

THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT.

In a napkin smooth and white,
Hidden from all mortal sight,
My one talent lies to-night.

Mine to hoard, mine to use,
Mine to keep, or mine to lose,
May I not do what I choose?

Ah! the gift was only lent,
With the Giver's known intent
That it should be wisely spent.

And I know he will demand
Every farthing at my hand,
When I in his presence stand.

What will be my grief and shame
When I hear my lumbable name,
And can not repay his claim!

One poor talent—nothing more!
All the years that have gone o'er
Have not added to the store.

Some will double what they hold,
Others add to it ten-fold,
And pay back the shining gold.

Would that I had toiled like them!
All my sloth I now condemn:
Guilty fears my soul o'erwhelm.

Lord, O teach me what to do,
Make me faithful, make me true,
And the sacred trust renew!

Help me, ere too late it be,
Something yet to do for thee—
Thou who hast done all for me!

—Kate B. W. Barnes.

THE TOBACCO HABIT.

BY THE HON. NEAL DOW.

The tobacco habit has become an evil so great in many ways that serious efforts ought to be made to check, if not to eradicate it from good society. I do not think there is in the world any custom or habit more absurd than this or with less reason to be. There is none which shows its victims to be more the abject slaves of foolish example than this.

A great many years ago there was cast away at Nootka Sound, on the north-west coast of America, an American ship, of which an account was published under the title of "Jewett's Narrative." At that time all that region was an unknown land. Among the curious customs of the Nootka Sound savages, Jewett says, was that of wearing a stick, about eight or ten inches long, thrust horizontally through the gristle of the nose, projecting about four or five inches on each side. The sailors called it the "spritsail yard," and sometimes, accidentally, would hit one end of it or the other, almost tearing it away from its insertion. The natives of some regions have in the under lip a long horizontal slit, into which is inserted a broad piece of wood, which extends the lip and makes a sort of shelf of it. The Negroes of some African tribes have the two upper front teeth extracted. Of some other tribes the front teeth are filed exactly to resemble saw-teeth. Some savages are tattooed, and others have the head flattened by compression in infancy between two pieces of board. Not one of these customs is more absurd and without reason than the tobacco habit.

It is far more absurd than the alcohol habit. I do not say more injurious to society or to the victim, but more absurd. The victims of the latter are originally, in most cases, drawn into the habit by the example and influence of others, which they cannot resist. But the moderate indulgence in alcoholics is pleasant to the taste and agreeable in its effects from the very first glass, so that it is easy for a weak or thoughtless youth, without experience or opportunity for observation, to be drawn on, step by step, until he finds retreat to be so difficult as to be practically almost impossible.

But it is not so with the tobacco habit. At the very first the use of tobacco is a dreadful disgust. It is even worse than this. It inflicts upon its future victim a nausea, a retching, a vomiting, a sickness, to which the horrors of sea-sickness are not to be compared. There is the blue upper lip, the livid, ghastly hue of the face, the eye like that of a dead fish, the limbs limp and powerless, the muscles pulpy and flaccid, a violent and painful vomiting, every symp-

tom of death, which it would soon be in reality if the unutterable horror of the suffering did not compel the poor fool to postpone the attempt to become a man in that way. Here endeth the first lesson. The silly youth resolves always that he will never touch tobacco again, and holds to his purpose until he has entirely recovered from the effects of the first lesson. Then he sees other youngsters like himself who have succeeded in conquering their disgust at tobacco. They have done it. Why not he? They laugh at him as white-livered; they assure him that the worst of it will be over in a few days, or, at most in a few weeks. They strut through the streets or in other public places so grandly; they have such a manly way with them; there is such a grace in their style of holding the cigar between finger and thumb, and striking off the ashes with the little finger. When they put the cigar into their mouths again, it is with such a flourish, and their heads are thrown back, a little on one side, with so much self-consciousness, their eyes at the same moment cast slyly right and left, to see who observes and admires them! Ah! this is quite irresistible, and our poor, foolish youngster goes off behind the barn, or into some other out-of-the-way place, and takes the second lesson. All this is carefully concealed from the parents, so the tobacco-pupil must go to bed before supper, under pretence of headache. Pretence! It is no sham. He has a racking and splitting headache, with the return of dreadful nausea. In a few weeks, more or less, our youngster has learned to smoke or chew, as the case may be.

Now, in doing this, he has expended far more resolution and right down hard work than would be necessary to acquire a fair knowledge of geometry, French, German, or Italian. But what has he acquired, in fact? Any good? None whatever. Any means of good? None. Any pleasure or means of gratification of any kind? None whatever. Then what has he really acquired? The tobacco habit. Is that all of it? Yes, that is absolutely the whole of it. But, surely, there must be some result to it, else we should not see people smoking or chewing through life? Yes, there is a result to it. What is it? This and only this, that the victim of the tobacco habit has acquired an absolute need, which he cannot forego. He is in an agony if by any mischance he loses his tobacco. The need of it to him is as imperative as that of food or drink to others. He suffers more cut off from tobacco than if he were cut off from food or drink. On an expedition of any kind, to lay in a store of tobacco is an absolute necessity to him, as a store of food and drink is to others. But then, surely, he derives a great pleasure from tobacco? No. There is no pleasure in it whatever. The smoking or chewing does this to him and only this: it prevents the suffering he would experience without it, or he is relieved from the suffering if it has already set in.

A gentleman told me this story, which exactly illustrates the condition of the victim of the tobacco habit. He was subject to headache. In a small spot over the right eye the pain was excruciating, but it disappeared instantly when his wife laid her hand upon it. I was in his house one day, when he came in and threw himself down in a rocking-chair, in an agony of pain, with his feet upon a stool. His wife ran to him and put her hand upon the spot. Instantly he exclaimed: "How delicious that is. The dreadful pain is all gone and I am so comfortable."

"But how long must your wife's hand remain there to drive off the headache?" I asked.

"Perhaps fifteen, twenty, thirty minutes," he said.

Now that describes exactly the condition of the tobacco victim. Without his smoke or chew he is in an agony of pain; but with his tobacco there is no pain, or the pain, if any, passes away. Here are two men sitting from the dinner-table—one with a cigar, the other with none. Why is this? One has acquired the tobacco habit; the other has not. One would be most miserable without his cigar, in spite of the good dinner; the other is perfectly comfortable with the dinner, without a cigar. The one would take the cigar, without the dinner, if he could not have both, because he would suffer far more from want of the tobacco than from want of food. The other would not accept a shipload of the best cigars in the world for his own use. The one would

give his last dime for a cigar, and go without food, if he had fasted for a day; the other would sooner put into his mouth a pebble from the roadside than a cigar.

But, surely, there must be some pleasure, some real gratification in the use of tobacco, else sensible men would not addict themselves to so nasty a habit? No; there is absolutely no pleasure, no gratification whatever in the use of tobacco, except that which results from preventing or relieving the great suffering that would come from the want of it. Here we are on a steamer, on a fine summer's day, upon an excursion up-river, across the lake, or among the islands, a large company of gentlemen and ladies. We see some gentlemen (!) around the deck smoking. Why do they do this? Because they would be most uncomfortable or, in fact, in great suffering without it. They cannot endure abstinence from tobacco until the return home. They are tobacco slaves, without knowing it.

Some of them are around among the ladies and other non-smokers, with their disgusting smell. Why is this?

These are men whose moral sense is dulled, if not deadened, by the tobacco habit. They do not even consider, they do not think of it, that these people have a right to the pure, fresh air, so important to their comfort and health, and they poison it with tobacco-smoke. The pure air is as much their right as is the purse in their pocket, and the forcibly taking it away by the tobacco smoke is as much stealing in the moral sense as picking the pocket; but these tobacco victims do not think of it or do not heed. The eminent English Dr. B. W. Richardson says that lying is a symptom of the alcoholic habit—an utter disregard of truth, a perfect indifference to it. In the same way and to the same degree the tobacco habit so deadens the moral sense that its victim will not hesitate to inflict any amount of discomfort upon others in gratifying his sensual appetite. He does not even think of the comfort or rights of others or he has become indifferent to them.

Why should not the Sabbath-schools be increased in value and importance to the young by utilizing them in teaching, at proper times and in a proper way, the great evils in many ways coming, inevitably from the tobacco habit, while no good whatever results from it?—*N. Y. Independent.*

GOING ONE WAY AND BACKING ANOTHER.

There is an old story told of a man who stole a drove of oxen, and to escape discovery, he pulled them into a cave by the tails, so that their tracks should seem to lead the other way. But the lowing of the cattle betrayed the thief, and he met the punishment he so well merited.

Children sometimes think they are deceiving others by going one way and facing another—getting into all sorts of mischief or wrong-doing and yet contriving to make their tracks look all right to their parents and teachers. Let me tell you of some of these boys and girls, and you will see how easy it is to get into wrong courses, and how even children need to "watch and pray" lest they also be tempted.

Eddie Holt stayed out playing the other evening an hour after his usual supper-time, and then accounted for his tardy appearance at table by saying he had been walking with his teacher in the fields collecting botanical specimens. This was true, so far as it went; but he should have added that, after his return from the walk with his teacher, he called to see two of his schoolmates and had been with them flying kite from five to seven o'clock, though he knew he ought to be home by six. His father's reply, "I am glad you were so well employed, my son," sent a blush of shame to Eddie's face. Had he told the whole truth, he would probably have received from his parents a just reproof for his tardiness, but he would have had the consciousness of acting honorably in confessing his fault, instead of a sense of inward shame in accepting praise where he well knew he had merited only blame. Added to this, Eddie had a constant fear that some time his deception might be found out, and the dread of discovery robbed him of far more enjoyment than the two hours stolen pleasure had given him. Was it not a hard bargain, this going one way and backing another.

Minnie Weston received the first prize for composition in her class, greatly to the

delight of her parents and brothers, while her teacher publicly congratulated her on the progress she had made in this branch of study. But none of them knew that Minnie's cousin Walter, who lived in the country, had taken her prize essay home with him on his last visit, and had so revised and improved her work that when Minnie came to copy the composition she could hardly recognize its original features. She had not asked him to do this, but she had told him in very anxious she was to win the prize, and from the depths of her heart she had thanked him for helping her to do so. But it was not honestly won; and to secure this small triumph over her classmates, Minnie lost the approval of her own conscience, and, more than all, had sinned against Him who looks into the heart and sees every secret thought of evil-doing, though to the outward appearance all may be fair and good. Did the gain equal the loss?

A "Christmas gift" from the Sunday-school to the pastor was to be purchased by the voluntary donations of the children, the amount given by each to be determined by himself or his parents. Carrie Elton asked her mother's permission to give the half-dollar she had reserved for her own pocket-money during the holidays.

"Certainly, my dear, you can do so if you wish," said Mrs. Elton, "but I should think that half that amount would be a liberal gift from my little girl, while she might quite lawfully spend the other half for herself. But you can do just as you please about it, and I would prefer that you decide it for yourself."

"Then, mamma, I will give the whole half-dollar," said Carrie eagerly. "I do want to be liberal—as liberal as any in our class and some, I know, are going to give fifty cents."

Carrie fully intended to do as she said, and started out the Saturday before Christmas to carry her gift to the lady who had charge of the fund. As she handed it, the lady said, "You know, dear, this is to be the children's own gift. Is this your own spending money, or money given you by your parents just for this purpose?"

"It is my own, ma'am," said Carrie, a little proudly.

"Then what a generous little girl you are," said the lady. "I should think half this sum would be enough for a little girl like you to give. Shall I give you a quarter in change?" she continued, as she held out the quarter.

Carrie took it, feeling very glad that she might keep part of her money for herself, and still be thought so generous. But did she forget that to be thought generous by man she was acting falsely and dishonestly in the sight of God. True, the money was her own, and she had permission to do as she pleased with it; but she did not tell her mother that she had only given a quarter, for she wanted to be thought more generous than she really was, and so she was taking as her due the praise that was not really hers.

All these children were going one way and facing another, and from just the same motive of deception as was the man who pulled the stolen oxen into the cave backwards instead of forwards.—*Fannie Roper Feudge in Child's Paper.*

ALMOST the last effort made by the late Thomas Bywater, Smithies, editor of the *British Workman* was to try and persuade a father to keep his boy from taking a situation where Sabbath work was expected to be done. "Go home and, with your wife, pray about it; you do not know what a different future your boy may have if, instead of beginning with Sabbath work, he takes a situation where he may have his Sabbath to himself," were the words he used in parting with the parent. We are very thankful to add that the boy has not taken it, and, we hope, will never be led into a step so sad. May God bless the lad, and be his Guide through life!—*British Workman.*

A NOVEL and successful way of raising money has been adopted in a Nebraska Sunday-school. They have adopted a missionary box, and whenever a member of the school has a birthday they put into the box on Sunday as many cents as the scholar is years old; and the money was to be used as a Christmas gift to the American Sunday-School Union. As there was delay in sending the money, it was changed into a "New Year's gift," and amounted to four dollars.—*S. S. World.*