



## Against Idleness and Mischief

By Isaac Watts

How doth the little busy Bee  
Improve each shining Hour,  
And gather honey all the day  
From every opening Flower!

How skillfully she builds her Cell!  
How neat she spreads the Wax!  
And labours hard to store it well  
With the sweet Food she makes.

In Works of Labour or of Skill  
I would be busy too:  
For Satan finds some Mischief still  
For idle Hands to do.

In Books, or Work, or healthful Play  
Let my first Years be past,  
That I may give for every Day  
Some good Account at last.

Isaac Watts published the poem "Against Idleness and Mischief" in 1715 in the anthology *"Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children"* in London. This book featured a compilation of didactic and moral songs and poems for children to encourage character development. One of the most noted pieces in the entire book is the poem "Against Idleness and Mischief" which focuses on a honeybee's day exemplifying the honeybee's extremely well-known work ethic.

Many years after Watts' death, in 1865, Lewis Carroll parodied "Against Idleness and Mischief" – also known as "How Doth the Little Busy Bee" - in his story *Alice in Wonderland*. Carroll's poem is entitled "How Doth the Little Crocodile," and it appears in chapter 2 of his 1865 novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Alice recites it while attempting to recall "Against Idleness and Mischief" by Isaac Watts. It describes a crafty crocodile that lures fish into its mouth with a welcoming smile.

## How Doth the Little Crocodile

By Lewis Carroll

How doth the little crocodile  
Improve his shining tail,  
And pour the waters of the Nile  
On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,  
How neatly spreads his claws,  
And welcomes little fishes in  
With gently smiling jaws!

## *The Sluggard*

Isaac Watts

*from Divine Songs for Children*

'Tis the voice of the sluggard; I heard him complain,  
"You have wak'd me too soon, I must slumber again."  
As the door on its hinges, so he on his bed,  
Turns his sides and his shoulders and his heavy head.

"A little more sleep, and a little more slumber;"  
Thus he wastes half his days, and his hours without number,  
And when he gets up, he sits folding his hands,  
Or walks about sauntering, or trifling he stands.

I pass'd by his garden, and saw the wild brier,  
The thorn and the thistle grow broader and higher;  
The clothes that hang on him are turning to rags;  
And his money still wastes till he starves or he begs.

I made him a visit, still hoping to find  
That he took better care for improving his mind:  
He told me his dreams, talked of eating and drinking;  
But scarce reads his Bible, and never loves thinking.

Said I then to my heart, "Here's a lesson for me,"  
This man's but a picture of what I might be:  
But thanks to my friends for their care in my breeding,  
Who taught me betimes to love working and reading.

## *Against Quarreling and Fighting*

Isaac Watts

*from Divine Songs for Children*

LET dogs delight to bark and bite,  
For God hath made them so;  
Let bears and lions growl and fight,  
For 'tis their nature too.

But, children, you should never let  
Such angry passions rise;  
Your little hands were never made  
To tear each other's eyes.

Let love thro all your actions run,  
And all your words be mild;  
Live like the blessed Virgin's son,  
That sweet and lovely child.

His soul was gentle as a lamb;  
And as his stature grew,  
He grew in favour both with man,  
And God his father too.

Now, Lord of all, he reigns above,  
And from his heav'nly throne  
He sees what children dwell in love,  
And marks them for his own.

*The hymn “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”  
is taken from a poem by Isaac Watts:*

***Crucifixion to the World by  
the Cross of Christ***  
**Isaac Watts**

WHEN I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
Save in the death of Christ my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow, mingled down;  
Did e're such love and sorrow meet?  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His dying crimson like a robe  
Spreads o'er his body on the tree,  
Then am I dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of Nature mine,  
That were a present far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.