nurture of primary children, three steps felt to be necessary. One, the establishment of the worth of nature stories in Christian nurture. Two, the further investigation of the entire literature field in nature subjects for primary children. And three, the exploration of possibilities for the use of scientifically accurate nature stories to teach moral and spiritual values.

2. The Problem Delimited

Nurture implies growth. It implies progress toward a goal. It implies a subject, as there can be no growth without a subject capable of growth. Christian nurture will be here considered as the guided growth of a child in fulfillment of God's purposes for his life.

In the usual sense, primary children are children between the ages of six and eight and/or in grades one to three in the public school system. In the first chapter this will be the meaning of the term primary children. In the second and third chapters, the term primary children will be narrowed in meaning to refer to children who are seven years old and/or in the second grade in school. The purpose of this particularization is so that a more specific evaluation of certain nature stories may be made, using the opinions and reactions of the second grade Church School class at The Brick Presbyterian Church in New York as a control in selection and use.

The nature stories here considered will be short stories containing a two or three sentence beginning, a climax following a step by step development of a plot, and a brief conclusion. The subject

matter of the stories will be facts concerning the natural world in which children live.

B. The Method of Procedure

The discussion in Chapter I will include a discussion of the Christian nurture of the primary child. Underlying philosophy as well as content will be presented. With the content or nurture as a basis, the needs of the primary child which are met through Christian nurture will be stated. The chapter will then focus on the potential values of nature stories as a medium of uniting needs and content in the nurture process.

Chapter II will be concerned with an examination of existing nature stories presented for use with primary children. Stories emphasizing scientific knowledge and stories emphasizing moral and spiritual values will be separately considered. Standards of evaluation will be set, and representative stories of both types will be evaluated and compared.

The final chapter will contain suggested uses of both types of stories. The stories used in this chapter will be those judged superior on the basis of the standards established in Chapter II. The stories used and the methods by which they are presented will

be determined in each case by the purpose for which the story is suited by virtue of its type and emphasis.

C. The Sources of Data

1. The Primary Sources

Material for the writing of this thesis will be gathered from two sources. Of primary importance will be the collections and single-story books containing stories which will be surveyed. Of great importance to the evaluation of the stories will be the authors from whose writings the standard of evaluation is established.

2. The Secondary Sources

In order to properly evaluate the nature stories and outline suggested uses for them, an understanding of the contribution made by the nature story to the child's Christian nurture is necessary. This study, which will be presented in Chapter I, will be based upon the writings of authorities in the fields of child psychology, Christian education, and the use of stories with children.

CHAPTER I
THE CONTRIBUTION OF NATURE STORIES
TO
CHRISTIAN NURTURE

CHAPTER I

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NATURE STORIES

TO

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

A. Introduction

Margaret Eggleston has given the following evaluation of the use of stories in the Christian education of children:

Stories are the very language of the child - the one great and beautiful way in which he comes to find himself and his ideals. They come to him as recreation and a pleasure, but he feeds on them, he grows through them, he longs for them... The story is one of our greatest assets, for it is God's own way of building a character.¹

This chapter will attempt to validate the use of nature stories as a means of Christian nurture. In order to do this, the first step will be to consider the Christian nurture of primary children from the standpoint of purpose and content, and then to discover the needs of the primary child which must be met in Christian education. Following this discussion, the value of nature, the value of the story, and thus the value of the nature story as a tool of Christian

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1. Margaret W. Eggleston: The Use of the Story in Religious Education, p. 21.

nurture at the primary level will be established.

B. The Christian Nurture of the Primary Child

1. The Underlying Philosophy of Christian Nurture

Can religious faith be taught? The answer to this question is one on which Christian nurture either stands or falls. Faith cannot be passed on, ready made, to someone else, but it can be shared with others.¹ This fact makes possible the effort of adult Christians to nurture their children into mature, Christ-like living.

a. The Process of Nurture

Faith can be shared in several ways. It can be expressed in words. Words of creeds, statements of belief, and explanations are all examples of attempts to share and to continue faith. Faith can also be shared through sharing ceremonial expressions and sacraments. In this spirit, worship, baptismal, and communion services are a means of sharing faith. Perhaps the most effective means of sharing, for both the adult and the child, is the expression of one's faith through his life.² This expression, and the

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1. Mary Alice Jones: Guiding Children in Christian Growth, p. 15.

2. Ibid., p. 15-17.

resultant transmission of faith through living it, is the idea behind Horace Bushnell's thesis "That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise."¹ Unless the child is surrounded by those who are truly living their faith in Christ, this type of nurture is impossible.

b. The Dangers in Nurture

There are dangers involved in the nurture of the child, just as there would be dangers involved in the propagation of any truth. An expression of faith by creeds may become meaningless crutches to the child. Explanation may not even touch the child because it fails to enter his life.² The child may not understand; he may have insufficient motivation to act on the explanation; he may forget; there may have been a lack of technique in the explanation; and primarily, there may have been no vital connection with the child's life.³

c. Methods of Nurture

Christian education has profited greatly by the findings of educators concerning methods of

.

1. Horace Bushnell: Christian Nurture, p. 4.
2. Jones, loc. cit.
3. Alberta Munkres: Primary Method in the Church School, p. 131.

learning. Adherence to learning laws and to experience as a means of teaching has enriched the process of sharing faith.

(1) Laws of Learning

Ethel Smither in her book, Teaching Primaries in the Church School, takes special note of the laws of learning in relation to Christian nurture.¹ One of the most important of these laws is the law of readiness. A child cannot learn in a living way if he is not ready to understand the material. Both teacher-made readiness and the child's maturity level are involved. The law of effect, stating that each action is followed by an effect, is another important law of learning. An implication of this law is that the child should not be protected from annoyance resulting from wrong action, but should learn to face the results of his deeds. Associated learnings are also to be recognized. The child not only learns the direct material taught, but also learns ways of feeling about what is taught. Finally, there is the law of exercise. Children learn what they practice, whether the practice involves facts, ideas, or attitudes.

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1. Ethel Smither: Teaching Primaries in the Church School, pp. 66-79.

Even in a child's refusal to learn, he is learning poor attitudes.

(2) Experience in Nurture

These laws have many implications for the child's experience of learning. When a pupil is interested in, and ready to learn, a particular thing, to do so is easy. A child tends to repeat those actions or learnings which result in satisfaction and discontinue those practices which result in dissatisfaction. The more he does a particular thing, the more likely he will be to continue doing it in that way.¹ It is of primary importance, then, that the teacher be mature in her own faith and able effectively to share it with the child, and that she be able to guide the child into an expression of his own faith.

The conversational method is one of the best for teaching children if the conversation is a real sharing experience for both teacher and child. This method can be even more effective if it is accomplished in terms of the child's life and with his active participation.² A story relevant to the child's experience and needs can be a means of his

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1. Irene Smith Caldwell: Our Concern is Children, pp. 95-97.

2. Ibid., p. 101.

vicariously entering into others' experience and growing along with them.

2. The Content of Nurture

The child needs more than method if he is to grow and mature in his faith. He must have adequate content along with the method. Christian nurture is concerned not only with method, therefore, but also with content. What spiritual knowledge should the primary child have by the time he finishes his eighth year? The answer to this question is determined to a great extent by the child's needs and capabilities, but there is also a necessity for a norm by which the teacher can guide herself. The primary child, generally speaking, is capable of grasping certain understandings about God, the Bible, his relationship to God, the church, and his own personal responsibilities. These understandings are the framework upon which the content of nurture is built.

a. Understandings of God

Before God can become real to the child he must share experiences of God. He can know God as Creator of the universe, and as his Creator. These concepts are built through experiences which associate God with such qualities.

(1) The Father

The primary child knows God as the Creator, and he is curious about implications of this fact. He wants to know how God made him, how God can be in different places at different times, and why there is so much unhappiness in the world if God is in charge. He needs to observe seasons, growing things, animals, and babies in order to gain an understanding of God's work through laws. He can be taught that misery in the world is often caused by man's will rather than because of God's lack of care.¹

(2) Jesus

A concept of Jesus as God's helper is easily established with the primary child. Jesus can be understood as a person of unsurpassed goodness and kindness. Stories of Jesus' birth, childhood, and His deeds of love and kindness are especially meaningful to the child.² The primary child can understand Jesus as God's Son, and the One who helps him know what God is like. He should have a growing desire and ability to pattern his life after Jesus' life and apply Jesus'

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1. Jones, op. cit., p. 18.
2. Munkres, op. cit., p. 20.

standards to his own conduct.¹ Stories of how Jesus changed persons will be meaningful to the child. Knowing Jesus as Saviour is also possible for the primary child. He can understand that God helped man by sending Jesus to show him what is good. The crucifixion can be taught as an example of Jesus' not compromising with evil.²

(3) The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit can be known to the child as the Spirit of God in his life to help him do what is good. At primary level, the Holy Spirit is a Person whose name is used in conversation, but who is not taught to the child in a doctrinal sense.³

b. Understandings of the Bible

Incidents from the experience of others help make God real to the child as he can vicariously experience the presence of God. Bible stories are of great value in giving the child these understandings. The Bible should be known to him as the book through which God tells him how to live. It seems destined to keep a primary place in the subject matter of the

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1. Cf. Caldwell, op. cit., pp. 13 & 75.
Smither, op. cit., p. 28.
2. Jones, op. cit., pp. 24-26.
3. Ibid., p. 27.

child's Christian education, because it is material most helpful in relating experience to God's purposes.¹

c. Understandings of Relationships to God

Another aspect of Christian nurture for the primary child is his understanding of his relationships to God. The three predominant areas of relationships are sin, love, and worship.

(1) Sin

Much can be done to help the child know about sin. He can relate goodness and rightness to the will of God, and badness and wrongness to a denial of the will of God. He can understand that refusing to do the will of God is sin. As he matures, he will grow in his discernment of what sin is.²

(2) Love

The child gains confidence in God as he feels a sense of companionship and fellowship in working with God. This confidence is linked with a knowledge of God's love, and a sense of God's care and goodness in his experience.

(3) Worship

One of the most meaningful experiences for

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1. Cf. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 13.
Jones, op. cit., p. 27.
Smither, op. cit., p. 30.
2. Jones, op. cit., p. 30.

the child's awareness of his relationship to God is through worship. Scripture, poems, stories, and hymns which help the child express his thoughts are used in worship. Prayer is a reality to the child, but is limited largely to specific times and places. Prayer should be used in worship as the child's expression to God. More and more he should pray in his own words. All concepts used in worship for the child should be on a Christian level and at the same time be meaningful to the child.¹

d. Understandings of the Church

Through worship, work, and play with others the child should realize that all who love God are members of His family.

(1) Missions

This realization of a family relationship should foster a care and interest in others on which a missionary education can be based. Through personal contacts with people of other backgrounds, and through knowledge of their customs, the beginning of a growing concern for others can be implemented.²

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1. Caldwell, op. cit., pp 142-147.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 75.

Smither, op. cit., p. 42.

(2) The Local Church

The church to the child is a place of worship. It is a fellowship in which he learns to belong. He grows in his response to the beauty of the church, and also his responsibility to the church. As he grows older, he will begin to see the church as being beyond his local place of worship and including all people all over the world who love God and want to do His will.¹

e. Understandings of Personal Responsibilities

A final area of increasing understandings is the area of personal responsibilities. The child should increase in his ability to share work, possessions, and attention with others.² He should grow in a Christian control of conduct. Such areas as truth-telling, obedience, and consideration for others are real places of problems in Christian control.³

f. Summary

As the child seeks to make his living conform to a Christ-like life, he uses all of his gained understandings about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit,

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1. Cf. Caldwell, loc. cit.
Smither, op. cit., p. 37.
2. Caldwell, loc. cit.
3. Smither, op. cit., p. 50.

the Bible, his relationships to God, the church, and his personal responsibilities. In this way the content of his Christian nurture is made a part of his experience, is augmented with increased understandings, and is within his living to aid him in increased Christ-likeness.

C1 The Needs of the Primary Child to be Met in Christian Nurture

1. Needs in Relation to Characteristics

Each child has his own characteristics and his own rate of growth. Because of this growth variance, expectations of him are not set on the basis of an overall average achievement. There are, however, general characteristics possessed by most primary children. It is from these characteristics and the balance within the individual child that his personal needs grow. Each child needs to be helped to make maximum use of his own total capacity in fulfillment of God's purposes for him. While his understanding of God's purposes depends on more than the satisfaction of physical needs, the child's thinking and purposing cannot be separated from his physical body. For this reason, the needs of the child as a whole should be considered

as relative to his Christian nurture.¹

2. Specific Needs of the Primary Child

a. Security

For the primary child, home is no longer the only center of interest. Something else demands his attention more and more.² He is growing from dependence to independence. And yet, this independence does not exclude him from the need and desire for adult approval. He is anxious to do well.³ One of the primary child's needs, therefore, is the need for security. He needs to feel that life is steady, consistent, and has meaning for him as an individual.⁴

b. Acceptance

The primary child grows socially in these years. He cooperates and shares with others more easily. He develops interests in group play and enjoys competition.⁵ He plays with both boys and girls at this age, but divergent interests become more marked. He is beginning to move from dependence on the approval of adults to dependence on the approval of his peers.

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1. Cf. Jones, op. cit., pp. 9-13.

Munkres, op. cit., p. 22.

2. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 71.

3. Gladys G. Jenkins: These Are Your Children, p. 292

4. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 43.

5. Ibid., p. 34.

Friends are necessary to the child, and by the end of his primary years he should have a best friend.¹

Experiences of joining in worship with his friends are needed. The child needs to feel an awareness of God and satisfaction in speaking to Him.² He needs acceptance at his own level of development, with understanding of his nature and interests.³

c. Guidance

Many new experiences are coming to the primary child which cause excitement. He is able to live in a larger world, making more of his decisions, under new authority, and learning new skills, all of which demand rapid adjustment and greater self control. He is capable of taking more responsibility, but still needs adult supervision. There must be the right combination of independence and encouraging moral support.⁴ Contacts with helpful adults who give him praise, warmth, and patience, and an example of living will help the child channel his interests and

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1. Jenkins, loc. cit.

2. Cf. Lewis, op. cit., p. 14.
Munkres, op. cit., p. 20.

3. Ibid.

4. Cf. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 72.
Jenkins, loc. cit.
Smither, op. cit., p. 17.

enthusiasms.¹ He needs wise guidance.

d. Concrete Learning

Concrete learning situations and active, direct participation in them are other needs of the primary child. He is eager and curious and wants to learn. Persons, play, and pets are major among his interests. Stories - fairy tales, myths, nature stories, true stories, adventure stories - comics, radio, movies, and television are especially appealing to him.² His interest in stories is partly due to his vivid imagination. The whole world is endowed with life. The inanimate talks, other things of nature grow lonely without children and the universe laughs and plays with him. And yet, due to his developing reasoning power, the real grows more distinct from the imaginary. There is a difference between right and wrong, true and false, according to the experience he has had. His developing reason leads to "why" and "how" questions which demand reasonable answers. Symbolism is far from his understanding ability, and he needs to see as well as hear the answers to his questions.³

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1. Lewis, op. cit., p. 17.

2. Cf. Jenkins, loc. cit.

Smither, op. cit., p. 14.

3. Cf. Caldwell, op. cit., pp. 33-35.

Munkres, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

Interpretation of truth in his life situations makes learning meaningful to the child. He learns the right and wrong ways to act as he tackles specific problems.¹ Freedom to ask questions and find satisfactory answers is important, whether in relation to factual knowledge or to problems of Christian living.²

e. Activity

"Active" and "activity" are key words to the characteristics of the primary child. Much activity means that he tires easily and has a short "sit still" period. His attention span is short, but increasing. Activity is more interesting to him than result. He has keen senses - seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling - and likes to use them by doing things. Activity requiring the use of his large muscles is easier for him, but his coordination of small muscles is rapidly improving.³

Ample opportunity for activity of many kinds is needed. The child learns best through active participation, and he needs this type of participation.

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1. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 44.
2. Lewis, op. cit., p. 14.
3. Cf. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 33.
Jenkins, loc. cit.
Munkres, op. cit., p. 16.

All kinds of activity, the physical and also the creative listening, are needed in his learning situations.¹

f. Responsibility

The primary child makes much of fairness. He demands his own turn and own rights. At the same time, he is able to evaluate himself better as his ability and accuracy are increasing. He has a growing understanding of the use of time and money. He makes numerous decisions on his own. Because of increased ability, he needs some responsibilities. These should be without pressure and rigid standards, and the decisions required should not be extensive in their implications.² Increasing responsibility brings a working with others for worth while ends. The process of discovering needs together and finding solutions together will help the child take his responsibility. He needs a sense of sharing in God's work, a sense of responsibility in helping God fulfill His purposes.³

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1. Cf. Caldwell, loc. cit.
Jenkins, loc. cit.
2. Cf. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 71.
Jenkins, loc. cit.
3. Lewis, op. cit., p. 15-16.

D. Potential Values in Nature Stories as a Medium of Christian Nurture

1. The Story in Christian Nurture

It has been seen in the previous material that explanation, the sharing of ceremonial expressions, and living are ways of sharing faith.¹ It has also been seen that the conversational method can be one of the most effective means of teaching a child.² The story is another method of guiding children in Christian growth. There is a place for the story in all three of the above ways of sharing faith. An effectively written and told story is a valuable aspect of the conversational method of teaching. As Lewis says,

Stories cannot be a substitute for the children's own thinking and decision, but they have great value in helping the children to think more clearly and to reach wiser decisions.³

a. The Purpose of Stories

There are many purposes for which a story can be used effectively to further the Christian nurture of the child. It can be told in order to suggest a

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1. Ante, p.2.

2. Ibid., p.3.

3. Lewis, op. cit., p. 71.

solution to a class problem. A story can be used to introduce problems and relate desired attitudes and purposes to them. Children learn to meet their own problems and solve them when they see themselves through the eyes of others and identify themselves with the experiences of others. The story which presents a problem and its solution is an excellent means by which to enable the child to do this.¹

Guiding sympathetic friendliness toward other races and classes can be accomplished through a story. A story can cause motivation for a project or enterprise through a theme involving worship or purposeful action. The religious interpretation of nature, and other religious principles can be made clear through a story.² Underlying all other purposes, however, is the purpose of giving joy and happiness that will be lasting.³

b. The Value of Stories

The story, however, will be transferred to

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1. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 102.
2. Cf. Jeanette P. Brown: The Story Teller in Religious Education, p. 7.
Katherine D. Cather: Religious Education Through Story Telling, Ch. II.
Lewis, loc. cit.
Smither, op.cit., p. 145.
3. Margaret Eggleston: The Use of the Story in Religious Education, p. 18.

the child's life only in the extent to which the elements in the story are familiar and relevant to the child's need.¹ A story will influence a child's life if he is so deeply impressed that he will act on the insight received. Herein lies the value of stories in Christian nurture.²

It has been said that the story is only valuable to the child in Christian nurture as it meets his need in familiar and relevant manner. The child has many needs. Some of these are specific to a certain child because of his individual personality and environment. As indicated above,³ other needs are general and characteristic of primary children as a group. In order for the story to be truly valuable in Christian nurture, it must meet first of all these general needs, and then the more specific needs.

(1) Security

The need for security is met through the story. As the child identifies himself with the characters, he finds himself in the company of others who feel as he does. The consistency and supremacy

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1. Jones, op. cit., p. 89.

2. Ilse Forest: Child Life and Religion, p. 64.

3. Ante, p. 12.

of God and the friendship of Jesus can be realized in this way. Thus the child can feel a sense of emotional and spiritual security, at least for the duration of the story and probably more permanently.¹

(2) Acceptance

Through the story the child can find a sense of acceptance. His need to love and to be loved can be met as he recognizes and learns to know God's love. He can learn to extend his own self respect and self love to a love and respect for others.²

(3) Guidance

The value of a story for guidance has been discussed indirectly. In many ways a story is used basically for guidance no matter what other need has precipitated its use. This, too, fills a need of the primary child. As the child identifies himself with God and with fine characters, he discovers new capacities and new sources in himself for fineness. He gains insight into living as he lives with the story. His experience is widened, and he can see the

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1. Mary H. Arbuthnot: Children and Books, p. 2.

2. Ibid., p. 4.

3. Ibid, p. xi.

cause and effect of behavior.¹

(4) Concrete Learning

In addition, the need for concrete learning can be met through the use of the story. A child's interests in people, the world around him, and his own life may be increased, while his need for aesthetic satisfaction is met. Feelings are channels for learning, and stories involve emotion. How he should feel about people, how he should treat others, and how he should meet situations can be concretely shown the child in a story.² Well chosen stories for the purpose of Christian ethics may produce truth telling, generosity, honorable behavior, and other such qualities in the child. Such stories can give the child the atmosphere and the means for fuller, richer living.³

(5) Activity

A story also provides a liberation for the child from the pressure of routines and adult rules. He finds energy and zest for life in a story. He finds reasons for laughter. Although the story demands

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1. Ibid., p. xi.

2. Ibid., p. 9.

3. Cf. Brown, op. cit., p. 34.
Forest, op. cit., p. 64.
Lewis, op. cit., p. 71.

quiet listening, there is activity within as the child becomes absorbed in the action of the story.¹

(6) Responsibility

Finally, the story can fulfil the child's need for a sense of responsibility. It can motivate him for a project or enterprise even though the motivation is not the primary aim of the story. He can feel a responsibility to God, to others, and to himself to do something worthy.² The right type of story, more than any other single factor, may create a desire within the child to give, do, and serve.³

2. Nature Study in Christian Nurture

a. The Purpose of Nature Study

Experience with nature is never outgrown.

As one grows older his experience can grow deeper and wider with the years. An early concept of nature as orderly, consistent, unified, and the result of God's desire is a basis for a later philosophy. The combination of intelligence and childlikeness which the primary child possesses offers a great opportunity for giving him a realization of nature as a whole, as well as an appreciation for its parts.⁴

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1. Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 7.
2. Ibid., p. 6.
3. Clara B. Blashfield: Worship Training for Primary Children, p. 137.
4. Bertha Stevens: How Miracles Abound, p. 4.

b. Values Derived from Nature Study

The study of nature can give a child real experiences in nurture content. Knowledge and understanding in all areas of content can be increased through nature study.

(1) Understandings of God

A child can be told that God is the Creator of the universe, but if he can touch God's creation and understand something of the wonder of its composition, he knows what God is like by experiencing His work. Much keener perception of the meaning of following Jesus is possible for the child if he observes and understands the nature which Jesus used in His teaching. Jesus loved nature, and the child can know Jesus better if he grows to love the same things.

(2) Understandings of the Bible

In studying nature through use of the Bible the child grows in appreciation and knowledge of both the Bible and the world about him. Because the Bible is the primary source book for Christian living, because it is trustworthy, and because it is a revelation of God, its use in nature study for Christian nurture is of highest value.

(3) Understandings of Relationships to God

There is great value in nature study used

to increase the child's relationship to God. Little common things are full of possibilities for bringing him face to face with God. A snowflake, trees, flowers, the silk worm, all bring to the child an awareness of God's planning, care, and love for His creation. Wonders of stars, the moon, and the night can bring wonder and worship of their Maker to the child.¹

(4) Understandings of Personal Responsibilities

Through nature study, the child can acquire a sense of responsibility and care for others. The care of a pet is a valuable experience in thoughtfulness and dependability. A study of the source of food is often the beginning of a sense of responsibility toward those who don't have the kind of food to which they are entitled. A sense of God's care for others as expressed in His creation can give the child specific guidance in his living to accomplish God's purposes.

It has been said that a complete nature program includes such things as intelligent wondering, exploring, imagining, comradeship, sharing, and a

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1. Alexander Myers: Teaching Religion Creatively, pp. 163-166.

spirit of play.¹ This content would fulfill most of the needs of the child. No study of nature, however, is complete without recognition of and increased acquaintance with God, who has revealed Himself even to a child by His creative work.

3. The Nature Story in Christian Nurture

The values of the story in Christian nurture have been seen to depend on the relevance of the story's content to the child's experience. While the technique of story telling is valuable in meeting the needs of primary children in general, the technique must be applied to meaningful material.

The content of a story is the determinant factor in its meaning to the child. In Christian nurture the ultimate aim of a story would be to help the child find an increasing, living knowledge of God and God's purposes for him. This knowledge is actually a growing Christ-likeness. The teacher is faced with the problem of making the story content of enough value to the child that he will take its message and incorporate it into his daily living. It has been seen that nature study is of great value in making

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1. Stevens, loc. cit.

God known and relevant to the child. Therefore, by using the story method and the nature content, the teacher is equipped with exceptional teaching material. As source material she has the great wealth of nature references in the Bible. She has the findings of modern science from which to draw. She has subject material which the child can touch and see as well as feel. And she has a method which appeals to and affects all children.

E. Summary

The nature story has been shown to be an effective method of Christian nurture because of two qualities - the content of the story, and the method in which the content is presented.

For the primary child, Christian nurture involves a great amount of transmission of faith from adults. It was seen that this process of transmission is most effectively accomplished through the expression of faith through living. After consideration of laws of learning and their implications in the process of nurture, it was seen that the conversational method, if it is a real sharing experience, is one of the best methods of transmission. It was then proposed that a

story which is relevant to the child's experience and needs can be a means of his nurture.

In order to further substantiate the worth of the nature story as a means of Christian nurture, consideration was given to the content of Christian nurture, and to the needs of the primary child which are met in Christian nurture.

The value of the story as a medium of Christian nurture was then discovered in light of the needs of the child which are met by a story. Security, acceptance, guidance, concrete learning, activity, and responsibility were shown to be qualities derived from the story.

The value of nature study in Christian nurture was then investigated. It was found that nature study contributes to all of the previously stated areas of nurture content. From nature study the primary child is able to gain in understandings of God, the Bible, relationships to God, and personal responsibilities.

Thus, because of a method which involves the life of the child, and because of content which increases the spiritual growth of the child, the use of the nature story in the Christian nurture of primary children was seen to be of great value.

CHAPTER II
THE EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION
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A. Introduction

The subject matter contained in this chapter will be divided into three primary sections. The available nature stories for primary children will be briefly surveyed in the first section. This survey will include sources for stories, a consideration of types of stories, a discussion of different subjects of nature considered in nature stories for primary children, and finally, observations of controlling purposes of nature stories.

In the second section a standard of evaluation will be determined through the adaption of criteria used in the selection of books and stories for primary children. The criteria will be established from standards given in Christian education materials and from standards given in public education materials. The criteria for evaluation will be stated from the standpoint of general bases on which books and stories are chosen, and also from the standpoint of specific standards which should be met by individual stories.

After having established a standard of evaluation, this standard will be applied to selected nature stories from the fields of Christian and general education. This standard will be considered also in the selection of the representative stories. The final conclusions, therefore, will be made on the basis of an examination of selected high quality stories.

A. A Survey of the Field of Nature Stories for Primary Children

1. Sources of Nature Stories

There are three primary sources from which nature stories may be obtained. Story books containing only one story are perhaps the most attractive to the child. The story in a book of this type is combined with a cover and illustrations which give extrinsic value to the book in the eyes of the child. Story collections are another source. Nature stories are rather difficult to locate in collections of stories unless the collection is limited to nature subjects. Nature stories can also be found in periodical literature. Magazines and papers for children and for teachers many times contain stories of this type. Nature stories which emphasize moral and spiritual values are found more often in periodical literature and in collections

of stories than in single story form.

2. Types of Stories

According to Jeanette Perkins Brown, there are five types of stories. One of these types is the character story. This is a story in which the hero's feelings are so affected that a change in his attitude takes place. The second of these types, the plot story, is a story in which the hero is involved in a situation where the final outcome is uncertain. It is not until the climax that the outcome is revealed. The problem story is a third type. The hero of this type of a story has a problem, the solution of which is given in the climax. In the quest story, the fourth type, the hero is on some type of a search which is climaxed when the search is rewarded with success. The last type of story, the journey story, is actually another quest. Rather than working toward the end of a search, this story builds toward the end of a journey.¹ These story types prove valuable in determining the aim of the story in many cases.

3. Kinds of Nature Stories

a. Stories about Animals

In addition to nature stories being

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1. Brown, op. cit., pp. 14-16.

classified into the above types of stories, they can also be classified according to topic. Animal stories are probably the most popular with primary age children.¹ There are several ways in which animal stories may be presented.

(1) The Folk Tale

A folk tale is a story which has animals as its main characters, but the animals have human characteristics. This type of story is completely unscientific. The hero of the story might be a human named Wolf rather than the animal, and it would make no great difference to the story. By the time the child reaches primary age he is almost ready to make some other type of story his favorite.²

(2) The Modified Scientific Story

When the child is six or seven, he is ready to appreciate the reality in his environment. Because of this fact, he enjoys an animal story which is scientifically true to the species, but which keeps the human attributes of thought and speech as part of the animals' life. This type of story is easy to sentimentalize, but thoroughly enjoyable if truthfully written.³

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1. Cf. Bryant, loc. cit.

Smither, loc. cit.

2. Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 426.

3. Ibid.

(3) The Scientific Story

Finally, as the child reaches the last of his primary years, he responds to stories about animals which are strictly from the observational standpoint. This type of story adheres to all modern knowledge of the species, presenting the animals by themselves in their own world.¹ Unless written as through the experience of a human, it is impossible to incorporate any conversation in this type of story. Because of this fact, a story of this nature must be skillfully handled in order to appeal to the child of primary age.

b. Stories About Plants

This type of story is considerably scarcer than the animal story. There is, however, adequate material from which to select. Plant stories for primary children correspond more to the modified scientific story or the completely scientific story than to the folk tale.

c. Stories About the Seasons

Stories concerning the seasons, either a single season or all four together, are found as told from the human experience point of view. There are a

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1. Ibid.

few which deal with seasons that are written from the standpoint of plants or animals, but these are essentially plant or animal stories rather than stories of seasons. It is difficult to take the child into the world of the seasons by writing the story from the viewpoint of the seasons themselves. The most understandable season stories are those told from the standpoint of people who experience the changing seasons.

d. Stories About Stars

There are very few stories for primary age children about stars. Many text type books have been written, and a few of these are suitable for use with primary children, but a true story about stars is quite difficult to find. This type of story would be most successfully presented from the standpoint of human experience with the stars rather than from a purely scientific standpoint.

e. Stories About Natural Resources

This kind of story is also quite scarce. There are, however, such subjects as geology and the weather which are possible subjects of interest to primary children and which could be sources of material for stories. There are a few stories written on weather subjects. This category does not include season stories

such as those on the snow in winter or the winds of the spring, but involves such subject matter as the process of rain becoming sea water, vapor, and then rain again. This type of material is usually too advanced for the understanding of the primary child, but it has been adapted in some instances into excellent story material.

4. Controlling Purposes of Nature Stories

After observing the field of nature stories, one becomes aware of two primary aims toward which a given story can unfold. These aims, or primary emphases, are not found in any particular area of the field, but can be ascertained only on the basis of a study of the individual story.

a. Stories Emphasizing Scientific Knowledge

There are many stories which are written primarily as information stories. These stories are usually used in school rooms to give the child a background of information on nature subjects. These stories are good stories, having introduction, plot, climax, and conclusion, and are of great value in teaching facts and attitudes about nature to a child.

b. Stories Emphasizing Moral and Spiritual Values

Other nature stories seem to emphasize moral and spiritual values. These stories are used in all education fields and have basis in facts of nature.

These stories are the preferred type for use in Christian nurture. A story which emphasizes moral and spiritual values may easily become a story which moralizes rather than a story from which a child can derive moral and spiritual value. Almost all stories written for use in Christian education tend toward this type, or are so vague that their purpose is uncertain.

Both emphases in stories are valid for a Christian education situation. The story which emphasizes knowledge can be either adapted or introduced and discussed in such a way as to allow for great moral and spiritual value.

C. A Standard of Evaluation

1. General Considerations in the Choice of Nature Stories

Children's stories are chosen for their beauty and literary value. Just as music and art are beautiful because of their form and their message, so also is a story good and beautiful due to its form and its message.¹

A story which is valuable for Christian nurture should be aimed toward the meeting of a need discovered through observation and study.² If the story

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1. Cf. Eggleston, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

Forest, op. cit., p. 60.

2. Lewis, op. cit., p. 71.

is not written in terms of the child's experiences, however, it will fail to reach its goal.¹

No matter how good a story may seem to an adult, unless the child enjoys it the story is not likely to be good for him.² Among the subjects in which the primary child is usually interested are nature stories, especially about animals, stories of wonder, and stories of children's experiences.³

2. Specific Standards for the Choice of Nature Stories

a. Action

One of the necessary elements in a good story for primary children is action. While listening to a story, the primary child is deprived of his freedom of action unless he finds action through the story. Because of his short concentration span, the action should be lively, in close sequence, and within the child's world. Something should be happening all the time.⁴

b. Plot

The plot of the story includes the events,

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1. Cf. Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. x.
Caldwell, op. cit., p. 103.
2. Jones, op. cit., p. 92.
3. Cf. Sara Cone Bryant: How to Tell Stories to Children,
p. 53.
Smither, op. cit., p. 165.
4. Cf. Arbuthnot, loc. cit.
Bryant, op. cit., p. 146.

their sequence, their purpose, and their climax. A story's plot should be built around an interesting and worthwhile theme. Lengthy or involved plots are not valuable for the primary child, because they are difficult to follow and his attention and interest are thus lost.¹ However, the story should include those events which are necessary for the smooth progression of the story.² The material involved in the plot should be true to experience and also have a strong element of imagination working in harmony with the reality.³

c. Characters

Characters often make a story good or bad in the child's eyes. Characters in a story for children should be unique and memorable, whether they are people or animals, or some other personification. They can be quite imaginative, even tinged with mystery, but they must be created to live and to draw a response from the child based on human interest.⁴

d. Style

A story for primary children should contain

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1. Arbuthnot, loc. cit.
2. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 103.
3. Cf. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 104.
Johnson, op. cit., p. XL.
4. Cf. Arbuthnot, loc. cit.
H. H. Horne: Storytelling, Questioning, and Studying, p. 39.

much direct discourse. Children soon become bored with a series of sentences which do not take them into the story and allow them to listen first hand to what is being said.¹ Repetition is another characteristic of style which holds the child's interest and enables him to familiarize himself with the story and its characters. Along with repetition, rhythm of sounds and words brings great delight to the child and makes the story more memorable.² The story should bring distinct pictures to the child's imagination, but the emotional coloring must never be overdone or insincere. The story should be sensitively geared to the child's maturity level and vividly bring him its impact.³

e. Content

Story content is an important area in which to form standards. A nature story to be used in the Christian nurture of a child should bring new thoughts and facts to the child's thinking. A nature story, then, should contain true facts about nature. The nature life which is involved should be truthfully represented.⁴

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1. Caldwell, loc. cit.

2. Cf. Bryant, loc. cit.
Forest, loc. cit.

3. Cf. Arbuthnot, loc. cit.
Smither, op. cit., p. 162.

4. Munkres, op. cit., p. 80.

A story for use in Christian education should contain more than scientific facts. The field of nature is a rich field from which to give the child understandings about God, the Bible, and his privileges and responsibilities in life.¹ A story which does not take advantage of this wealth of meaning in God's creation should not be used in Christian education unless it is revised or augmented by the teacher.

D. The Evaluation of Selected Nature Stories

The selected stories will be taken one at a time, generally described, and evaluated on the basis of the specific standards which have been setablished.

a. "Make Way for the Ducklings"²

This story is the true story of two Mallard ducks and their adventures in finding a home in which to raise their family. The problem is introduced in the first sentence as the reader is told that they are searching for a home. The climax is reached as the mother duck marches her family of eight ducklings from their nesting place, across busy streets, and into the

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1. Ante, pp. 24,25.

2. Robert McCloskey: Make Way for the Ducklings.

park which was first chosen by the ducks as a fine place in which to live. Because of the two or three journeys made by the ducks, this story would be properly classified a quest story.

"Make Way For the Ducklings" contains much action. The ducks are flying in the first sentence, and they waddle, swim, and dive for food throughout the story. The child can picture in his mind each kind of action described, and in this way he is able to identify himself with the story.

The plot of the story is simple and well suited to a scientific type of story. Steadily moving from the initial problem of finding a home, through the training of their family, to the family's arrival at the home of their first choice, the plot holds interest and imagination. Direct discourse between the ducks and descriptions of their thoughts and actions give the story its needed touch of imagination.

The ducks in this story are memorable because of their unusual home and because of the human emotions given them, such as the pride of the mother duck in her well-behaved brood of ducklings.

The story is written in an appealing style. There is some direct discourse. Very little exact

repetition of word pattern is used, but the ideas and places mentioned recur. A happy, singing atmosphere has been captured in the expressions used. The vocabulary is quite understandable to a primary child, although not so simple that his thinking would be unchallenged.

Nature has been truthfully represented in this story, and the child has been given a good, although unusual picture of duck life. In order to be of use in a Christian education situation, the story would require a strong introduction which would channel the thoughts of the children toward the moral aspects involved. There are no basic spiritual values taught, and the happy family situation depicted needs underscoring in specific ways in order to be apparent to the child.

b. "Hi, Mr. Robin"¹

The subject of this story is the coming of spring. The introduction presents the problem in the words "It was time for spring but spring didn't come."² Little Boy waits, watches, and asks for spring. Gradually the out-of-doors world begins to change until finally even the little boy knows that it is spring. The climax of the story comes with the little boy's words, "Hi, Mr. Robin! - It's spring!"³

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1. Alvin Tresselt: Hi, Mr. Robin.
2. Ibid., p.1.
3. Ibid., p.21.

This story, as the previous one, is a quest story built around the little boy's search for spring. Many different signs of spring are woven into the narrative and give the story a good scientific basis.

Because of the quest theme, the story is built on action. The robin flies and sings, the little boy runs, looks, and listens, and the mother and grandfather carry on their regular adult tasks. Along with the action of the bird and the people moves the action of the coming of spring.

The plot is simple and moves steadily toward the final statement of spring's arrival. The story's scientific emphasis makes it very true to experience. Imagination is evident in the use of repeated phrases for the robin's speech. This technique puts the robin in the world of nature so adequately that the reader is given the impression that the boy is only imagining the actual words of the robin.

The characters are not particularly unusual. The little boy and his mother and grandfather are quite ordinary people, and they are more of a support to the science of the story than being primary necessities. This subordination of characters serves to emphasize the aspect of nature.

There is repetition in the action as the little boy goes again and again to the robin in order to find out when spring will arrive. There is rhythm and repetition in the three-fold song which the robin gives in answer to the boy's questions. The great amount of description gives the story a distinct musical quality which reaches its climax in the joyous "spring is here" of the little boy.

Because of the factual description of the coming of spring, the story holds a good supply of new thoughts and ideas for a primary child. Through the truthful representation of nature, the child can be made aware of the coming of spring and can be encouraged to watch for its arrival.

Intrinsic to the story is a strong lesson of patience and constructive waiting. The child could readily discover how much of value can be missed by impatiently wishing for that which is coming. A real appreciation for God's orderly plan for life could be gained through this story if it were adapted to the needs of the children with whom it is used.

c. "Johnny Maple-Leaf"¹

Johnny's life story from bud to fallen leaf is the theme of this story. The maple leaf, Johnny, is the main character, and the story builds as Johnny grows and changes. The flowers, birds, and animals which Johnny sees indicate the passing seasons of spring, summer, and fall, until finally Johnny lets go of his branch, floats down to the ground, and is covered by the falling snow.

In one respect this story is a character story. Johnny's character as a leaf changes as the seasons pass, until finally he is happily asleep with his friends. In another respect, however, the story is a journey story. Johnny begins his life journey in the spring and reaches the end of his journey in going to sleep.

The action of this story takes place most of the time apart from the main character. However, in his choice of verbs the author has given considerable action to Johnny Maple-Leaf, too. He "broke out of his tight brown bud. He took a deep breath and slowly stretched out."² Although the action is not lively, it is

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1. Alvin Tresselt: Johnny Maple-Leaf.
2. Ibid, p.6.

sufficiently strong and familiar to the child to hold his attention.

The plot is very simple and moves rapidly. The story is quite true to reality and yet the anthropomorphic figure given to the maple leaf adds the imagination necessary in order to make the plot interesting. Progression from one step to another occurs rapidly with no unnecessary halts in the movement.

Primary of the characters is Johnny Maple-Leaf. All other characters are incidental necessities, making an environment for Johnny. Although Johnny is not as memorable a character as many other nature characters, he is unique enough to evoke interest and sympathy from the child.

There is no direct discourse in the story. Johnny's thoughts are given indirectly, and the whole story is told from an impersonal standpoint. The lack of discourse is a weak point of the story. There is a good element of repetition in the story, however. The phrase, "...and Johnny Maple-Leaf decided that this was the best place in the whole world for him to be..."¹ is a phrase which gives literary unity to the story.

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1. Ibid., pp.12, 18, 28.

The words used are understandable and descriptive, although not as warm and personal as possible.

The content of the story is truthful to nature life. The information is more suited to the youngest of the primary group because of the lack of detail. The more impersonal tone, however, makes the story less valuable for this younger age.

There are two primary spiritual values which could be derived from this story through an effective introduction and conclusion. One is the contentment of Johnny through all the changes in his environment. The other is the understanding which could be given of God's part in creating life to progress in season cycles.

d. "The Magic Spider"¹

"The Magic Spider" is a story of a spider told from the viewpoint of the ants. The problem is presented in the first statement of Wise Ant. "...I saw a big black-and-yellow-Spider. He's magic, he comes from nowhere, and then he disappears."² Adventurous Ant ignores the warning of Wise Ant and gets caught in the Spider's web.

The story is a problem story, the magic of

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1. Mary Adrian: Mystery Nature Stories, pp.24-30.
2. Ibid., p.24.

the spider being the problem, but there are also strong characteristics of a plot story contained in the adventures of the Adventurous Ant. These two story types within the same story tend to make it involved.

The action of this story is lively and exciting. It builds rapidly toward the climax of the Ant's escape, and then builds again toward the discovery of the Spider's secret. The action is true to the insects' habits, and at the same time is described in terms understandable to the child. Because of the great amount of physical activity and struggle described, there is a high degree of appeal in the story to the primary child.

Many different but related scientific facts are contained in the plot. These many angles of the plot tend to diminish its clarity, but, on the other hand, they contribute in a valuable way to the story and are handled quite well. The child's imagination is stimulated through the unusual theme and plot movement.

Life-like characters contribute much to the story's charm. The action of the insects is true to science, but the expression of their thoughts is in terms of human experience. There is a strong element of the mysterious in the character of the Spider, and

adventure and wisdom expressed in the two ants.

There is a great deal of direct discourse in the story, which helps to involve the child in the story's environment. The discourse is in a child's vocabulary and is phrased in harmony with child thought. There is no direct repetition, but there is repeated action. Although the story is exciting and lively, it ends quietly and happily. There is an overall sympathy established toward the happiness of the ants, and this sympathy is resolved in the happy ending.

The story is written so excitingly that the child is probably motivated to watch some of the events of nature life which are mentioned in the story. Through discussion, some spiritual emphases could be raised from the story. The importance of being wise and courageous could be emphasized, and the wise instinctive actions of the insects could bring a sense of the wonder of God's creation to the child.

2. Nature Stories Emphasizing Moral and Spiritual Values

a. "The New Crown"¹

Goldenrod is the subject of this story.

Beginning with the young plant, the life of the goldenrod

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1. Margaret Eggleston: Forty Stories for the Church, School, and Home, pp. 132-135.

is traced until it becomes a dead weed of winter. The story is told from the plant's viewpoint and is written primarily for the purpose of inspiring patience and usefulness.

The story is a character story. There is definite progression in the attitude of the goldenrod, and her change in outlook is the climax of the story.

The action of the story is subdued because its main character is not capable of strong movement. There is, however, an atmosphere of activity given through the use of words of action and the description of the growth of the flower.

As a whole, the plot of the story is quite simple. It is not introduced within the first few sentences, and this pre-plot discussion causes uncertainty until the problem becomes evident.

The goldenrod is the primary character with other characters contributing to its development. There is much human interest in the story because of the human thoughts of the plant and the familiar objects and flowers which are woven together to form the background.

The tone of the story is a happy one. Although the goldenrod becomes discouraged and dissatisfied, the discouragement is combined with expressions of joy so that there is no constant sense of failure. There

is direct discourse throughout the story, although the story is not based on discourse. The repeated elements in the story are the expressions of the goldenrod which indicate her character development. Nothing is directly repeated.

The process of plant development forms the scientific facts upon which the story is based, but the primary emphasis is on moral character qualities. The courage of the weed is emphasized in the beginning paragraphs. Through the repeated impatience of the plant to be beautiful and useful, there is indicated within the story the moral influence which is recognized by the child.

b. "Not Lost, But Gone Before"¹

The theme of this story is the metamorphosis of a grub. The story begins with the problem of the grub's curiosity concerning what is outside his water world. His curiosity becomes so great that it almost results in disaster. Finally one day, the grub has a strange desire to go up to the surface again. When he arrives at the surface, he bursts his shell and becomes a beautiful dragon-fly.

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1. Committee of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends,
The Children's Story Garden, pp.65-69.

The story is a problem story. The grub's problem is solved in the climax as he changes into a dragon-fly. It is told as a modified scientific story. The insects speak in human manner, but in all other respects are true to their kind.

There is considerable action, some of it quite exciting. The events follow one another in close sequence and are traced largely by the conversation. There is much imagination used in the description of reactions and situations.

The plot is progressive and develops rapidly. Although they are interpreted in terms of human experience, the events described are true to nature and bring an important natural process to the child's thinking.

The grub and the yellow frog are the primary characters. There is an element of mystery about the grub which reaches its peak when he feels that he must go to the surface a second time.

Discourse forms the basic method of plot progression. This discourse gives the story a reality and action which greatly increase its value. The story is written in a style which adopts the laughter and manner of expression of the primary child and takes him right into the water world.

The content of the story is scientifically sound and gives the child basic thoughts on which to base his concept of nature. The primary emphasis, however, is not on the content but on the problem which the content expresses. The change in the grub for which he had longed is the value being emphasized. A primary child probably could not grasp the spiritual symbolism indicated in this change, but the emphasis of the story points to some understandings about God's creation. The moral and spiritual values of this story are not explicit and need to be brought out through discussion or introduction.

c. "The Wasted Oak Leaf"¹

The theme of this story is usefulness. It is told about Barbara, who finds that leaves are quite useful even after they fall from the tree. The problem of finding what happens to the leaves as they fall forms the plot framework, and the climax is reached when Barbara digs into the black earth of the woods and discovers the rich plant food made from the leaves.

There is good action in the story. The activity of Barbara sustains the movement of the story where it would otherwise tend to become too quiet.

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1. Ibid., pp. 93-96.

The Oak Leaf scoffs, the wind blows leaves around, and small insects scurry about, giving the story a quiet, sub-surface type of action.

The plot contains two levels of life, - human and plant. A more unified story would have been achieved if the details of the first three paragraphs were omitted and the story problem introduced at the beginning.

Although leaves and plants do not talk, the imaginary conversation given them in the story is true to fact and the action is in harmony with nature. The child would appreciate the style of this story.

Barbara is an ordinary little girl, with normal reactions and curiosities. The Oak Leaf, a secondary character, is quite unique and memorable. Child interest is gained through Barbara's actions of digging, covering plants with leaves, and listening to the leaves talking.

There is a large amount of direct discourse in the story. Ideas, not words, are repeated, the dominant repetition being the concern for the plants to be covered before the winter comes. The general mood of the story is happy and carries much opportunity for wonder. The words used are descriptive and poetic, and challenging to the child's intellect.

Facts of nature which are given are true and are probably new to most primary children. There is appreciation and sensitivity to nature in the story, and the information is presented with this feeling.

Discussion would bring out many implicit meanings to the child. The lack of wasted material in nature is the theme of the story, and the moral value of thrift is obvious without any comment. God's plan in nature could be understood through the use of this story, and the resultant understanding of God's care for all of life could be realized.

d. "The Caterpillar's Journey"¹

"From death to life" is the theme of this story. It is a journey story as indicated in the opening sentence. The story is an account of the death of nature in the fall, and the new life which comes with spring. A caterpillar is the unifying factor in the story. He travels to a maple tree where he plans to spin a hammock, and on the way he finds all the beautiful growing things have died. When he awakens in the spring as a butterfly, he sees that all of his friends have come alive again, too. The last sentence reveals

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1. Mary Kirkpatrick Berg: Primary Story Worship. Programs, pp. 148-150.

the spiritual value of the story.

He did not understand, and nobody understands, but we know the soft voices were true when they said, 'They shall live again, they shall live again.'¹

There is slow, lazy action all through the story. Caterpillars move slowly, and the story action reflects the character of the caterpillar. The action is steady, however, leaving few spots which contain no movement.

The plot is imaginative and is composed in such a way as to make the value of the story evident. There is steady progression toward the climax of the caterpillar's discovery that everything is alive again. The way in which the plot moves causes the child to interpret the phrases "They shall live again..." and derive his own values.

The characters are simple, having no special uniqueness except in their identity. The words and thoughts of the caterpillar are quite human, and coming from the caterpillar they make the story memorable.

The story contains discourse which is repetitious. Most of the conversation is in the form of repeated phrases or single sentence thoughts of the

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1. Ibid., p. 150.

caterpillar. The vocabulary is especially appropriate for young primary children. Descriptive words add a winsome sadness to the body of the story, and a subdued joy to the climax.

True facts about nature are presented and are combined to focus on spiritual values. The final sentence departs from the theme and progression of the story, however, and should be omitted when the story is told. This story is good material for establishing concepts of death and life at Easter time. There is an element of wonder which makes the story valuable for use in a worship program.

3. Conclusions Based on the Evaluations

An evaluation of these selected stories which emphasize scientific knowledge reveals that the knowledge presented is accurately and interestingly given. The stories involve action, imagination, simple plots, and build upon well pictured characters. Rhythm and repetition are characteristic of the style, and the stories are happy, although they may involve tense moments.

This evaluation also reveals that moral and spiritual values are often present. Such stories, therefore, could be used in the Christian nurture of children if they were introduced or discussed in such a way as

to bring out these values. Of the four stories of this type considered in this chapter, "Hi, Mr. Robin" and "The Magic Spider" are the most usable in a Christian education situation. Although the plot of "The Magic Spider" is more complex than the plots of the other stories of this group, the story involves values more clearly and will be used in the following chapter for this reason.

The stories which emphasize moral and spiritual values were found comparable in quality to those of the previous category, although far more difficult to find. In general, the action of these stories is more subdued. The plots tend to become involved in more than one thread in an effort to give moral value to the story. The characters are well pictured, and the style is rhythmic and often poetic.

The degree to which these stories emphasize moral and spiritual values differs. Some are rather vague in their focus on specific values, and others explicitly state values. There almost always needs to be preparation or discussion with this type of story also, although sometimes one can be used without comment. The effectiveness with which a given nature story will emphasize moral and spiritual values depends to a great

extent on the way in which it is used.

Of the stories from this category which have been evaluated, "The New Crown" and "The Caterpillar's Journey" contain the best combination of literary value, scientific facts, and moral and spiritual values.

E. Summary

The first consideration in this chapter was the survey of the field of nature stories for primary children. Sources of nature stories were found to be the books, collections of stories, and stories in periodicals which are available in public and private libraries. The several types of stories were listed. These were the character story, the plot story, the problem story, the quest story, and the journey story. The type of story was seen to depend upon the way in which the plot is developed. Nature stories were found to have animals, plants, or seasons as their subject in literature for primary children. A limited number of stories were said to deal with natural resources, and none were found that were built around astronomy. The animal stories were catagorized into folk tales, modified scientific stories, or scientific stories, depending upon the degree to which they agreed with science.

A standard of evaluation for nature stories was then established. General considerations in the process of evaluation were given in terms of the story's artistic value, the needs met by the story, and the degree to which the story appeals to the child. Specific standards were then given. The action of the story, the plot development, the characters of the story, the style in which the story is written, and the content of the story were presented as the main points of evaluation.

Selected stories from the field of nature stories which emphasize scientific knowledge and from the field of nature stories which emphasize moral and spiritual values were evaluated on the basis of these standards. Stories from both fields of nature stories were found to be valid for use in Christian education situations, if carefully selected, because the values derived from a story depend in part upon the way in which they are used. "Hi, Mr. Robin" and "The Magic Spider" were the two stories emphasizing scientific knowledge which also implied moral and spiritual value to the greatest degree. "The New Crown" and "The Caterpillar's Journey" were the two stories which combined the best literary quality and scientific facts with their emphasis on moral and spiritual values.

CHAPTER III
SUGGESTED PROCEDURES
FOR THE USE OF
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A. Introduction

The following material will be divided into two main considerations. The first section will contain a brief review and further discussion of the purposes for which nature stories may be used in the Christian nurture of primary children. The purpose of the nature story in gaining insights and in giving motivation will be considered.

The second section will contain suggested plans for the use of four selected nature stories. The stories used will be chosen from among those evaluated in the second chapter. The stories chosen will be those which seem to meet the established standard in the most adequate way. The degree to which the individual story is adaptable in a Christian education situation will also be a determining factor in its choice, particularly in the case of stories having scientific knowledge as their emphasis.

The procedures in this last section will include an introduction to the story as used in the situation, the story, and the concluding remarks or discussion if such are needed. The suggestions will serve as examples of some of the uses of nature stories in the Christian education of primary children, and will illustrate some of the ways in which nature stories can be a valuable medium of their Christian nurture.

B. Purposes For Which Nature Stories May Be Used

As has been said previously, there are many purposes for which a nature story can be used to further Christian nurture.¹ The purpose of giving joy and pleasure to the listeners should be understood as being basic to other purposes. A story which does not give joy or happiness will rarely accomplish another purpose. There seem to be two general purposes for which nature stories are used: the purpose of increasing insight, and the purpose of giving motivation.

1. Increasing Insights

The process of gaining insights results more from the implicit aspect of a nature story than

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1. Ante, p. 19.

from its overall explicit force. The insights gained depend on the content and its interrelations. There seem to be three specific areas in which insights are gained. These areas - problems of the children, their theology, and their attitudes - are discussed briefly in the following pages.

a. Problems

The nature story can be used to suggest solutions to various problems, both of individuals and of a group. If there is no awareness of a problem among the group, the story can be used to define the problem and bring it to the attention of the children.¹ The experience of the child is widened as he sees himself through the experiences of others and is helped in the solving of his problems.²

b. Theology

Christian principles can be made meaningful to the child through a story. God can be presented as the creator and the loving Father who cares for his children. The teachings and the character of Jesus can be illustrated through carefully used nature stories.

c. Attitudes

Stories which build Christian faith must

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1. Ibid.

2. Forest, loc. cit.

first produce attitudes toward God and toward characteristics of faith. Thus, truthfulness must result from a love of truth, and an admiration of and devotion to God are basic to this growth.¹ Attitudes toward other races and classes can be expanded through the use of a story. Stories involve emotions and children learn through their feelings. As the child feels with the characters in a story, he learns how to feel about others, how to treat others, and how to meet situations with the right attitudes.²

2. Giving Motivation

As well as being used to increase insights, stories about nature can give motivation. The emotional and intellectual impact of a story can be the force behind important decisions and actions.

a. Worship

The sense of wonder given through a story of nature can result in worship of God as the Creator. Great space, system, quietness, order, and beauty are some of the contributions to a worshipful mood.³ These contributions may be found in small things of nature as presented in a story, and true worship of the God whose

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1. Forest, op. cit., p. 64.

2. Brown, op. cit., p. 34.

3. Edna Dean Baker: The Worship of a Little Child, p. 43.

character they express can result.

b. Christian Action

A nature story can give motivation for a project. A story involving purposeful action will often cause realization of a need to achieve or to do something worthy. The right type of a story may result in giving, doing, or serving for others by the child.¹

c. Further Study

A child is often motivated to further study by the information presented in a story. A story which is sufficiently challenging should result in the child's desire to know more. It is the curiosity and interest raised which help make nature stories useful in Christian nurture. Curiosity and interest result in further study. As the result of further study becomes active in the child's life, he grows in his Christian stature. This growth is a process of Christian nurture.

C. Suggested Procedures

The following suggested procedures will be built upon general principles of Christian education

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1. Cf. Arbuthnot, loc. cit.
Blashfield, op. cit., p. 137.
Lewis, op. cit., p.71.

methods. The possible uses for each story will be considered and the most suitable use will be illustrated. An attempt will be made to include a variety of uses and methods.

1. "Hi, Mr. Robin"

a. Possible Uses

As indicated in the evaluation, there are several valid ways of using this story in a Christian education situation. Insights can be increased in theology as the story gives an orderly, systematic idea of the coming of spring. Through discussion, this systematic creation could be attributed to God. Attitudes of appreciation toward God's creation would be developed, leading the child to enjoy what God has given him. Attitudes about the Bible, which so adequately expresses the beauty of nature and attributes it to God, could be resultant.

It is through this idea of God as cause that worship could result. The story could promote further study, as it would possibly motivate the child to watch for more evidences of the coming of spring.

b. A Suggested Method

This story seems best adapted to the development of attitudes toward God and His revelation. The procedure which follows will emphasize the development

of attitudes toward the Bible as man's expression of God's creative action.

(1) Introduction

Read Psalm sixty-five to the children, beginning with verse one, "Praise is due to Thee, O God..." and then skipping to verse nine. This can be paraphrased in parts which would not be understandable to the child.

Ask the following questions as a basis for a short discussion: Why is this song in our Bible? What do you think made the song writer think these thoughts? How do you think he felt?

(2) The Story

The story should be read after the children have thought of how the Psalmist might have felt. "Hi, Mr. Robin" should be read as an illustration of a purpose for writing a song.

The story is as follows:

Through the long cold months of winter the land had slept. Now the little boy was tired of ice and snow and frosty days. It was time for spring but spring didn't come. The bare tree branches whistled in an icy wind, snow still covered the brown fields, and the sparrows huddled in corners to keep warm.

"When will spring come?" asked the little boy.

"When you see crocuses blooming all over the grass," his mother told him, scattering crumbs for the winter birds. But the grass was brown, and the ground was

frozen.

"When will spring come?" he asked his grandfather.

"When the peach tree blooms again," said the old man, and he knocked his pipe against the tree trunk. But all the boy could see were the sharp bare branches, until high on the top of the tree he spied a robin.

"Hi, Mister Robin!" cried the boy. "When will spring come?"

"It's here, it's here," sang the robin, then flew away. But that night it snowed again, and the boy woke to a white world once more.

After breakfast he saw the robin swinging on a piece of suet that hung from the peach tree. "Now, Mister Robin, where is the spring?" he demanded.

"Use your eyes, use your eyes," sang the bird, and he flicked his tail as he flew off to the woods. The little boy followed, and there by the brook he found the first pussy willows pushing out of their shiny brown shells. But the brook was frozen, and the snow lay on the ground.

Still spring didn't come. The days stayed cold and rainy, and everyone was out of sorts. The little boy grew more restless, and he teased the cat. His mother scolded him for tracking mud on her clean kitchen floor, and his grandfather complained about a stiff back. "Sometimes I think we never will have any spring," said the little boy crossly as he put away his coat and rubbers.

Only the robin seemed happy as he flew from tree to tree singing, "Wait and see, wait and see."

After school one afternoon the boy saw the robin picking for crumbs at the back door. "You said spring was coming," he cried. "Well, where is it?"

The robin flew into the bare peach tree. "Use your ears, use your ears," he sang, and hopped from limb to limb to keep warm. The little boy listened and listened and suddenly he could hear the frogs peeping their spring songs. He ran to the brook and he heard

the water gurgling under the cover of ice.

"Maybe spring will come after all," he said, but he shivered in the chill wind, and the sky was grey. He ran home for hot cocoa and crackers, and his grandfather helped him fix up his kite.

One morning the boy heard the robin singing a new song, "It won't be long, it won't be long." He hurried outside, but he couldn't see the spring.

"It isn't here yet," he grumbled, and he kicked a stone with his foot.

His mother only smiled. "It won't be long now," she said. "Look!" And there in the grass was a single crocus.

"But I'm tired of waiting," he answered. "When will the lawn be covered with crocuses? I want to go fishing and I want to play baseball, and I don't want to wear my coat any more."

"Well it won't be long now," said his grandfather, feeling the sticky buds on the peach tree.

And little by little the day grew soft as a misty rain filled the air. The trees lost their sharp winter look, a blur of pale green and yellow spread slowly over the tree-tops, and the young leaves started growing.

All day the boy watched the gentle falling rain. All day his mother hummed quietly to herself as she did her housework, and his grandfather read over the seed catalogues again. And the robin sat high in the peach tree and sang, "Cheer up, cheer up, cheer up."

Then in the soft magic night, while everyone was asleep, spring came back to the land, and the brown earth turned green. Growing roots stretched in the warm wet soil, the sticky scales fell from the peach blossoms: the willows hung down their long green hair, and the birds returned from the south - happy meadow-larks and orioles, chattering wrens and bluebirds.

Now at last the little boy went out on the first day

of spring. His mother put on her new hat, his grandfather polished his shoes, and they all walked in a new green world.

"That peach tree makes a pretty sight when it's all in bloom," said the old man.

"And I don't know when I've seen so many crocuses," exclaimed his mother.

But the little boy was too excited to keep still on such a beautiful day. He kicked up his heels and laughed as he ran down the path. Suddenly he spied his friend the robin perched among the peach blossoms. "Hi, Mister Robin," he called. "It's spring!"¹

(3) Application

Read the psalm again in order to emphasize what the psalmist did as an expression of his joy and pleasure because of God's creation.

As an activity, the class might compose a tune to go with the words of the psalm. Perhaps they would want to write a psalm using the story as a basis for thought.

2. "The Magic Spider"

a. Possible Uses

"The Magic Spider" could be adapted for several purposes. The story indirectly points out dangerous character traits of haste and disregard for advice. It could be introduced in such a way as to

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1. Alvin Tresselt: Hi, Mister Robin.

give the children an awareness of God's wisdom in creating even insects, and attitudes of care and pleasure in God's creation could be built.

b. A Suggested Method

The wisdom of God is an emphasis which could be easily developed using this story. Instinctive actions of the insects could be brought to the children's attention in the progress of this theme.

(1) Introduction

Before the story is told, suggest to the children that they watch for things which they didn't know insects could do.

(2) The Story

The wise ant rushed down the garden path at a terrific speed. Her feelers waved in great excitement. Her coat of black armor trembled with fright.

"What's the matter?" asked the Adventurous Ant.

"You look as if something terrible has happened."

"I've just been to the rosebush," replied the Wise Ant. "I was milking the honey cows when suddenly I saw a big black-and-yellow Spider. He's magic. He comes from nowhere, and then he disappears."

"He can't be that magic," answered the Adventurous Ant. "I'm going to the rosebush and see for myself."

The Wise Ant followed her sister up the garden path. Her feelers still quivered; her warning cries grew louder and louder.

"The rosebush looks perfectly safe to me," said the Adventurous Ant as they approached a pink petal that had fallen to the ground. "The honey cows are lined up on the stems, and there isn't a Spider in sight."

"That's just it," cried the Wise Ant. "You can't see the Spider coming, and you can't see him anywhere around after he has left his web. I tell you he's

magic."

"Who's magic?" interrupted several other ants, who had arrived from their colony.

"The Spider," replied the Wise Ant. And she quickly told her story.

"I still don't believe there is a Spider in the rosebush," answered the Adventurous Ant. "And besides, I want to milk some honey cows."

"If you do, you'll be sorry," warned the Wise Ant. "The magic Spider will come after you."

Another rose petal fluttered to the ground. The Adventurous Ant ran across its velvet surface with unwavering steps. A second later she was climbing up the rosebush.

The Wise Ant looked on with a foreboding heart. Already other ants had begun their journey up the bush. Eagerly they sought the honey cows, the tiny green bugs, to stroke them with their feelers, until they gave a drop of honeydew. This was the sap which these green bugs had collected from the leaves and stems of the rosebush and converted into honey. Willingly they gave it in return for the ants' protecting them from their enemies, the ladybird beetles and daddy longlegs.

"My, but this is sweet juice!" said the Adventurous Ant. "It's the best I've had this year."

"It's the best we've ever tasted," answered the other ants.

"You had better watch out!" called the Wise Ant. She had climbed to the top of a rock to get a better view. "The magic Spider will catch you."

Several steps more and she would have a cluster of honey cows to feed from. But in her excitement she slipped and fell into the Spider's web. Strong silk threads bound her like the iron bars of a prison. And there standing at the edge of the trap stood a Spider, a black-and-yellow spider with glittering eyes.

With the speed of an electric flash the Spider ran across the spoke-like strands of his web. But instead of making a dash for the Adventurous Ant, who trembled with fright, he stopped and shook his web violently. Then he ran to a far corner of it, where a Praying Mantis glared at him, motionless but without fear. (She had blundered into the trap at the same time as the Adventurous Ant.)

With the skill of an expert, the Spider threw out a strand of silk to lasso his huge prize; where-

upon the Praying Mantis quickly thrust out her arm-like forelegs. Immediately the Spider withdrew, for he was familiar with her most dreaded weapon - her praying arms, which were equipped with sharp hooks, and which operated like the blades of many steel knives.

But being a wary creature, the Spider believed he could outwit the Praying Mantis. Again he rushed toward her. Again he was driven back.

The Adventurous Ant, still struggling to free herself from the Spider's trap, looked on in terror. Would the Spider suddenly decide to abandon his duel with the Praying Mantis and rush to her corner of the web instead? She dreaded to think what would happen to her then.

Several moments later a gust of wind swept through the garden. Black clouds blotted out the sun; thunder rumbled in the distance. The Spider looked neither to the left nor to the right of him. His one concern was to capture the Praying Mantis.

With a renewed effort he rushed forward. This time he miscalculated his distance. He came a little too close. The forelegs of the Praying Mantis closed upon him with the spring of a steel trap.

In a desperate struggle the Spider tried to release himself from the Praying Mantis, only to find her sharp blades tighten upon him, as the wind shook the web like a hurricane. Suddenly the spoke-like strands of the web broke. The Praying Mantis, with the Spider still clutched in her forelegs, fell to the ground. Not far from them the Adventurous Ant scrambled to her feet and rushed pell-mell down the garden path.

"Come up here!" called the Wise Ant in a loud whisper.

The Adventurous Ant stopped. With her head tilted to one side she looked about her, puzzled.

"We're up here - on top of the rock!" continued the Wise Ant.

Immediately the Adventurous Ant rushed to the side of the rock. Up, up, up! she climbed over the jagged precipices of the boulder. When she reached the top, the Wise Ant and the others looked at her.

"Are you all right?" they asked as they stroked her with their feelers. "You're not hurt, are you?"

"No, I'm all right now," replied the Adventurous Ant. "But it was terrible." She turned to the Wise

Ant. "The Spider is magic. Suddenly I saw him standing in his web. I don't know where he came from, but

there he was."

The Wise Ant nodded her feelers understandingly. "The Spider is not to be trusted. But now that the Praying Mantis has killed him, I'm going back to the rosebush to see what it's all about."

"You're not going back there after what has just happened!" cried the ants.

"There is something I have to find out!" replied the Wise Ant.

Quickly she ran down the smooth side of the rock and hurried up the garden path to the rose petals.

The ants leaned over the edge of the boulder and watched her - breathless with excitement.

"Look!" cried one ant. "She's really going up the rosebush!"

"See where she is now!" cried another ant several minutes later. "She's going around the broken web. What do you suppose she sees?"

The Wise Ant moved a few inches forward on the rosebush, waving her feelers as if she expected to find something very important.

"I think I've found it!" she cried. "In a second I'll know. Yes, here it is!"

She stared at a silk line, which ran like a telephone wire from the broken web to several leaves sewn together with spider silk.

"It's the most exciting thing I've ever seen!" she cried.

Down from the rock, up the garden path, and up the rosebush the ants traveled at a great rate. But when they reached the broken web, they were disappointed. All they saw were loose strands of silk, tossing back and forth with the wind.

"Why, there's nothing here at all!" they cried.

"You're wrong. There's plenty to see here," called the Wise Ant. She was standing a short distance away.

"Is it another broken web?" asked one ant.

"I should say not!" replied the Wise Ant. "Do you see this?" she added as she pointed with her feelers to the tent of leaves.

"Yes, what is it?" asked another ant.

"It's the Spiders tent. That's where he was hiding. You can see the opening he made when he rushed out."

"I can hardly believe it!" cried the Adventurous Ant. Then she blinked her eyes with laughter. "So I was right in the first place. The Spider isn't

magic."

"That's right," answered the Wise Ant. "But the Spider is a smart creature. He tries to make you think he's magic. He hides in his tent of leaves, and then as soon as someone touches his web - out he comes."

"But how does he know when some one touches his web?" asked the Adventurous Ant. "He can't see anyone when he hides in his tent of leaves."

"Do you see this silk line running from his tent to his web?" asked the Wise Ant. "It tells the Spider when he has visitors." She turned to the Adventurous Ant. "You crawl into the tent, hold the line, and see what happens."

The Adventurous Ant hesitated.

"Go on," urged the Wise Ant. "There's nothing to be afraid of now." She turned to another ant. "You go back to the broken web and walk across the line at that end."

Several minutes later the Adventurous Ant thrust her head out of the tent of leaves.

"It's a wonderful signal!" she cried. "All you have to do is to wait until you feel it tugging, and then you know that some one is there."

"Yes, that's it," answered the Wise Ant. "And if I know the Spider, he even goes to sleep in his tent of leaves and doesn't wake up until he feels the jerk of his telephone line. Then out he comes to get his next victim."¹

(3) Application

Ask the children what new things they found out about insects. Their answers will probably involve such things as the honey cows' giving honey dew for the ants, and the spider's cunning trick.

In order to lead their thinking to God's wisdom, ask such questions as the following:

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1. Mary Adrian: Mystery Nature Stories, pp. 24-30.

How do you think the ants learn to milk honey cows? Where did the Spider learn how to make a trap? How did they get all their knowledge?

Read from Job thirty-eight through forty-one selected questions asked of Job involving the wisdom and understanding of God as revealed in nature.¹

After a pause to allow the children time to think, ask them their opinions. In closing, read Job forty-two, verses one and two.

3. "The New Crown"

a. Possible Uses

Children can be made aware of problems through the use of this story and can learn something of how to solve them. Attitudes of patience and courage could also be developed. There is not too much opportunity to teach theology through use of this story. The emphasis is strongly on moral values.

There is opportunity to teach worship if the application is carefully handled. The story contains good material through which to motivate action toward developing good character or toward accomplishing a project.

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1. Job 39:19, 26, 27 are possibilities.

b. A Suggested Procedure

Because of the character change in the Goldenrod, the story lends itself well to a motivation of the children toward finer character.

(1) Introduction

Have the following words on a bulletin board: How do God's children act? Under the sign tack the names of some of the fruits of the Spirit.¹ These can be written in terms understandable to the child if they will not be understood as found in the Bible.

(2) The Story

In a tiny grass plot between two roads - the one leading to a great city, and the other to an upland farm - a little weed began to grow when Spring was yet quite new. It was a hard place in which to grow. The soil was sandy, and often very dry. Large animals were driven along the road each day, stopping to crop the grass and tender weeds as they ambled along. Many trucks and whizzing cars came close to the little weed as she stood there day after day. Sometimes she was almost sucked under the wheels; sometimes she was almost broken by the heavy winds and storms. Occasionally a road-scraper - that giant enemy of the weed - came that way. Yes, indeed, it took a lot of courage to grow there in the fork of the road.

But this little weed had good courage. She wanted to be beautiful, so she pushed up and up toward the sun, and down and down to find food and moisture for her roots. She was soon straight and strong, and she seldom grumbled.

"I wonder what I am going to be and do," she said

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1. Galatians 5:22, 23.

to herself. "Of what use is a plant, anyway?" but no one answered her question.

One day a violet, which grew in a ditch not far away, woke to find a beautiful purple flower rising above her leaves.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried the weed. "Can I ever be as beautiful as that? "Wait," she called to a bee. "Tell me! Of what use is a flower?"

"To give honey to the bees," he buzzed, without stopping in his flight.

"But where is my honey?" pondered the weed.

Soon the daisy and the buttercup both burst into flower and were eagerly gathered by the school children to carry to their teacher.

"These will make our teacher happy," they cried as they filled their arms.

"Maybe a flower is supposed to make somebody happy," thought the weed, and she longed all the more for her own flower children to appear. As the summer months went by, she became very much puzzled.

"I am only green and useless," she said. "Of what use is it to try to grow straight and strong, if I am to be useless?" and she begged the insects that ran up and down her stem to try to find out why she had no beautiful flower children.

Then one happy day, when the sun shone warm, she felt her own flower buds beginning to grow and she knew that the time of her crowning was near. Would she be purple like the violet, or red like the clover, or white like the daisy? She could hardly wait to see, and when she found herself covered all along the stem with lovely yellow blossoms, her joy was unspeakable. She swayed in the breeze, holding out her beauty to all who passed by.

"See that beautiful goldenrod!" called a child in passing, and the weed thrilled as she thought,

"Now I am giving pleasure, too. Surely I am the loveliest flower that has bloomed by the roadside this whole summer through. I shall never, never lose my beauty as the rest have done. The bee may try to find my honey, and I want to stay here and make the roadside beautiful."

But, though the goldenrod did her best, one by one her flower children dropped to the ground to make other weed families, and, at last, she stood there in the fork of the road, stiff and brown, with not one thing to make her beautiful. The oaks were golden; the maples were red; the elms were yellow; and the

firs were green. All were lovely except herself.

"Why must I stay here alone?" she cried. "Why could I not fall to the ground with my children? I am lonely and useless. If only someone would pluck my stem and throw me away. I am old, and no one needs me." But there she had to stand and wait.

One night, when the wind blew and it was very cold, the goldenrod felt something lightly touch her stem; it came again and again. She seemed to hear a faint whisper, and then to feel something cuddling very close to her heart, as if to keep warm.

"What can it be?" she cried. "I wish it were day so that I could see who has come to me. Someone needs me, I am sure. I will open my brown buds and let my visitors enter." So she did. She could feel the little visitors snuggling closer and closer until she could hardly hold her head up with them there. Her house was full of them, and they were clinging to her stem and dead leaves. Eagerly the goldenrod watched for the dawn, and with the first red glow of the east, she opened her eyes. Then she uttered a glad cry of surprise.

In place of her bright yellow crown, she now wore a high crown of dazzling white. It sparkled in the light, and was far more beautiful than the yellow one had been. She was holding hundreds and hundreds of tiny snow fairies, every one as perfect as could be; every one glimmering white. They clung lovingly to their new mother, and the goldenrod was very happy.

"Mother," called a child who was riding by. "See the goldenrod you wouldn't let me stop to pick one day. It is covered with snow. Isn't it beautiful?"

"It is beautiful, child," replied the mother. "The goldenrod is showing us that one can be useful, even when stiff and old. The little weed is making the roadside beautiful, just as it was when we passed in the summer time. Its crown of white is there because it stood ready to help the snowflakes."

"I shall remember that," said the goldenrod with a glad heart. "I shall stand right here all winter, ready to help the snowflakes, and I shall no longer feel ugly, or lonely, or useless. I have beautiful work to do. Maybe some time, if I wait, I shall again have a crown of gold."

So the goldenrod held the snow fairies close through that cold winter's day as she stood there in all her new beauty in the fork of the roads, one of which led to the upland farm and the other to the heart of a great city.¹

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1. Margaret Eggleston: Forty Stories for the Church, School, and Home, pp. 132-135.

(3) Application

Ask the following questions as a basis for discussion, making a list of the answers given to the last one.

Which of the things that the Goldenrod did were good? How can we do as good a job as the Goldenrod? What are some things we can do that would be like the Goldenrod's actions?

The answers which the children give, especially to the last question, should incorporate some of the qualities listed on the bulletin board. As a closing thought, the passage from Galatians might be read from the Bible to the group.¹

4. "The Caterpillar's Journey"

There is great possibility in this story for teaching theology in an embrionic form. This is what has been attempted by the sentence of application at the end. Attitudes toward creation and toward death could be established or strengthened.

The story also contains great opportunity

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1. Galatians 5:22, 23.

for worship. The life which God ordained as recurring each year is a great wonder to a child. The way in which a butterfly comes from a crawly caterpillar is another source of wonder. Unless the spiritual application of new life because of Christ's resurrection is given the child, there is not much motivation toward Christian action in this story. There is, however, an opportunity to create interest in further observation of this life cycle of the caterpillar.

b. A Suggested Procedure

Because of the great sense of wonder which is evident in the story, this suggested procedure will be for a worship experience.

(1) Introduction

There is no introduction to this story. If it is used in a formal worship service, it will follow the order of service. If used informally, as will be suggested herein, it would be effectively presented without an introduction.

(2) The Story

Once upon a time a lazy brown caterpillar started out on a journey. You would not have thought it a very long journey - just across the road and under the fence to the roots of the big maple tree, where he thought he would spin himself a hammock and hide away from the cold winds and snow which he knew would soon come. But the caterpillar thought it a long way and full of dangers. Some careless boy or

girl might stop on him, or an automobile or wagon might run over him. He trembled when he thought of it, but one bright day he started out. He could see a tall white daisy on the other side of the road, and he thought he would stop and talk to her when he reached her.

It took him a long time to cross the road, and when he came to the place where he had seen the daisy there was no daisy there, only a tall brown stalk. "Where is she?" he asked a robin who was watching him with bright eyes from a bough above. The robin answered in a little song that said, "She is dead, she is dead." "Oh," said the caterpillar, "I wanted to talk to her." The robin went on singing in a soft little voice, and soon the caterpillar knew he was saying, "She shall live again, she shall live again." But the caterpillar did not understand, and he felt very sad as he went on.

Soon he began to look about him and think what he would say to the friendly green grass which had nodded to him on the other side of the road. When he looked, he saw there was no friendly green grass; everything was dry and hard. "Where is the friendly green grass?" he said to himself. "Where can it have gone?" And then came a little whisper in his ear which he knew was the wind. "It is dead, it is dead." The poor little caterpillar felt very lonesome, and he put his head close to the ground as he cried out, "Oh! the friendly green grass, I shall miss it so." Then he heard the wind whisper again very softly this time, "It shall live again, it shall live again." But the little brown caterpillar did not understand, and he felt very sad as he went on.

By and by he came to the roots of the big maple tree and as he looked up he saw the branches were all brown and bare and the lovely green leaves were all gone.

"Oh, dear," he said to himself, "the big maple tree is dead, too." But he heard again the soft voice of the wind as it said, "It shall live again, it shall live again." But the caterpillar did not understand, and he was sad.

Soon the hammock was all done, and the caterpillar was ready for his long nap. He did not hear the two children who came and looked at the hammock and said to each other, "The caterpillar is dead, too," but the wind heard them, and answered softly, though they did not understand, "He shall live again, he shall live again. Wait and see."

The cold wind and snow came, and stayed all winter, the birds were all away in the southland, and the wind no longer whispered in a soft voice, but whistled shrilly through the trees and shook the branches roughly.

By and by the sun grew warm and bright and the snow melted away, and Spring came to all the earth. The little seeds began to grow in the warm earth and soon everything was a lovely green again. Something began to happen in the silken hammock where the caterpillar went to sleep. Slowly it came open and something moved inside. The soft wind saw it, and said, "The caterpillar is alive again." And then out of the silken hammock came a queer thing, not at all like the brown caterpillar. The sun shone warmly upon it, and soon it was resting there on the trunk of the big maple tree, a great beautiful butterfly, with wings of black and gold.

The butterfly did not understand, and he said to the robin who looked down at him from the branch above, "I thought I was a caterpillar." But the robin answered as before in a little song, "Now you are living again."

Then Mr. Caterpillar Butterfly thought of his friends, the lovely white daisy, the friendly green grass, and the big maple tree, and he remembered the soft voices that said, "They shall live again." And he looked around him and there they were, every one of them, more beautiful than ever in the warm sunlight.

He did not understand, and nobody understands, but we know the soft voices were true when they said, "They shall live again, they shall live again."¹

(3) Application

Read a paraphrase of Romans one, verses nineteen and twenty, omitting "So they are without excuse." Ask the following questions for brief discussion.

What do these verses mean? How does the story we heard help to show us what God is like?

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1. Mary Kirkpatrick Berg: Primary Story Worship Programs, pp. 148-150.

Keep a list of these suggestions, and read them slowly to the group when it is completed. Let the children, separately or together, thank God for revealing Himself in each of the ways. A suggested pattern is as follows: Dear Father, thank you for showing us your _____. Original expression of these thoughts should be encouraged.

D. Summary

This chapter has first discussed the purposes for which nature stories may be used in the Christian nurture of the primary child. These purposes were seen to be concerned with increasing insights and with giving motivation. Insights may be increased in three areas, the problems of the children, theological concepts which are basic to Christianity, and attitudes toward Christianity and toward life. Motivation can be given for worship, Christian action, and for further study through the proper use of a nature story. These different areas were presented as a basis for the development of suggested procedures for the use of nature stories.

The suggested procedures given were built around four of the eight stories evaluated in the

second chapter. The aim of each use was selected on the basis of the type and development of each story. The four stories selected were the most suitable of those evaluated to giving scientific knowledge with high moral and spiritual values. Each procedure was given in terms of the possible uses of the story. A suitable purpose was selected from those possible, and the procedure built around this purpose was in terms of an introduction to the story, the story itself, and the application of the story.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The contribution of the nature story to the Christian nurture of the primary child was established through an investigation of the content and needs involved in his nurture. The content of Christian nurture was seen to include understandings of God, the Bible, relationships to God, the Church, and personal responsibilities.

Following the consideration of the content, needs of primary children to be met in Christian nurture were discussed. These needs are security, acceptance, guidance, concrete learning, activity, and responsibility.

The discovery of potential values in nature stories as a medium of giving the content and meeting the needs was undertaken. It was found that the story as a medium of Christian nurture is valuable because it is able to meet the needs of the primary child as established previously. Nature study was found valuable in Christian nurture because it is capable of giving understandings of the content involved. Because of the value of the story and the value of nature study, a nature story based on scientific facts was deemed of great value in giving content and meeting needs.

Having established the value of the nature story in Christian nurture, an examination of the field of nature stories was made. It was discovered that scientifically based stories for primary children were written about plants, animals, and the seasons. A few stories were found dealing with natural resources, and none were found dealing with astronomy. There were two controlling purposes of nature stories observed. Some stories obviously emphasized scientific knowledge. Others emphasized moral and spiritual values. The stories were evaluated on the basis of these two categories.

A standard of evaluation was then determined to evaluate the stories for use. This standard was based on action, plot development, reality of characters, appealing style, and valuable content.

On the basis of this standard, stories were selected for evaluation. Four stories with each of the two emphases were evaluated. It was found that stories emphasizing moral and spiritual values and at the same time having a basis in scientific fact were not easily found.

Four stories, two from each emphasis group, were selected from the eight evaluated and

their possible uses in a Christian education situation were discussed. Suggested procedures, involving an introduction to the story, the story itself, and an application to the story, were included.

The need for more scientifically based nature stories which involve an emphasis on moral and spiritual values was discovered. It was also found that high quality stories can be adapted for use in a Christian education situation whether or not their main emphasis is on moral and spiritual values.

A further area of investigation possible is the use of original nature stories in the Christian nurture of primary children.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

"JOHNNY MAPLE-LEAF"

This story was evaluated by standards set in Chapter II.¹ The text of the story follows:

One sleepy spring afternoon Johnny Maple-Leaf broke out of his tight brown bud. He took a deep breath and slowly stretched out. There were branches all around him with hundreds of little leaves popping out just like himself. Down below on the ground there were little Quaker ladies and Jack-in-the-pulpits bowing to one another in the breeze. Rabbits played leap-frog over an old tree stump. A field mouse scurried about looking for things to eat. Two squirrels gathered sticks to build a nest in the top of the tree. Bright vireos and orioles and robins flew back and forth in the sunlight. And a big old hoot owl sat in a hole in the tree and said whooooooo. As the sun went down it grew cooler, and Johnny Maple-Leaf curled up just a little. He decided this was the best place in the whole world for him to be, and he went to sleep.

Each day Johnny Maple-Leaf grew larger, and turned dark green. The sun was hot, but down below it was cool and damp mossy. And there was always something happening under the tree. Many flowers bloomed, wild ginger and May blossoms, trillium and wild geraniums. A dog came crashing through chasing a fox while a chipmunk scolded from a safe branch.

Birds came and built their nests in the branches all about Johnny Maple-Leaf. First there were little blue and brown speckled eggs. Then the eggs broke open, and the nests were filled with dozens of hungry baby birds all calling for dinner at once. The big birds were so busy feeding the baby birds they scarcely had time to sing. But early in the morning as the sun rose, and in the evening as the sun set, the birds stopped and sang. Then the whole forest was filled with music. Johnny Maple-Leaf decided this was the best place in the whole world for him to be.

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1. Ante, pp. 46-48.

Sometimes it rained and sometimes the wind blew. The trees tossed and swayed, and the birds and little animals hid in their warm nests. The rain beat down, and thunder rolled across the black sky. Johnny Maple-Leaf spun and twisted 'round and around. But now the rain didn't fall and the wind didn't blow, and he just dripped quietly. Night came and pale green moths flew in the soft moonlight as the forest went off to sleep.

The summer slowly passed and the nights grew cold. Bright patches of goldenrod and deep purple asters danced in the fields. The birds stopped singing, but the old owl came out of his hole and whistled whoooooooo. Great flocks of ducks and geese flew overhead in the sky, and a hunter tramped through the forest with his dog.

One morning Johnny Maple-Leaf found he had turned bright red. The leaves all around him had turned to red and yellow. One by one they floated down, till the ground below was bright with many-colored leaves. Gray squirrels scurried about looking for hickory nuts and acorns to store away for the winter. The wind tugged and pulled at the branches until all the leaves were gone, all except Johnny Maple-Leaf.

The bare branches whistled as the wind blew harder. He was cold and lonely. Where were the birds and the rabbits, the flowers and leaves that had lived with him all summer? Still the wind blew, and Johnny let go, sailing down, down, down... The other leaves seemed to make room for him, and he wiggled his way in. Here it was warm and he wasn't lonely. Gentle little snow flakes fell softly over him, and Johnny Maple-Leaf decided this was the best place in the whole world for him to be, and he went off to sleep.¹

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1. Alvin Tresselt: Johnny Maple-Leaf.

APPENDIX B

"MAKE WAY FOR THE DUCKLINGS"

The following story was evaluated in chapter two as a story emphasizing scientific knowledge.¹

Mr. and Mrs. Mallard were looking for a place to live. But every time Mr. Mallard saw what looked like a nice place, Mrs. Mallard said it was no good. There were sure to be foxes in the woods or turtles in the water, and she was not going to raise a family where there might be foxes or turtles. So they flew on and on. When they got to Boston, they felt too tired to fly any farther. There was a nice pond in the Public Garden, with a little island on it. "The very place to spend the night," quacked Mr. Mallard. So down they flapped.

Next morning they fished for their breakfast in the mud at the bottom of the pond. But they didn't find much. Just as they were getting ready to start on their way, a strange enormous bird came by. It was pushing a boat full of people and there was a man sitting on its back. "Good morning," quacked Mr. Mallard, being polite. The big bird was too proud to answer. But the people on the boat threw peanuts into the water so the Mallards followed them all around the pond and got another breakfast better than the first.

"I like this place," said Mrs. Mallard as they climbed out on the bank and waddled along. "Why don't we build a nest and raise our ducklings right in this pond? There are no foxes and no turtles, and the people feed us peanuts. What could be better?" "Good," said Mr. Mallard, delighted that at last Mrs. Mallard had found a place that suited her. But - "Look out!" squawked Mrs. Mallard, all of a dither. "You'll get run over!" And when she got her breath she added: "This is no place for babies, with all those horrid things rushing about. We'll have to look somewhere else."

So they flew over Beacon Hill and round the State

1. Ante, pp. 41-43.

House, but there was no place there. They looked in Louisburg Square, but there was no water to swim in. Then they flew over the Charles River. "This is better," quacked Mr. Mallard. "That island looks like a nice quiet place, and its only a little way from the Public Garden." "Yes," said Mrs. Mallard, remembering the peanuts. "That looks like just the right place to hatch ducklings."

So they chose a cozy spot among the bushes near the water and settled down to build their nest. And only just in time, for now they were beginning to molt. All their old wing feathers started to drop out, and they would not be able to fly again until the new ones grew in. But of course they could swim, and one day they swam over to the park on the river bank, and there they met a policeman called Michael. Michael fed them peanuts, and after that they called on Michael every day.

After Mrs. Mallard had laid eight eggs in the nest she couldn't go to visit Michael any more, because she had to sit on the eggs to keep them warm. She moved off the nest only to get a drink of water, or to have her lunch, or to count the eggs and make sure they were all there.

One day the ducklings hatched out. First came Jack, the Kack, and then Lack, then Mack and Nack and Ouack and Pack and Quack. Mr. and Mrs. Mallard were bursting with pride. It was a great responsibility taking care of so many ducklings, and it kept them busy.

One day Mr. Mallard decided he'd like to take a trip to see what the rest of the river was like, further on. So off he set. "I'll meet you in a week, in the Public Garden," he quacked over his shoulder. "Take good care of the ducklings."

"Don't you worry," said Mrs. Mallard. "I know all about bringing up children." And she did. She taught them how to swim and dive. She taught them to walk in a line, to come when they were called, and to keep at a safe distance from bikes and scooters and other things with wheels. When at last she felt perfectly satisfied with them, she said one morning: "Come along, children. Follow me."

Before you could wink an eyelash Jack, Kack, Lack, Mack, Nack, Ouack, Pack, and Quack fell in line, just

as they had been taught. Mrs. Mallard led the way into the water and they swam behind her to the opposite bank. There they waded ashore and waddled along till they came to the highway. Mrs. Mallard stepped out to cross the road. "Honk, honk!" went the horns on the speeding cars. "Qua-a-ack!" went Mrs. Mallard as she tumbled back again. "Quack! Quack! Quack! Quack!" went Jack, Kack, Lack, Mack, Nack, Ouack, Pack, and Quack, just as loud as their little quackers could quack. The cars kept right on speeding by and honking, and Mrs. Mallard and the ducklings kept right on quack-quack-quacking.

They made such a noise that Michael came running, waving his arms and blowing his whistle. He planted himself in the center of the road, raised one hand to stop the traffic, and then beckoned with the other, the way policemen do, for Mrs. Mallard to cross over.

As soon as Mrs. Mallard and the ducklings were safe on the other side and on their way down Mount Vernon Street, Michael rushed back to his police booth. He called Clancy at headquarters and said: "There's a family of ducks walkin' down the street!" Clancy said: "Family of what!" "Ducks!" yelled Michael. "Send a police car, quick!"

Meanwhile Mrs. Mallard had reached the Corner Book Shop and turned into Charles Street, with Jack, Kack, Lack, Mack, Nack, Ouack, Pack, and Quack all marching in line behind her. Everyone stared. An old lady from Beacon Hill said: "Isn't it amazing!" And the man who swept the streets said: "Well, now, ain't that nice!" And when Mrs. Mallard heard them she was so proud she tipped her nose in the air and walked along with an extra swing in her waddle.

When they came to the corner of Beacon Street there was the police car with four policemen that Clancy had sent from headquarters. The policemen held back the traffic so Mrs. Mallard and the ducklings could march across the street right on into the Public Garden. Inside the gate they all turned round to say thank you to the policemen. The policemen smiled and waved good-by.

When they reached the pond and swam across to the little island, there was Mr. Mallard waiting for them, just as he had promised. The ducklings like the new island so much that they decided to live there. All day long

they follow the swan boats and eat peanuts. And
when night falls, they swim to their little island
and go to sleep.¹

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1. Robert McCloskey: Make Way for the Ducklings.

APPENDIX C

"NOT LOST, BUT GONE BEFORE"

This story was evaluated as a story emphasizing moral and spiritual values in Chapter II.¹ The text of the story is as follows:

"Where do you suppose he went?" inquired Dragon-fly Grub as he watched the Frog swim to the top of the pond and suddenly disappear.

"I don't know and I don't care," replied a saucy Minnow whose whole object in life was getting enough to eat and having a good time.

The poor little Grub looked crest-fallen. He had spent a great deal of time pondering on this subject and he could not understand why his companions were not equally curious.

"Why don't you ask him when he comes back?" suggested the elderly Eel who had been listening to the conversation.

Now in the pond world the Frog is a very important and dignified personage and the little Grub had never been able to muster up enough courage to speak to him. But today, he determined to be very brave. He waited patiently until - splash - there was a great disturbance and the Frog came swimming back.

"Mr. Frog, please, Mr. Frog," called the Grub, "there is something I must ask you."

The Frog stopped swimming and turned his great goggle eyes in the direction of the Grub. "Indeed," said he, "Proceed!"

"Mr. Frog, what is there beyond the world?" stammered the Grub, so scared he could scarcely speak.

"What world do you mean?" inquired the Frog.

"This world, of course - our world," answered the Grub.

"This pond, you mean," sneered the Frog.

"I mean the place we live in, whatever you may choose to call it," cried the Grub. "I call it the world."

"Oh, do you?" rejoined the Frog. "Well, then, what do you call the place you don't live in, up there beyond your world, eh?"

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1. Ante, pp. 52-54.

"That's just what I'm asking you," retorted the Grub.

"Well, I'll tell you," said the Frog in his most pompous manner. "It's dry land."

"But what's dry land?"

The poor Frog was really nonplussed, for he did not know how to answer. So he said in a very condescending manner, "Of all the inquisitive creatures I ever met, you certainly are the most troublesome. Dry land is something like the mud at the bottom of this pond, only it isn't wet, because there isn't any water."

"No water!" interrupted the Grub. "Well, what is there then?"

"They call it air," said the Frog, "and if you've never been there, I can't make you understand what it's like. It's more like nothing than anything else."

The poor little Grub was more confused than ever and he looked so downcast that the Frog took pity on him and said, "You are a very silly fellow not to be satisfied with the experience of others. But as I rather admire your spirit, I will make you an offer. If you choose to take a seat on my back, I will carry you up to dry land and let you see for yourself what it's like."

The Grub climbed joyfully on the Frog's back and the Frog swam gently upward till he reached the bulrushes by the water's side.

"Hold fast," cried the Frog as he clambered up on the bank and got upon the grass.

"Now, then, here we are!" exclaimed he. "What do you think of dry land?"

But no one spoke in reply.

"Halloo! gone?" he continued; "that's just what I was afraid of. Perhaps he'll climb up by himself. I'll wait here and see."

But the Grub, meanwhile? The moment he reached the surface of the water a terrible sensation had come over him and he reeled off the Frog's back, panting and struggling for life. It was several seconds before he recovered himself.

"Horrible," cried he when he got his wits together. "Beyond this world there is nothing but death. Mr. Frog has deceived me."

He contented himself for the present therefore, with telling his friends what he had done, and where he had been. Now that he had really had a thrilling experience he found a great many eager to hear about it.

That evening, as the Grub was returning from a ramble among the water plants, he suddenly encountered his friend, the yellow Frog.

"You here!" cried the startled Grub, and was about to tell the Frog what he thought of him for deceiving him about the World Beyond when the Frog interrupted with, "Why didn't you sit fast as I told you?"

They would soon have had a serious quarrel if the Frog had not suggested that the Grub tell his story and show why he had been so clumsy as to fall off.

The story was soon told. "And now," said the Grub in conclusion, "as it is certain there is nothing beyond this world but death, all of your stories about going there were not true. You evidently don't care to say where you do go. I will, therefore, bid you a very good evening."

"You will do no such thing till you have listened as patiently to my story as I have to yours," exclaimed the Frog.

Then the Frog told how he had waited for the Grub and "At last," he continued, "Though I didn't see you, I saw a sight which will interest you more than any creature that lives. Up the stalk of one of those bulrushes, I saw a Grub just like you slowly climbing until he had left the water, and was clinging to the stem in the full glare of the sun. I must say I was surprised, knowing how fond you all are of the shady bottom of the pond. So I stayed and watched and then a very wonderful thing happened - a rent seemed to come in your friend's body and gradually after much squirming and struggling there came out from it a glorious Dragon-fly. Oh, little Grub, you who have never seen the sunshine and who have lived here in the ugly mud of this dark pond can not imagine what a beautiful creature a Dragon-fly is. It has wonderful, gauzy wings and its body gives out rays of glittering blue and green. I watched it fly in great circles and then I plunged below to tell you the splendid news."

"It is a wonderful story," said the Grub - "but" - and, then, he began to wonder whether it could really be true and whether perhaps it might some day happen to him.

Weeks passed and the Grub often thought of what the Frog had told him. Finally one day he felt sick and weak and had an overwhelming desire to go upwards. The other grubs gathered around him and made him promise that if indeed the wonderful change should happen to him, he would return and tell them so.

He promised and then slowly climbed up the bulrush stalk. A few of his friends and relatives went near the surface of the water hoping to see what happened but alas! their eyes were made to see only in the water, and as soon as the Grub reached the air, he was lost to their sight.

And then the wonderful change did take place. The Grub burst his shell and became a beautiful Dragon-fly. At last his hopes had come true.

Did he forget his promise to go back and tell his companions? No, indeed, he did not forget, but when he tried to descend into the water he had the same sensation as before, when a Grub, he had tried to come out into the air. But although he could not go back to them, he often flew close to the surface of the pond, longing to be able to tell his comrades of the great joy that was in store for them.¹

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1. Anna Pettit Broomell, Chairman: The Children's Story Garden, pp. 65-69.

APPENDIX D

"THE WASTED OAK LEAF"

The following story was evaluated in Chapter II as a nature story emphasizing moral and spiritual values.¹

"A pile of newspapers and this bag of rags to be gotten rid of!" remarked Barbara's mother as she dumped them down on the back porch, where Barbara was working. It was fall house-cleaning time, and Barbara was busily wiping with a damp cloth the glasses of the framed pictures from the walls. On the lawn outside, the October sun shone brightly, and a flock of blackbirds picked among the leaves scattered on the grass.

"Mother, can't I take the newspapers out in the garden and make a bonfire with them? I've finished cleaning the pictures," Barbara asked, adding longingly, "I'll be careful. I do so love to burn things."

Mother shook her head. "I don't want them burned. I give them to the Salvation Army man. He sells them to people whose business it is to make brand new paper out of the pulp of old newspapers. Rags are used in the same way. It would be very wasteful to burn them."

"Oh, dear, I wish I could this once! Lots of things are wasted all the time! Just look at all the dead leaves flying around, wasted." A little whirlwind danced past, flinging a few brown leaves at Barbara's feet. Her voice sounded very whiny, for, to tell the truth, she was tired of bending over the pictures and felt a trifle cross.

Mother looked at her little daughter in surprise. "Put the cloth away now, dear," she said. "Run out in the woods and see whether or not the leaves are wasted. Maybe you'll find they are made over just like the newspapers."

As Barbara waded through a pile of crackling leaves that the wind had drifted in by the porch steps, and raced across the grass into the woods, she felt quite cheerful again. The woods seemed

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1. Ante, pp. 54-56.

light and airy, with the branches half bare and every breeze shaking down a shower of gold and brown. She stood still to watch a chipmunk scamper across the path in front of her, his little brush of a tail curled over his back and his cheeks bulging with nuts. A large, leathery oak leaf, turning slowly round and round as it fell, almost touched Barbara's nose. It settled lightly at her feet with a rustle that sounded very much like a sigh. Barbara leaned over in time to hear a tiny voice say:

"You didn't quite hit it, did you!"

The thin, dry voice of the Oak Leaf answered: "No, that little girl was in the way. Oh, well - the West Wind will move me again."

Barbara jumped to one side, for she hated to be in the way. Then her curiosity overcame her, and she returned to the Oak Leaf.

"Where were you trying to go?" she asked.

"I hoped I would strike the clump of ferns you are almost walking on," it replied. "We have to look out for it - it's rather tender, and last winter suffered with the cold. All of us on my branch agreed we would be specially careful to cover it well this year."

Before Barbara could answer, a round little voice piped up from across the path:

"I don't want to interfere with Maidenhair Fern, but please don't forget me." Barbara saw a tuft of the queer-shaped, green leaves of the Hepatica, that grows among the rocks and blooms early in the spring, tremble slightly. "I thought the Beech would send me a covering, but so far not a beech leaf has come near me," the Hepatica went on.

Barbara was astonished, and was just about to ask a question, when a spray of yellow Goldenrod spoke up:

"You're all foolish to worry so soon about your winter blankets. You know perfectly well that the West Wind is going to mix the leaves all up anyway, and whirl them here and there. By the time the Freeze comes, you'll all be covered."

"Tell me," Barbara interrupted eagerly, "do the leaves off the trees really have to keep the plants protected from cold? I thought in the fall leaves just died and fell down to the ground."

"Just died and fell down!" - listen to the child!" scoffed the Oak Leaf. "Much she knows! There is no such thing as 'just dying' in the woods.

First, while we're on the branches, we make green food for the trees out of sunlight and rain; then we cover the ground to keep Jack Frost from running in and out in winter, splitting the earth and tearing the roots of the plants. Thick and soft we cover the ground." The Oak Leaf nestled closer into a hollow.

"And then what happens to you?" Barbara questioned.

The Goldenrod plume stirred, as a late bee settled on it. "Let her look and see for herself what becomes of the leaves," it advised.

"Look under me" - "And me" - "And me," rustled a dozen voices.

Barbara gathered up a double handful of the loosely scattered crisp oak leaves and laid them gently on the clump of Maidenhair Fern. Below where they had been, she found a mass of damp leaves closely packed together, some oak, some beech, some maple. She discovered when she tried to lift them that they stuck closely together and tore easily when separated. A little red salamander crawled hastily under a stone, and several flat beetles and worms with many legs scuttled away.

"Dig deeper," the Goldenrod directed, when Barbara hesitated. She found a stick and turned up the mat of wet leaves. Below it lay a mixture of black earth and what looked like skeletons of leaves, with only the veins and stems left. This layer was filled with tiny roots, and was damp and cool. Barbara thought it looked like the soil Mother always brought from the woods to fill the pots of her beautiful house ferns. She scratched deeper with her stick, turning up only fine, rich dirt, with no trace of leaves. Then the stick struck a stone and she could dig no further.

"Well," said the Oak Leaf from its new bed on the Maidenhair Fern, "do you see now what becomes of us? 'Just died,' indeed! That black earth is the finest plant food in the world - better than all the fertilizer your father buys in bags! Three years from now I'll be feeding the roots of trees and goldenrod and ferns, myself. Because I feed them, they will grow new leaves, which in turn will fall and rot and - Let me tell you, little girl, we don't waste even leaves, in the woods."

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