

'Tis the First One that Counts.

BY S. JENNIE SMITH.

Beware of the first drink of liquor, my lad,  
As that will lead on to the rest;  
Turn away ere beginning a habit so bad,  
For that way is surest and best.  
Don't fancy you're strong, and can stop at the first,

That one to a hundred amounts.  
Refuse even a sip of this glass so accursed—  
'Tis always the first drink that counts.

Beware of the very first smoke, my boy;  
The cigar or the cigarette vile  
Will multiply tenfold your health to destroy,  
Your flesh and your blood to defile.  
Then reject at the start this poisonous weed;  
Remember your liberty's lost,  
If once you allow this foe to succeed;  
And here, too, the first step will cost.

Avoid the first act of deceit, my dear;  
When once you have turned from the truth,  
Retracing your steps is not easy, I fear—  
'Tis impossible almost, forsooth.  
Beware of beginning with falsehood to deal;  
That act good intention surmounts,  
And by it your weakness you clearly reveal,  
For 'tis always the first lie that counts.

Look out for the very first theft, my love,  
Though it seem but a trifle so small,  
Yet when judged by our Father who reigneth above,  
It's reckoned a terrible fall.  
Dishonesty grows till it brings forth the deed  
Which sorrow and ruin amounts;  
Then beware when you're planting the very first seed,  
For that is the moment that counts.

Avoid the beginning of anything wrong;  
Fight bravely to conquer the first;  
And that of itself is sufficiently strong  
To quickly lead on to the worst.  
For don't you see, darling, without number one,  
There never could be two and three,  
Or a still higher number? For sin not begun  
Can claim no existence, you see.

A CHILD'S ORY FROM CHINA.

THE following letter from China, tells its own touching story:

TSUNHUA, CHINA.

My Honorable Friends,—I give you my best bow. I am a stupid little Chinese girl. Some days I am so naughty, my grandma says I shall probably be a monkey after I die! This scares me and gives me a big pain in my heart. I am sure I was born on an unlucky day. They tell me my mother cried a great many tears because I was a girl, and my grandma and father were very cross and angry.

I go into the temple and pray the old god to make me over into a boy. Alas! It is of no use. Sometimes I pray the god to help me to be good, so I can be a boy after I die, but I cannot see that he helps me any. I still have my naughty days.

They name me Ling Te, which means "Lead along a brother." But when another baby came she was a girl, too. I heard my father say, "We are too poor to keep another girl." Mother said, "I have had such a hard time I wish I had died when I was a baby; the poor little thing had better die." She cried a great many tears. Father took the baby away and I never saw her.

After a few years, a little brother did come, and that was indeed a joyful day! I stood by and watched them tie the clothes around his little arms and legs. Day after day he laid upon the brick bed, looking toward heaven, making the back of his head so flat and nice. I brushed away the flies, and thought how proud we should all be to have him grow up and be a mandarin and wear a button on his hat, and ride a big, black, shiny mule! Of course we shall find a wife for him, and then we shall have a slave, at last, of our own. I say, however, in my heart's centre, "I will be real good to her."

Soon after this grandma brought bandages nine feet long, and I heard her say to my mother, "You must bind Ling Te's feet." Mother said, "Oh, I dread it, for she will fuss and cry and keep us awake nights." "You must surely do it," said grandma, in her stern way. "Why, how do you expect to get a mother-in-law for her if her feet are not bound?"

This scared me, for I have heard some girls say it is terrible to have a mother-in-

law. I ran away. I had to come home at night. Grandma was angry and said, "If you run away again I will send the foreign devils after you; they will dig out your eyes and your heart, and take off your skin, and take you off to America, and after you die you will be a donkey for them to ride." This scared me, of course, and she began to turn my toes under and wind the long bandages around my feet.

Tighter and tighter she drew them, and when I could not bear it and began to struggle and scream and kick, she called my father and mother to hold me. I could not sleep that night for the pain. I can never tell how my feet ached; after a few days they were so sore and lame I could not walk. Once my mother said, real soft and sweet, "Poor child," and that seemed to make me feel a little better.

Now my feet are dead and do not ache so bad, and I can walk on my heels pretty well.

I used to see my grandma stitching on some fine clothes, and I said: "Grandma, who are those clothes for?"

"For me."  
"Why do you make them so fine?"  
"Because they are my grave clothes."  
"Why! Are you going to die?"  
"Yes."  
"Very soon?"  
"Who knows? Don't talk about it."  
"Why do you put in so much cotton?"  
"Because the grave is so cold." When she told me how cold folks are when they die, her old face looked so bad I could not look at her, and it made me shiver. I hope I shall not die.

One day I heard my father say, "My venerable mother is getting feeble. I must sell a donkey and buy her a coffin. I know she will feel better if she sees it all ready for her!"

The next day our little black donkey was gone, but a fine big coffin came, and was placed in the hall. When they lifted up the heavy cover I looked inside. It was painted black, and looked big enough for all of us! We looked in it a long time and said this and that, but grandma only looked once and then hobbled away. I ran after her and said: "Why, grandma, don't you like your coffin?"

She did not answer me. I heard her say: "Oh, Buddha! Oh, Buddha! it looks so black and lonesome! How can I lie there all alone?" I saw it made her afraid to think of being put in the coffin.

During the sixth moon, Wen Shan, one of our neighbor's girls, came back from the Peking school. She looked so queer to us! They had taken the bandages from her feet and she walked like a boy, and her feet were nearly as big as a boy's. I laughed at her because she had followed the foreign devils and had a girl's head and a boy's feet; but often my poor feet ached so I wished in my heart that I had a boy's feet, too.

At first we all made sport of Wen Shan because she had been off to the Mission school, but she was so gentle and kind we got ashamed to make her feel bad. One day I said, "Why don't you get angry and revile, like you used to do?"

"Because Jesus said, 'Love your enemies.'"  
"Jesus? Who is Jesus? Is he your teacher?"

Then she told me a beautiful story about her Jesus. I did not believe it, but I liked to hear it all the same. We all liked to look at her doll and the pretty things that came from America, in a box, for the school. No one in our village ever saw such pretty things. Everybody went to see her home after she trimmed it up with the bright picture cards. She called them "Christmas cards." She says Christmas is Jesus' birthday, and the nicest day in all the year. We girls wish we could have Christmas in our village! She says the verses on the cards are Bible verses, and the Bible, she says, is the book the true God has given us to help us to be good and please him, so we can go to heaven when we die.

When I told grandma, she said, "Ask Wen Shan to bring her Bible book over here and read to me, and I want to hear about her Jesus God, too."

When Wen Shan came I could see that grandma loved to hear her talk about Jesus. Wen Shan seems to love her Jesus, but we are afraid of our gods, and sometimes I think her God must be nicer than ours.

"Do you think there is a heaven for me,

too?" said grandma, and her voice shook so it made me feel very queer in my heart.

"Yes, surely there is."  
"But I am nothing but a poor, stupid old woman, and I am afraid he won't wait for me in his fine mansions," said grandma.

After this I noticed that grandma did not burn any more incense to the gods, and sometimes it seemed to me she was talking with someone I could not see.

When the cold weather came she began to cough and grow weak, and one day I heard them say: "She cannot live long." My mother bathed her and put on her fine clothes, and the priests came from the temple and beat their drums and gongs to scare away the devils that watch for the dying. Poor old grandma opened her eyes and looked so scared I could not look at her!

Mother put the brass pin in her hand and she shut her fingers around it tight.

All at once she said: "Send Ling Te to that Jesus school." Then she went off to sleep. About midnight she opened her eyes and smiled so glad! But she did not seem to see us.

"Oh, look! look!" "The door is open."  
"Oh, how beautiful!" "Yes, it is my mansion!" "So big!" "There is room for all of us—I'll go first and wait for you."

Then she folded her hands and went to sleep, and they put her in the black coffin and fastened down the cover with pegs.

I found the old brass pin on the floor; I was so sorry for grandma, until I remembered she said the gate was open, so I thought she would not need to rap.

After the funeral mother talked a great deal to me about going to the Jesus school. One day, when my father could not hear, she said: "I want to know more about Jesus. I can never read his Bible book, but you can go, my daughter, and learn, and then you can tell me."

I was very anxious to go, for the cold weather made my feet sore, and I cried every time I changed the bandages. At last my father said: "Oh well; she is nothing but a girl—let her go. I shall save rice by it." So one day I started out on the little white donkey for the Jesus school. My heart felt big and shaky, but I was glad to go.

But when my father talked to the teacher about leaving me her face grew very sad and she said, "I cannot take her; my school is full! I have already turned away seven girls to-day."

Now I am thinking all the time about those happy girls inside, while I am shut outside. I often see a hungry look on my mother's face, and she says to me, "Oh, my daughter; I did hope I was going to know about Jesus."

I don't know how to pray to Jesus—I wish I did—but every night I say, "Please, Jesus, ask your friends in America that have money, to send some over here to China—enough to make a place for the stupid child, for, oh, dear Jesus, it makes me feel so bad to be shut out."

From the small, stupid child,

WANG LING TE.

FIVE REASONS AGAINST USING TOBACCO.

BY E. P. T.

1. CHEWING, snuffing, or smoking is uncleanly. Those who are not wholly besotted confess it. "I love my pipe, but I despise myself for using it," said a man of influence. Your breath smells bad, your clothes, books, and apartments are offensive. Smokers and chewers are almost invariably spitters, and so are repulsive to all persons of cleanly habits.

2. The habit is injurious, tending to "insanity, paralysis, and cancerous affections," as an eminent surgeon shows by official statistics. One of the ablest Connecticut pastors gave up the ministry, and went to Vineland, N. J. He confessed that he could not give up tobacco. His nerves were shattered. He had no will-power left. He was warned by a physician that he must stop or die of paralysis. He had no power to stop, and in a few months expired, body and mind wrecked. Besides the narcotic effects of the poison, there is a large amount of creosote in the fumes, such as eats through the pipe of a furnace or kills the nerve of a tooth. It stupefies and poisons. It renders the voice husky. Tobacco creates a thirst for alcoholic drink. Its influence on youth and on those of sedentary habits is particularly destructive.

3. It is a costly indulgence. Government statistics have shown that three hundred and fifty millions of dollars are wasted on this vice in a year, far more than what is spent for bread! Yet every loafer, tramp, and beggar must have the poison, though he lacks the food. Millions of money have also been lost by the fires kindled by smokers, whose burning matches and flying sparks have caused fearful conflagrations and numerous fatal burnings. That the abolition of street smoking is allowed is a marvel of modern civilization.

4. It is a sin against conscience. You know it to be useless, harmful to yourself and others, and so a sin. You know that God enjoins cleanliness of body as well as purity of heart. He forbids the wicked waste of money. He forbids you to inflict a physical taint on your unborn offspring by indulgences, the immediate evils of which you may escape. Your conscience says don't do it.

5. The example is bad. I have known of a smoker who threatened to horsewhip his boy if he dared to touch tobacco. Many of those who are loudest in condemning tobacco are slaves to it, sometimes helpless. But the grace of God, which commands us to cleanse ourselves, "from all filthiness of the flesh," and to give our bodies to Christ, "a sweet-smelling sacrifice," is able to extinguish the deadly appetite. For your sake and for the sake of others whom you influence, ask God's help to abandon a habit which is uncleanly, injurious, costly, insulting to conscience, and which is harmful to others. The writer of these lines was once a smoker, but for twenty years has been happy in the freedom wherewith Christ hath made him free. Will you not enjoy this freedom?

THE LARGEST FLOWER IN THE WORLD.

In the farthest southeastern island of the Philippine group Mindanao, upon one of its mountains, Parag, in the neighbourhood of the highest peak in the island, the volcano Apo, a party of explorers found recently, at the height of 2,500 feet above the sea level, a colossal flower.

The discoverer, Dr. Alexander Schadenberg, could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw amid the low growing bushes, the immense buds of this flower, like gigantic brown cabbage heads. But he was still more astonished when he found a specimen in full bloom, a five petaled flower nearly a yard in diameter—as large as a carriage wheel in fact. This enormous blossom was borne on a sort of vine creeping on the ground. It was known by the natives who accompanied Dr. Schadenberg, who called it "bo-o."

The party had no scale by which the weight of the flower could be ascertained, but they improvised a swing scale, using their boxes and specimens as weights. Weighing these when opportunity served, it was found that a single flower weighed over twenty-two pounds.

It was impossible to transport the fresh flower, so the travellers photographed it and dried a number of its leaves by the heat of a fire. Dr. Schadenberg then sent the photographs and dried specimens to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Breslau, where the learned director immediately recognized it as a species of Rafflesia, a plant formerly discovered in Sumatra, and named after the English governor, Sir Stamford Raffles. The flower was accordingly named Rafflesia Schadenbergia.

"A LANTERN UNTO MY FEET."

A GENTLEMAN was walking one dark night along a road in the slate country. He carried with him a lighted lantern, but thought he knew the road so well that he need not use it; so he kept it under his cloak. The wind was high and blustering, and a sudden gust blew his cloak aside, and the light of the lantern flashed upon the road before him. Very mercifully it showed him that he was walking straight to the edge of a slate quarry. A few steps more, and he would have been hurled down and dashed to pieces in the pit below. He began to retrace his steps, and turned back till he came to the high road, keeping his lantern shining upon the ground.

"Thy word," says the Psalmist, "is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths;" but, alas! how many there are who possess a Bible, but do not read it, or reading, do not obey it.