

BOYS AND GIRLS

Only One Mother.

You have only one mother, my boy,
Whose heart you can gladden with joy,
Or cause it to ache
Till ready to break
So cherish that mother, my boy.

You have only one mother, who will
Stand by you through good and through ill,
And love you, although
The world is your foe:
So care for that love ever still.

You have only one mother to pray
That in the good path you may stay,
Who for you won't spare
Self-sacrifice rare;
So honor that mother alway.

You have only one mother to make
A home ever sweet for your sake,
Who toils day and night
For you with delight;
To help her all pains ever take.

You have only one mother—just one;
Remember that always, my son.
None can or will do
What she has for you;
What have you for her ever done?
—Exchange.

Tom's Father.

'Can't afford it, Tom; it's no use you bothering me about books, boots or new clothes; I tell you I can't afford it, times are very hard just now.'

'But I'm ashamed to go to school, father, in my old boots, my toes are peeping out of one of them; I am sure the boys will be laughing at me.'

'Well, Tom, perhaps I'll buy a second-hand pair on Saturday night; anyhow, it's no use you expecting me to buy you a new suit; it's very hard to make a little money supply all the wants of a family.'

Tom turned away, for he didn't want his father to see the tears that were beginning to flow down his cheeks. His little heart was breaking; he could not endure the thought that he should go to school not only shabby, but in rags, for his mother had mended, darned and patched his clothes until it was quite impossible to mend them any more. As for his boots neither his mother nor the bootmaker could do anything with them, they were past repair, the soles were worn quite thin, and, as Tom said, one of them was actually showing his foot. How he wished he was old enough to go out to work and earn his own living, then he would buy his own boots and be independent of everyone.

Tom went into the kitchen to his mother for consolation.

'Mother,' he said, 'father can't afford to buy me any new clothes, and he talks of buying me a second-hand pair of boots; I wish you would talk to him about it.'

'Never mind, Tom. I don't know how it is, we seem to be poorer than ever; we don't seem to be a bit better off now than your father has got his new place, and earns good wages.'

'All I can say it's jolly hard; the spring-time is here, and I shall have to leave off my great coat, and then my old patched jacket will be seen. I wish I was a man, that I do.'

Tom Fletcher was only ten years of age, but he had the spirit of a boy much older; he seemed to understand what was going on all around him much more than ordinary boys; he

argued and talked with genuine good sense, and he thought that it was not entirely on account of the poverty of his parents that he was deprived of his proper clothing.

Mr. Fletcher was an industrious, intelligent, sober workman. A punctual and regular attendance at his duties had gained him a promotion, but for all this he never had a penny in his pocket to spare; little luxuries that other workmen easily obtained he could never obtain. As for taking a fortnight's holiday in the summer, that was quite out of the question, for in the summer especially the funds were always low, and, indeed, at nearly all times his wages were half spent before he obtained them.

Both husband and wife were moderate drinkers of intoxicating drinks—they drank their glass of beer or ale at meals, only occasionally indulging in a little spirits or wine. Mr. Fletcher, however, felt that he was in duty bound to return the glasses of liquor to which some of his fellow workmen treated him. It never once occurred to them that their moderate allowance of intoxicating drink was really the cause of their poverty. If ever this was hinted to them they spurned the idea with indignation, saying they were not drunkards, and would not allow any one to say so.

Tom had been trained by his parents to abstain. They thought it was an excellent habit for children; they encouraged his attendance at the Band of Hope, but they would have none of his 'teetotal nonsense' at home; he was to drink his jug of water at dinner in quietness, and say nothing about his parents' beer.

It so happened that the very next night to the one on which the conversation about the boots had taken place was Tom's Band of Hope night, and, as usual, he was in his place in good time. A gentleman gave an address such as most of the children could understand and appreciate.

It was all about money, how to get it, and how best to spend it, and as most of the audience had very little of the precious metal, they were deeply interested in the remarks of the speaker, specially when he came to tell them how they might save money when they became men and women. 'A man,' he said, 'was poor if he had plenty of money and wasted it; he was rich if he had little money and laid it out properly to supply his wants.' Then he told them how much money was spent in intoxicating drinks; he compared this with the money spent in bread, meat, milk, house rent, etc.; and then he went on to show them that many persons who were not drunkards, wasted in the end a very large sum of money, which money, if saved, would provide education and clothes for their children, or might be put to one side for a time of sickness or old age.

Tom became deeply interested when the speaker wrote on the blackboard how much a family of moderate drinkers spent in a year in intoxicating drinks, and how much this would amount to if the money had been kept in a good bank. Tom copied the figures in his note-book, and determined he would try in some way to let his father understand all about them.

As Tom walked home he was puzzled as to the manner in which he should let his father see the figures he had copied; he was certain if he spoke to his father he would be told to mind his own business, and, besides, Mr. James, the secretary of the Band of Hope, said that children ought to be respectful to their parents, and never be rude to them about drinking.

At last the thought occurred to him to write

something on his slate that would attract his father's attention, and then probably he would have an opportunity of speaking to him. So when Tom reached home he wrote in large letters on one side of his slate the following words:

A Pint of Water
Costs Nothing,
and does Good.

And then on the other side—

A Pint of Beer
Costs Four Cents
and does Harm.

With many fears Tom placed the slate where his father would be sure to see it; and when he said his evening prayers he did not forget to ask God to bless his little effort.

Mr. Fletcher came home rather late that evening; Tom, of course, was fast asleep. Mr. Fletcher picked up his slate, curious to see what sort of home lessons his boy was doing; how great was his astonishment when he read Tom's little sermon. 'What's this?' he cried, "'a pint of water costs nothing"—that's true, as far as it goes; certainly, you can get it for nothing—"and does good;" yes, that's true also; but it's poor stuff to work upon; a drop of beer beats all your water.'

"A pint of beer costs four cents,"—yes, I know that—"and does harm." No, no, Tom, you are wrong; though I don't want you to get into the habit of drinking. Yet I cannot believe that beer does harm; it gives strength and power to work. I must ask Tom about this to-morrow; this is a strange sort of home lesson.'

Tom came downstairs the next morning half afraid to meet his father, for he knew that he could be very angry at times; but he walked boldly into the kitchen, and sat down at the table.

'Good morning, father,' he said, as Mr. Fletcher walked into the room. He looked at Tom in a peculiar manner, and, pretending to be angry, he said in a harsh tone, 'I say, Tom, you seem to have very extraordinary kind of home lessons. I must get you another school; what's all this on the slate about water and beer?'

Tom began to shiver, for being a nervous boy, he very soon got excited. Somehow, his tongue was in a kind of knot, and when he attempted to answer he began to stammer.

'Well, f-a-t-h-e-r, it's what they t-o-l-d us at the B-a-n-d of H-o-p-e.'

'Nonsense, boy; don't talk to me like that; let me know all about it.'

Poor Tom got still more alarmed, his face turned white, his heart beat rapidly, and he only stammered the more.

'B-e-e-r's d-e-a-r, f-a-t-h-e-r; w-a-t-e-r's c-h-e-a-p.' That's all he could say.

Mr. Fletcher cooled down, and told his son that he would have a quarter of an hour to spare after breakfast and then Tom could tell him all about it.

All the time Tom was eating his bread and butter, and drinking his mug of coffee, he was thinking of what he should say, and when he had gained confidence he spoke out like a little man, and did credit to his society.

This is what he said: 'It's just this, father: a gentleman told us at our Band of Hope that if our parents saved their beer money they would be better off, and have money in the bank.'

'That's true, Tom, if a man drinks too much; but when only a little is taken, like your mother and me, there is no harm, and we do not spend much.'