

For the Sunday-School Advocate.

A PEEP AT THE OLDEN TIME.

FROM THE GERMAN, BY J. P. L.



"In old times it cost much more to be a Christian than it does now. I do not mean that it is very easy to be a good Christian in this age, but I mean that the ancient Christians endured many sore trials of which we now can scarcely conceive. They were not only despised, hated, slandered, and abused, but even their lives were not regarded; nay, they were often cruelly put to death for the mere amusement of the wicked heathen multitude. I propose to relate to you one instance of this cruelty.

About the year 203 a band of very pious persons in Carthage were arrested for being Christians and thrown into prison. After some time they were brought before a judge and charged with being Christians.

"It is true," they replied, "we are Christians."

They were then required to deny Christ; but they all refused to do this, and were consequently condemned to be thrown among and devoured by wild beasts.

On the morning of the day of execution they walked from the prison to the amphitheater as cheerfully and joyfully as if they were going from earth to heaven, "trembling for joy but not for fear." Out of Perpetua's eyes there beamed such a radiant light that the bystanders could not look her in the face. Felicitas, knowing that her infant child was left in good hands, was ready gladly to receive the baptism of blood.

When they came to the amphitheater the keepers wished to dress them in the manner of priests of Saturn and priestesses of Ceres, but they refused, saying:

"It is because we were not willing to violate our conscience that we are brought here to suffer; and how can we do this thing?"

Then they were led in as they came. The amphitheater was surrounded by a high wall, and above this the people sat gazing down with cruel gladness on the scene of horror. The wild beasts were let loose. First of all, Saturninus and Revocatus were destroyed by a leopard and a bear. In vain they set against Satorus a savage beast; instead of killing him he killed his keeper. In vain they sent against him a huge bear; he would not injure him. Then spoke the unharmed man to Pudens, the keeper of the prison:

"Here I am just as I believed and said I would be. I have yet suffered nothing from the wild beasts. Now believe me with your whole heart. See, I can tell the future: I am now going to be killed by a single bite of the leopard."

And immediately the leopard sprang toward him, and with a single bite so overspread him with blood that the people shouted out:

"Enough for baptism! enough for baptism!"

Then spoke he his last words to Pudens: "Farewell, and think on my words, and let what you see befall me not injure but strengthen you."

Then he took a ring from his finger, dipped it in his wound, and gave it to him as a pledge of love and a remembrancer of the blood baptism, after which he sank down in death.

Then a wild horned beast was set against the women. Perpetua was first thrown up into the air and then Felicitas. Their clothes were half torn off. They arose, and seemed to suffer more from their exposure than from their injuries. The beast did not again attack them, and they were taken to the spot where it was the custom to slay with the sword those who had escaped the beasts. But the blood-thirsty people cried out and had them brought where they could have full view of their death by the sword. Then Perpetua and Felicitas kissed

each other, in order that with this sign of peace they might finish their sufferings for Christ. After which they were pierced by the cruel sword, and their blood-washed spirits received the crown of life. And how ample was their reward! A few years and hours they bare scorn and suffering, and because they were faithful, God gave them the unutterable joys of eternal life.

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CHILDREN'S PSALM.

For the gift of thy Book we bless thee,
Our God, our Father's God!
Thou didst make our fathers mighty
By the words on its holy page:
Thou hast fixed our ark of refuge
Where it fears no spoiler's rage,
For the gift of thy Book we bless thee,
Our God, our Father's God!



IN THE FOLD.

A HYMN FOR GOOD CHILDREN.

I AM Jesus' little lamb,
Happy all day long I am;
In my tender Shepherd's guiding,
Living by his sweet providing;
He who loves me knows my name—
Tends me all my life the same.

By his staff still led about,
I may wander in and out;
Still in sweetest pastures feeding,
Never care or comfort needing:
Should I thirst or faintness know,
See the cooling waters flow!

Ah! then should I dare repine?
I am his and he is mine;
Yet a few bright days I tarry,
Then at last he'll come to carry
Me upon his bosom home—
Even so, dear Shepherd, come.

For the Sunday-School Advocate.

THE FIRST STEP DOWNWARD.

CHARLEY LAWRENCE is bright, and manly, and generous; he is prompt at school and a favorite on the play-ground, but he has taken one step on the wrong road, and I am very sorry. He was seen the other day with a cigar in his mouth.

Now I have heard persons say who ought to know that smoking creates a taste for strong drink. The tobacco dries the glands of the mouth, and those who smoke a great deal are very liable to begin to drink beer and wine, and then ardent spirits. You

will notice that intemperate men almost always use tobacco.

But even if you never go any further than to smoke cigars, you are injuring yourself very much by this habit. You do not perceive it now, but you probably will if you keep on, when it will be very hard to give it up. For this habit, as everybody knows, makes a *slave* of a man. It is harder to leave off the use of tobacco than it is to break off from intemperate drinking. You have heard how difficult it is for a drunkard to reform. It is *possible*, for some do reform; but I have known men in many instances try to give up the use of tobacco because they knew it was poison to them, and they affirmed their suffering during the attempt almost drove them crazy.

I was once acquainted with a youth who in his teens acquired the habit of chewing this disgusting weed. A young lady, who was the friend of his sister, begged him very earnestly to give up the poison. At last she induced him to promise he would take none of it until he met her again. He would not break his word, but tobacco had become his master. After a struggle of two or three days he walked the four miles which separated him from his adviser, and the moment he spoke with her, put a ready quid into his mouth!

Now, Charley Lawrence, I would not become such a *slave*! and to a vile, degrading habit which makes you disagreeable, which does you no good at all, but a great deal of harm, besides burning up a vast amount of scrip! You can leave off now without difficulty. Just throw your cigar away and promise yourself that no form of this weed called tobacco shall ever touch your lips. If the boys ask you to smoke, have the firmness and courage to say, "No."

I am acquainted with a clergyman, a talented, spiritual man, who, when a lad, was led by bad company to learn to smoke and drink brandy. When he gave himself to the Lord Jesus Christ in his young days, he abandoned all his sinful habits together. He talked and wrote against the use of tobacco with a great deal of earnestness. But once, in his maturer years, he was ill, and a physician advised him as a remedy to swallow the smoke of tobacco. He followed the prescription with temporary benefit, but he said "it was like pulling a hair from the mane of the sleeping lion." It aroused the passion for the drug which he thought was dead, and he has never since been able to leave off smoking. It was twenty years ago that he took that medicine and he is now an elderly man. Never begin, boys; that is the best way. **UNA LOCKER.**

For the Sunday-School Advocate.

MOTHER AND HOME.

I READ lately of a little girl who, while singing and gathering wild flowers in a meadow, was met by a gentleman, who asked her:

"Whose little girl are you?"

"Mother's," said she, looking as if she was very happy to think she had a mother.

"And where do you live?" inquired the gentleman.

"At home, sir," she replied with a smile that was full of sweet content.

The gentleman walked on, thinking of what the little girl had said. "Ah!" thought he, "those are two beautiful words for a child, *Home! Mother!*"

He was right. There is no place like home, no breast for a child to lean on like a mother's. What would my children do if they had neither home nor mother? How sorrowful they would be! Life would be like a long, cold, and gloomy day to them without a mother's smile to cheer it, without the brightness of their cosy home to make it glad.

Love your homes, then, my children. Love your mothers too! Ay, love them dearly, very dearly. And let your love be of that sort which shows itself in kind words, sunny smiles, and obedient deeds.

Q. Q.