

A September Violet.

For days the peaks wore hoods of cloud,
The slopes were veiled in chilly rain;
We said: It is the Summer's shroud,
And with the brooks we moaned aloud,—
Will sunshine never come again?

At last the west wind brought us one
Serene, warm, cloudless, crystal day,
As though September, having blown
A blast of tempest, now had thrown
A gauntlet to the favoured May.

Backward to Spring our fancies flew,
And, careless of the course of Time,
The bloomy days began anew,
Then, as a happy dream comes true,
Or as a poet finds his rhyme—

Half wondered at, half unbeliev'd—
I found thee, friendliest of the flowers!
Then Summer's joys came back, green-leaved,
And its doomed dead, awhile reprieved,
First learned how truly they were ours.

Dear violet! Did the Autumn bring
Thou vernal dreams, till thou, like me,
Didst climb to thy imagining?
Or was it that the thoughtful Spring
Did come again, in search of thee?
—Robert Underwood Johnson.

Free.

"WHAT'S that you are holding in your mouth, Harry?"

"Nothing but a piece of rattan, Uncle Ben; but it looks almost like a cigarette, doesn't it? It holds fire well, you see."

"Yes, I see."

"When I'm a man, though, I'm going to smoke real cigarettes and cigars. Father won't let me now, but when I'm a man I shall be free to do as I please. I've promised my mother not to smoke while I'm a boy."

"I think you had better keep that promise when you are past being a boy."

"No." Harry strutted up and down, puffing out the smoke, and then holding his rattan between his first and second fingers, in what he considered a very stylish manner. "I'm not going to make myself a slave to any such promise then. I'm going to be a free man. I don't mean, you know," he went on with a dignified air, "that I'm going to smoke too much, as some men do, but I'm going to take a smoke when I want it. Any man who amounts to anything knows how far he ought to go;" and Harry flung away his imitation cigarette with an air of being fully able, with his thirteen years of experience, to judge of what he or any other man ought to do.

"I have heard some such talk as that before this morning," said Uncle Ben; "and as it was from a man, and he seemed to think very much as you do, I suppose his opinions ought to give strength to yours."

"Who was it, uncle?"

"Sam Waite, who used to be foreman in the factory. I saw him down at the grocery. He looks shabby and forlorn, and seems to be having a hard time. He bought a paper of tobacco, looked at a bit of fruit which he said he would like to take up to his sick wife if he could afford it, and then

began ranting against Mr. Barton, the owner of the factory.

"Turned me out of my situation six weeks ago," he said, "where I have served him faithfully and well, because I wouldn't give up tobacco."

"Well," said a man who was standing near, "you know he had good reasons for it. Two or three accidents happened from men smoking on the sly, and he couldn't forbid it to one without forbidding it to all."

"I don't care," said Waite angrily. "I'm not going to be any man's slave; I shall do as I please."

"But you have had a good place with Barton for years," said another; "hadn't you better give up for the sake of your family?"

"No," growled Waite. "If Barton chooses to turn me off, the fault is his, not mine. This is a free country, and I'm going to be a free man. It's a piece of tyranny to ask a man to give up his tobacco; I'd rather give up my food."

"It looked to me, Harry," went on Uncle Ben, "very much as if the slavery was the other way. A man becomes a slave to the ugly habit, for he is miserable unless he can have the stuff at certain times. It tyrannizes over his purse, over his well-doing, and over the comfort of his family, as you have seen in Waite's case. And look here!"—he took hold of the boy's chin and raised the bright face so that he could look into it—"your mouth is clean and your breath sweet and your teeth white, just as the good Lord made them; when I come again to visit you in a few years shall I see them stained and filthy? Your grasp is firm and strong now"—he took his hand—"but a few years later shall I find your hand beginning to tremble and your eye losing its clearness? And if I say, 'Give it up, my boy,' you will be likely to answer, 'I am so accustomed to it that I cannot;' that is what most of them say. Is that your idea of freedom?"

"There's Johnnie Waite," cried Harry, loosening his hand and running towards the gate. "Hello, Johnnie! Are you going with the rest of the boys on the excursion to-morrow?"

The little boy turned a very sorrowful face as he answered, "No; my father is out of work, and I can't go."

Harry walked thoughtfully back to his uncle. "I believe you are about right, Uncle Ben," he said. "There goes my rattan and I'll send the tobacco after it when my time comes."

"I hope you will have the resolution to keep yourself free, Harry. It would be much better for Waite if he felt free to take care of his poor family instead of being enslaved by a habit which you see stands in the way of his duty to them. They have to suffer because of his self-indulgence. There are very few ways in which we can do wrong without bringing unmerited sufferings upon others."—*Sydney Dayre.*

Praying by Machinery.

NINE out of every ten Mongols you meet will have rosaries in their hands, and be rapidly repeating prayers. The efficacy depends not on the meaning, but on the repetition of the prayer. It is not properly speaking, praying at all, but "repeating charms." But mouth-repetition is a slow process, and to expedite matters a praying-wheel has been invented, into which are put a large number of printed prayers; the wheel is turned round, and, by this simple act, all the prayers contained in the machine are supposed to be repeated. This is a wonderful acceleration. The wheel is fitted on to a handle, which a man can easily hold as he walks about; and thus it comes that men may be met with examining their cattle, or going from one place to another, whirling their prayer-wheels all the time. In some tents there is a stand, in which is placed a large wheel, bearing about the same relation to the hand-wheel as a family Bible bears to a pocket Bible. A thong is fixed to a crank, the inmates take their turn in pulling it. If a wrongly-timed pull sends the cylinder turning backwards, according to the Mongol idea, it makes a sin in place of merit. In one house I saw a wheel placed over the fire, and driven by the upward current of hot air, after the manner of a roasting-jack. A common form of the prayer-wheel is a windmill set on a lofty pole high above the tent. When a strong north-west gale springs up the machine goes whirring round; and the poor Mongol, as he shudders at the tempest, in his tent below, is comforted, so far at least, by the thought that the blast is performing a lot of prayers for him. Sitting in a tent once, I heard behind me a curious clicking noise, and, looking round, found a praying-wheel going by machinery. The master of the house, being a mechanical genius, had bought an old clock in a Chinese town, taken out and rearranged the spring and wheels, and made them drive a cylinder filled with prayers. When he got up in the morning he simply took the key, wound up the clockwork, and then the thing made prayers for the whole establishment.

He that is too poor to buy a hand-wheel or a windmill gets a prayer flag—a piece of common Chinese cotton cloth printed over with Tibetan characters—fastens it to a pole, and sets it up near his tent, believing that every time it flutters in the wind all the prayers on it are repeated. Not only at tents, but over stone cairns on hill-tops, these flags abound. The cloth is coarse, the printing rude, wind and rain soon make havoc of its appearance; but there it is, and there it flutters, bleached and ragged, long after the weather has removed every trace of letters. Large temples have sometimes large praying wheels, broad and high, filled with sacred books, shrines, and idols. Pilgrims come

from long distances, assemble round the wheel, lay hold of its handles, and with "a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether," by their united strength drag the creaking fabric round, and believe that each one who has helped has acquired as much merit as if he had read all the books, repeated all the charms, and worshipped at all the shrines contained in the wheel. The thing would be laughable were it not too serious a matter by far for laughter. The worshippers really believe that this charm-repeating and wheel-turning and flag-fluttering makes merit which cancels sin. They live in this belief, and they die with this lie in their right hand. This idea, too, is the cause of much sin. Believing, as he does, that this merit cancels sin, a Mongol aims, not at leaving sin and being holy, but at providing for plenty of merit to counterbalance his sin, and thinks that the more religious he is he can afford to sin the more, just as the man who has most money can afford to spend the most.

The All-Giver.

When the fields are sweet with clover;
When the robin sings with glee;
When the skies are bright and cloudless,
and this world is fair to see,
Dost thou thank him
Who has made all things for thee?

When the goldenrod is nodding
By the wayside, slim and tall;
When the purple asters blossom
All along the garden-wall,
Dost thou heed them?
Dost thou see his hand in all?

Every modest little blossom,
Every bird upon the tree,
Tells his love for all his children,
Tells his love for you and me;
Dost thou love him
Who has shown such love for thee?

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