Tommy Smith's Animals

Edmund Selous

Tommy Smith's Animals

By Edmund Selous

With Minor Edits and Footnotes
By Rachel E. North

With Eight Illustrations
by G. W. Ord

Charlotte Mason Beehive
Melton Mowbray

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INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW EDITION

TOMMY SMITH'S ANIMALS, by Edmund Selous is a charming little book, first published in 1899 and subsequently reissued in a dozen or more editions for many years afterwards. It tells the story of Tommy Smith, a mischievous little boy who takes pleasure in harming the animals and birds who inhabit the countryside surrounding him. No longer content to be the object of his unkindly affections, the animals band together to teach him a lesson. Through educating the young child and showing him what magnificent creatures they are, he can no longer continue to be a menace but rather becomes their close friend and confidant. Not preachy in any way but packed with factual information about the animals, such as what they eat; where they live; how they raise their babies, and much more, this book proves to be a fun and educational way of introducing natural history to young children.

Miss Charlotte Mason, founder of the Parents' National Educational Union (P.N.E.U.), must have thought so too for she assigned this book (and its sequels) fairly frequently in the programmes set out for her youngest students in Form I.

This new edition of the estimable work is published exclusively by Charlotte Mason Beehive, and has been especially edited and arranged for use with young children in Form I of a Charlotte Mason education. It is intended to be used over the course of one academic school term, alongside one or two editions of Arabella Buckley's *Eyes and No Eyes* series.

Each lesson should exceed no more than twenty minutes once a week, including time set apart for narration.

1. Updated for Twenty-First Century students:-

Treating the text with great respect, we have occasionally made careful edits where deemed necessary, such as to correct factual errors, or to clarify information.

The edits in this book are extremely minor and do not mar the original content or intentions of this book as set out by the author in the late nineteenth century.

2. Short lessons:-

Short lessons are a key component of a Charlotte Mason education and therefore the chapters (lessons) have been arranged for completion within a twenty minute time-frame (including narration).

Some chapters have therefore been split into parts and the readings spread across more than one lesson. This is noted clearly by Roman numerals marking the text.

3. Narration Breaks:-

You will find the narrative broken up periodically by three stars marking the break in text (***). This indicates an appropriate place to pause the narrative and request a narration *if you feel it is necessary*.

For beginner narrators, young children, and new students this may be a helpful tool but you do not need to stop at any or all stopping places. It is advised that you work towards the goal of being able to complete an entire episode before calling on narration.

4. Footnotes:-

Alongside your purchase of *Tommy Smith's Animals* we highly recommend its picture-book companion, *Natural History Pictures for a Living Education: Tommy Smith's Animals*. This book, which is made up

entirely of photographs, relates directly to the animals and birds read about in your natural history lessons for this unit. It is designed to be used alongside your reading of *Tommy Smith's Animals*

To maximise its efficiency and to avoid any extra prep work by parents and teachers, footnotes are littered throughout *Tommy Smith's Animals*, indicating when a picture is available to supplement the text.

For example:

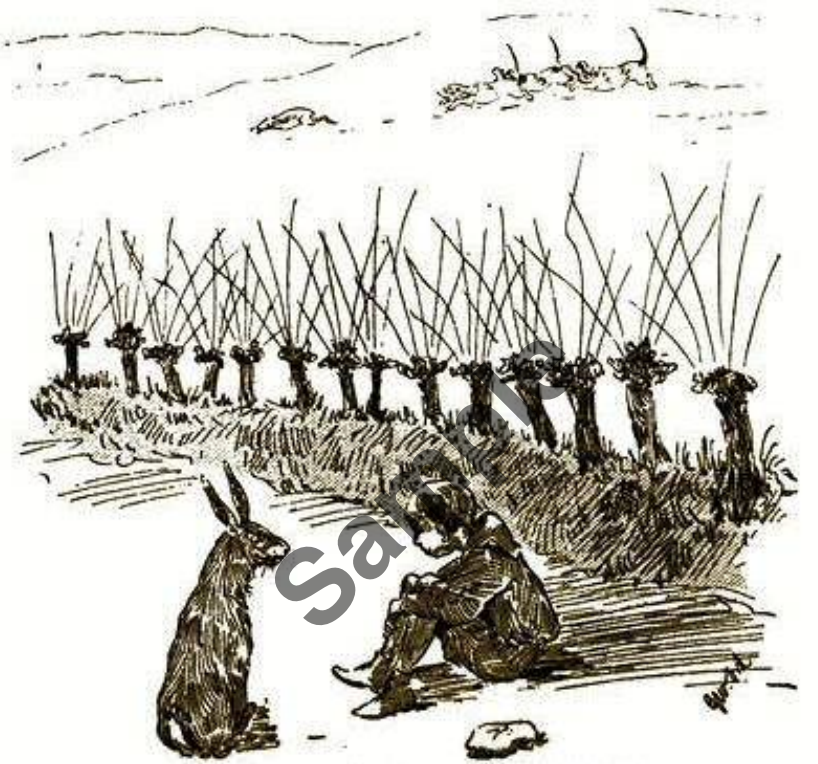
> Natural History Pictures: Tommy Smith's Animals, p. 17. No. 11.

It goes without saying that even though the footnotes are scattered throughout the text itself you should not interrupt the flow of the narrative to draw attention to a picture. It may be good practice to allow the students to view the pictures before the reading of the lesson text. This is so the students may refer to the pictures during the reading; however should you find this is distracting for the students, you may wish to introduce the pictures before or after narration instead. We don't advise allowing students to refer to the pictures during their narrations.

In addition, occasional footnotes are included to clarify information in the text as quite a lot has changed in the last century or more from when the book was first written!

We sincerely hope you find these additional edits and resources helpful, and that you will have a pleasant and engaging school year learning natural history with your students. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us through our website at charlottemasonbeehive.co.uk.

RACHEL E. NORTH,
JULY 2021



"HE MAY HAVE FOUND *ANOTHER* HARE"

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CHAPTER I.—THE MEETING

"*The owl calls a meeting, and has an idea:*
They all think it good, though it SOUNDS *rather queer.*"

THERE was once a little boy, named Tommy Smith, who was very cruel to animals, because nobody had taught him that it was wrong to be so. He would throw stones at the birds as they sat in the trees or hedges; and if he did not hit them, that was only because they were too quick for him, and flew away as soon as they saw the stone coming. But he always *meant* to hit them—yes, and to kill them too,—which made it every bit as bad as if he really had killed them. Then, if he saw a rat, he would make his dog run after it, and if the poor thing tried to escape by running down a hole, he and the dog together would dig it out, and then the dog would bite it with his sharp teeth until it was quite dead. It never seemed to occur to this boy that the poor rat had done *him* no harm, and that it might be the father or mother of some little baby rats, who would now die of hunger. Even if the rat got away, he would whip the dog for not catching it, yet the dog had done his best; for, of course, dogs must do what their masters tell them, and cannot know any better. It was just the same with hares or rabbits, squirrels, rooks, or partridges. Indeed, this boy could not see any animal playing about, and doing no harm, without trying to frighten it or to hurt it.

When the spring came, and the birds began to build their nests, and to lay their pretty eggs in them, then it is dreadful to think how cruel this Tommy Smith was. He would look about amongst the trees and bushes, and when he had found a nest, he would take all the eggs that were in it, and not leave even one for the poor mother bird to sit

on when she came back. Indeed, he would often tear down the nest too, after he had taken the eggs. Perhaps you will wonder what he did with these eggs. Well, when he had brought them home and shown them to his father and mother, who never thought of scolding him, or to his little brothers and sisters (for he was the eldest of the family), he would throw them away, and think no more about them. If he had left them in the nest, then out of each pretty little egg would have come a pretty little bird. But now, for every egg he had taken away, there was one bird less to sing in the woods in the spring and summer.

At last this boy became such a nuisance to all the animals round about, that they determined to punish him in some way or other. They thought the first thing to do was for all of them to meet together and have a good talk about it. In a wood, not far off, there was a nice open space where the ground was smooth and covered with moss. Here they all agreed to come one fine night, for they thought it would be nice and quiet then, and that nobody would disturb them, as, perhaps, they might do in the daytime.

So, as soon as the moon rose, they began to assemble, and I wish you could have been there too, to see them all come, sometimes one at a time, and sometimes two or three together.

The rat was one of the first to arrive, and then came the hare and the rabbit arm in arm, for they knew each other well, and were very good friends. The frog was late, for he had had a good way to hop from the nearest pond, where he lived, so that his cousin, the toad, who was slower, but lived nearer, got there before him. The snake had no need to make a journey at all, for he lived under a bush just on the edge of the open space. All the little birds, too, had gone to roost in the trees and bushes close by, so as to be ready in good time; and,

when the moon rose, they drew out their heads from under their wings, and were wide awake in a moment. The rook and the partridge, and other large birds, were there as well, and the squirrel sat with his tail over his head, on the branch of a small fir tree. Then there were weasels, and lizards, and hedgehogs, and slow-worms, and many other animals besides.

In fact, if you had seen them all together, you would have wondered how one little boy could have found time to plague and worry so many different creatures. But you must remember that even a very *little* boy can do a *great* deal of mischief. Perhaps there were some animals there that little Tommy Smith had not hurt, because he had not yet seen them, but these came because they knew he *would* hurt them as soon as he could; and, besides, they were angry because their friends and companions had been ill-treated by him.

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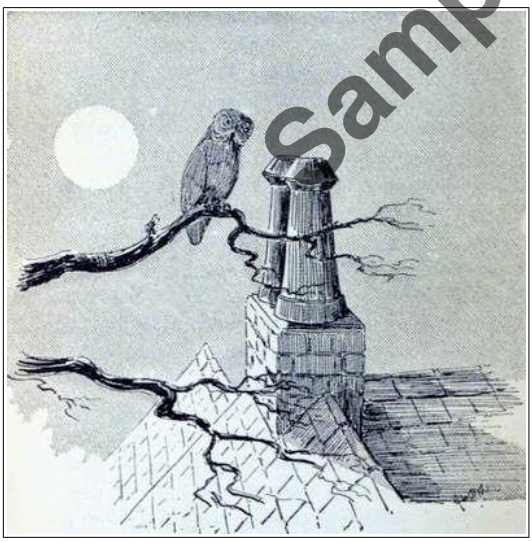

"THAT IS WHY I AM SO WISE."

At last it seemed as if there was nobody else to come, and that everything was ready. Still, they seemed waiting for something, and all at once a great owl came swooping down, and settled on a large mole-hill which was just in the middle of the open space. Now, the owl, as perhaps you know, is a

very wise bird, and, for this reason, all the other animals had chosen him to be the chief at their meeting, and to decide what was best to be done, in case they should not agree amongst themselves. He at once showed *how* wise he was, by saying that before he gave his own opinion he would hear what everybody else had to say. Then everybody began to talk at once, and there was a great hubbub, until the owl said that only one should speak at a time, and that the hare had better begin, because he was the largest of all the animals there.

So the hare stood up, and said he thought the best way to punish Tommy Smith was for every one of them to do him what harm he could. For his part, he was only a timid animal, and not at all accustomed to hurt people. Still, he had very sharp teeth, and he thought he might be able to jump as high as Tommy Smith's face and give him a good bite on the cheek or ear, and then run off so quickly that nobody could catch him. The rabbit spoke next, and said that he was just as timid as the hare, and not so strong or so swift. All *he* could do was to go on digging holes, and he hoped that some day Tommy Smith would fall into one of them. The hedgehog then got up, and said he would hide himself in one of these holes and put up his prickles for Tommy Smith to fall on. This would be sure to hurt him, and perhaps it might even put one of his eyes out. The rat thought it would be better if the hedgehog were to get into Tommy Smith's bed, so as to prick him all over when he was undressed; but the hedgehog would not agree to this, as he did not understand houses, and thought he would be sure to be caught if he went into one.

"Well, then," said the rat, "if you are afraid I will go myself, for I know the way about, and am not at all frightened. In the middle of the night, when it is quite dark, and when Tommy Smith is fast asleep,

I will creep up the stairs and into his room, and then I can run up the counterpane to the foot of his bed and bite his toes."

"Why his toes?" said the weasel. "*I* can do much better than that, and if you will only show me the way into his room, I will bite the veins of his throat, and then he will soon bleed to death."

"That would be taking too much trouble," said the adder, coming from under his bush. "You all know that *my* bite is poisonous. Well, I know where this bad boy goes out walking, so I will just hide myself somewhere near, and when he comes by I will spring out and bite his ankle. Then he will soon die."

The birds, too, had different things to suggest. Some said they would scratch Tommy Smith's face with their claws, and others that they would peck his eyes out. The frog wanted to hop down his throat and choke him, and the lizard was ready to crawl up his back and tickle him, if they thought *that* would do any good.

At length, when everyone else had spoken, the owl called for silence, and then he gave his own opinion in these words:—"I have now heard what every animal has had to say, and I have no doubt that we could easily hurt this boy very much, or perhaps even kill him, if we really tried to. But would it not be a better plan, first to see if we cannot make little Tommy Smith a better boy? Many little boys are unkind to animals because they know nothing about them, and think that they are stupid and useless. If they knew how clever we all of us really are, and what a lot of good we do, I do not think they would be unkind to us any more. I am sure that they would then have quite a friendly feeling towards us. But they cannot know this without being taught. Tommy Smith's father and mother *ought*, of course, to teach him, but as they will not do so, why should not we teach him ourselves? To do this, we shall have to speak to him in his own

language, as he does not understand ours; but that is not such a difficult matter to us animals. I myself can speak it quite well when I want to, for I often sit on the trees near old houses at night, or even on the houses themselves, and I can hear the conversations coming up through the chimneys. That is why I am so wise. So I can easily teach all of you enough of it to make *you* able to talk to a little boy. My idea, then, is to *teach* little Tommy Smith before we begin to *punish* him, and it will be quite as easy to do the one as the other. Only let the next animal that he is going to kill or throw stones at, call out to him, and tell him not to do so. This will surprise him so much that he will be sure to leave off, and then each of us can tell him something about ourselves in turn. In this way he will get such a high idea of all of us, that he will never annoy us any more, but treat us with great respect for the future."

All the other animals thought this was a very clever idea of the owl's, and they agreed to do what he said, before trying anything else. So they begged him to begin teaching them the little-boy language at once (all except the rat, for he knew it too), so that they should lose no time. This the owl was quite ready to do, and he taught them so well, and they all learnt so quickly, that when little Tommy Smith got up next morning to have his breakfast, there was hardly an animal in the whole country that was not able to talk to him.