

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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CHRISTIAN MARTYRS.

BY THE EDITOR.

DURING the early Christian centuries the enthusiasm for martyrdom prevailed, at times, almost like an epidemic. It was one of the most remarkable features of the ages of persecution. Notwithstanding the tortures to which they were exposed, the fiercer the tempest of heathen rage the higher and brighter burned the zeal of the Christian heroes. Age after age summoned the soldiers of Christ to the conflict whose highest reward was death. They bound persecution as a wreath about their brows, and exulted in the "glorious infamy" of suffering for their Lord. The brand of shame became the badge of highest honour. Besides the joys of heaven they won imperishable fame on earth; and the memory of a humble slave was often hailed with a glory surpassing that of Curtius or Horatius. The meanest hind was ennobled by the doom of martyrdom to the loftiest peerage of the skies. His consecration of suffering was elevated to a sacrament, and called the baptism of fire or of blood.

Burning to obtain the prize, the impetuous candidates for death often pressed with eager haste to seize the palm of victory and the martyr's crown. They trod with joy the fiery path to glory, and went as gladly to the stake as to a marriage feast. "Their fetters," says Eusebius, "seemed like the golden ornaments of a bride." They desired martyrdom more ardently than men afterward sought a bishopric. They exulted amid the keenest pangs that they were counted worthy to suffer for their divine Master. "The tyrants were armed," says St. Chrysostom, "and the martyrs naked; yet they that were naked got the victory, and they that carried arms were vanquished." Strong in the assurance of immortality, they bade defiance to the sword.

Though weak in body they seemed clothed with vicarious strength, and confident that though "counted as sheep for the slaughter," naught could separate them from the love of Christ. Wrapped in their fiery vesture and shroud of flame, they yet exulted in their glorious victory. While the leaden hail fell on the mangled frame, and the eyes filmed with the shadows of death, the spirit was embraced by the vision of the opening heaven, and above the roar of the mob fell sweetly on the inner sense the assurance of eternal life. The names of the "great army of martyrs," though forgotten by men, are written in the Book of Life. "The Lord knoweth them that are his."

There is a record traced on high,
That shall endure eternally;
The angel standing by God's throne
Treasures there each word and groan;
And not the martyr's speech alone,
But every wound is there depicted,
With every circumstance of pain—
The crimson stream, the gash inflicted—
And not a drop is shed in vain.

This spirit of martyrdom was a new prin-

ciple in society. It had no classical counterpart. Socrates and Seneca suffered with fortitude, but not with faith. The loftiest pagan philosophy faded into insignificance before the sublimity of Christian hope. This looked beyond the shadows of time and the sordid cares of earth to the grandeur of the Infinite and the Eternal. The

us, rack us, condemn us, grind us to powder," exclaims the intrepid Christian Apologist; "our numbers increase in proportion as you mow us down." The earth was drunk with the blood of the saints, but still they multiplied and grew, gloriously illustrating the perennial truth—"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."



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heroic deaths of the believers exhibited a spiritual power mightier than the primal instincts of nature, the love of wife or child, or even of life itself. Like a solemn voice falling on the dull ear of mankind, these holy examples urged the inquiry, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And that voice awakened an echo in full many a heart. The martyrs made more converts by their deaths than in their lives. "Kill

HIS FIRST OFFENCE.

On the usually frank and noble face of the boy there was a furtive, sinister expression. He replied in monosyllables to the remarks that were addressed to him, ate his breakfast with little or no appetite, and kept his eyes fixed doggedly on his plate as if fearful of encouraging the gaze of other members of the family. Yet through this real or assumed timidity a close observer might have discovered a

fixed purpose, an inflexible determination. What was the unrighteous resolve that possessed the soul of this well-raised, carefully trained, but evidently demoralized boy?

We shall see.

No sooner had he left the table than he went upstairs to his own room, then removed his shoes, slipped softly across the corridor to his father's apartment, opened a drawer in the bureau, took something from it, and slipped it into his pocket.

Then carefully retracing his way to his own room he put on his shoes, went down the back stairs on tiptoe, and a few minutes later climbed the ladder leading to the hayloft in the barn.

Pausing at the top of the ladder to look about him, and being apparently satisfied that he had not been watched or followed, he climbed stealthily across the hay until he reached a remote corner whose dim recesses were faintly illumined by the light from a window at the opposite end of the loft.

Pale with agitation, but with no faltering in the resolution written in his fiery eye and compressed lips, he took from his pocket a small glass object, fastened it against the wooden wall by means of pins stuck in above and below, and listened once more.

All was still.

Then without a quiver of remorse for the desperate deed he had resolved to omit, this 16-year-old boy took from his pocket his father's razor, stood in front of the small glass object he had fastened up against the wall, and perpetrated his first shave.—Chicago Tribune.

CUBEB CIGARETTES.

BY ORIE M. GROVER, M.D.

CUBEB is a drug, and no drug should be taken into the system by healthy persons, and cannot be without injury. Medicine is to cure disease and if a person is well they need no drug, and if sick should be very careful to take the right one.

Cubeb is sometimes prescribed as a relief to bronchial troubles, but are not, as a rule, curative. When smoked, they are subject to many of the objections made against tobacco. The minute particles of carbon are there the same as in tobacco smoke, and lodge in the mucous surfaces and produce the same irritation. Then there are the gases and other deleterious substances that result from chemical changes in burning, which are more or less poisonous.

Smoking, in itself, is not a physiological process. No animal, either human or brute, draws the breath through the mouth naturally. The nose is the breathing organ and the mouth breathing is injurious and largely to blame for much of the prevalent catarrh. I doubt cubeb smoking antidoting the desire for tobacco. In fact, many of the so-called cubeb cigarettes are mixed with tobacco and are manufactured for the purpose of creating the tobacco habit, while claiming to be harmless, which I have shown cannot be.

The lungs need all the oxygen they can