

The Moan of the Attic.

HAVE pity upon us, O, tender God!
When shrivel and faint; we pine away
Under the glare that fierce and broad
Beats with its merciless, scorching ray
Into our throbbing brains, that dries
All power to weep from our patching eyes,
And leaves us no breath wherewith to pray;
Ah, pity us, patient God!

Men pity us not; they go their ways,
Fanned by the breezes of sea and shore;
Steeping in mountain shades their days,
Making life wholesome to its core:
While we—we toil in our want and woe,
The tiles above, and the bricks below,
Our children agasp on the grimy floor,
Instead of the grassy ways.

We think with a craze of the years gone by,
Or ever we trod a city street,
How childishly happy we used to be
On the edge of the clover, purple-sweet:
When the heats of the summer noons were strong,
How we sat by the brook as it slid along,
And dabbled our bare and dusty feet,
While the bees went buzzing by.

And it maddens us: for our children moan,
No hope in their eyes: could we but see
A field of clover before it's mown,
Or wallow in grass beneath some tree,
And freshen our feet in the clean, wet sand,
And gurgle the water through our hand,
And hear the hum of the humble-bee,
Or sit on a mossy stone,

"'Twould seem like heaven"—and when we tell,
For quieting of their gannt despair,
How their playmates who've died, have gone to dwell
Mid flowers and fruits and crystal air
Do you wonder then, as we hear them say,
As they often do, in a frenzied way,
"Dear God! if he only would take us there!"
Do you wonder our bosoms swell?

Ah, pitying Christ! Thou once wert a child,
And felt the scorplings of Egypt's sun,
And saw how thy mother's face so mild,
Grew sad with ruth for her holy one
Be merciful!—move the hearts of men
To care that our children breathe again
The air thy bounty demes to none—
Thou who wert a human child!

The world is so wide, so green, so broad,
And none of it theirs, close-pent beneath
These crushing roofs shall the cool, fresh sod
Be strange to their feet till kindly death
Covers them under it? Must they sigh
For the sweet, pure air until they die,
Tasting it first with heaven's first breath?
Have pity, O tender God!

THE SMALL BOYS' FIRST SMOKE.

BY REV. ALFRED TAYLOR.

I NEVER shall forget the sight of that boy. Somehow or other he had picked up the idea that it was a manly thing to smoke.

The older boys thought it was manly. They smoked in the street as they came to school and as they went home. The small boy felt very small as he saw them doing such a manly thing, and reflected that he had never learned how to do it. Somebody had told him that the first smoke would make him dreadfully sick. He asked the bigger boys about this, and they told him that it was even so. But they advised him to try it, even if it did make him sick for a day or two—for they had all been sick with it, and had got well again.

The idea of being sick was not a pleasant one to the small boy, but he thought he would risk it, for the prospect of soon getting well again was pleasant enough to make up for it. So the small boy got two large cigars. Exactly how and where he got them I never knew. But I think some of the older boys gave them to him. At all events he felt very proud when he got them, and marched off in

a happy frame of mind, because he was now going to be as big as anybody else, and quite as much of a man.

This happened nearly forty years ago, which to some of my young readers may seem a long while. Yet the picture of that small boy is photographed on my mind so clearly that it cannot be rubbed out. I saw him after he had enjoyed his smoke on the sly, and unbeknown to his parents. The enjoyment was all over, and it was time for the misery to come along. The misery had come in full force, and had taken possession of the whole boy. The poor fellow was crouching behind the shelter of a large cellar-door, looking as if he wanted to escape from the sight of every other human being. At best he was not a handsome lad. He had short and bristly red hair, a low forehead, a pug nose, and one squinting eye. His face was covered with freckles; and his mouth was not of a pleasant shape. Now that he was suffering from the effects of the tobacco, every feature showed evidence of pain; and his whole expression was one of most horrible ugliness. He sat doubled up like a jack-knife, in a position of great discomfort. The frightful groans he was uttering showed the strife that was going on within him.

One of the big boys was standing near him, and telling him to be "a man, and not mind it, for it would soon be over." To the wretched sufferer this was cold comfort.

The very ugly little boy continued to writhe and groan and twist his face into ever so many uncounted shapes. To look at him, anybody would have supposed he had by this time found out all that he needed to learn about smoking, and that he would never touch tobacco again.

As for me, I had now seen and learned all I wanted to on the subject. Had every friend I had in the world come to me just then, each one offering me a lot of the choicest Havana cigars, I would not have been tempted by their generosity. It was enough for me to see that suffering little rascal writhe and look ugly, and to know that he had nobody to sympathize with him; and that, in addition to the sufferings I had seen, he would yet suffer the thrashing his father would give him on hearing of the transaction. I thought that if smokers had to go through all this sorry experience in order to learn to smoke, they might do so, if it made them happy; but I wanted none of it. All the enjoyment to be derived by a boy from making a chimney of himself for the puffing out of ill-smelling smoke, would never pay for going through what that ugly boy was enduring.

However manly it might seem to strut around with a cigar, and puff it like a man puffs, and hold it between thumb and finger as a man holds it, and spit as a man spits, that small boy looked anything but manly, and there was nothing in his appearance that looked like leading to manliness.

There were a good many reasons why I never learned to use tobacco, but the experience of this awful boy was one which made the most marked impression on me. Whenever I have been tempted to smoke, the image of that suffering little wretch has come up in my mind so vividly as to discourage me from the attempt. If my first cigar will make me look as he did, and feel as he felt, I will never, never smoke it.

And somebody may ask about the boy. Did he ever smoke again, or was that first smoke enough for him? He got over his evil feelings, and learned to smoke and be "manly" like the other boys. He became a clergyman. I met him a few years ago at a railway-station. He was in a crowd at the ticket-office, and was selfishly puffing his smoke in other people's faces, without asking them whether

they liked it or not. The picture of his first smoke came at once to me, and I seemed to see him in all his youthful ugliness. He was a slave to the power of the weed that had at first so badly nauseated him.

The Daisy.

Not worlds on worlds, in phalanx deep,
Need we to prove a God is here;
The daisy fresh from winter's sleep,
Tells of his hand in lines as clear.

For who but he, who arched the skies,
And pours the day-spring's living flood,
Who works and dwells in mysteries,
Could rear the daisy's purple bud?

Mould its green cup, its wiry stem,
Its fringed border nicely spun,
And cut the gold-embossed gem
That sets in silver gleams within?

And fling it, unrestrained and free,
O'er hill, and dale, and desert sod,
That man, where'er he walks, may see
In every step the stamp of God?

A BRIGHT BIRD.

He was an English starling, and was owned by a barber. A starling can be taught to speak, and to speak very well, too. This one had been taught to answer certain questions, so that a dialogue like this could be carried on:

"Who are you?"

"I'm Joe."

"Where are you from?"

"From Pimlico."

"Who is your master?"

"The barber."

"What brought you here?"

"Bad company."

Now it came to pass one day that the starling escaped from his cage and flew away to enjoy his liberty. The barber was in despair. Joe was the life of the shop; many a customer came attracted by the fame of the bird, and the barber saw his receipts falling off. Then, he loved the bird, too, which had proved so apt a pupil.

But all efforts to find the stray bird were in vain. Meantime Joe had been enjoying life on his own account. A few days passed very pleasantly, and then, alas! he fell into the snare of the fowler, literally.

A man lived a few miles from the barber's home, who made the snaring of birds his business. Some of the birds he stuffed and sold. Others, again, were sold to hotels near by, to be served up in delicate tid-bits to fastidious guests.

Much to his surprise, Joe found himself one day in the fowler's net, in company with a large number of birds as frightened as himself. The fowler began drawing out the birds, one after another, and wringing their necks. Joe saw that his turn was coming, and something must be done. It was clear that the fowler would not ask questions, so Joe piped out:

"I'm Joe!"

"Hey! what's that?" cried the fowler.

"I'm Joe," repeated the bird.

"The deuce you are!" said the astonished fowler. "What brings you here?"

"Bad company," said Joe promptly.

It is needless to say Joe's neck was not wrung, and that he was soon restored to his rejoicing master the barber.

NOTHING will have more influence over you than the books you read. Then see to it that you read only good books, which will help you to grow better and truer as you grow older.