

## Erzsebet Barsony With Her Brother And Stepmother



My stepmother Janka Bauer [nee Schwartz], my brother Arpad Bauer and I are in this picture, which was taken sometime during World War I. After my real mother's death my father had just settled his situation with his second marriage, and by the time things started to get better, the bitter period started. After my father had been drafted in World War I, there was no wage-earner left to provide for us, so my mother had to work. Since we didn't have any reserves, we were left there without any income. My stepmother was a trained linen seamstress. She managed to get a job at a very distinguished downtown shop. She did a very good job as a homemaker, she sewed beautiful

things on the model of something, they were very satisfied with her, but she earned so little, that she could only maintain herself, and pay the rent. We didn't see our father; we knew that he was alive, but we had no idea about when we would see him again. We only knew that our mother was waiting for him, because she took care of all his belongings. She sometimes took them out and left them in the fresh air, so that they wouldn't become moth-eaten. She preserved jam and all kinds of bottled fruit, and we weren't allowed to touch these, because they were preserved for 'Daddy'; we didn't get much of these. My brother would sometimes pinch from them a little, and he was punished for it. Our childhood went by with us getting used to being poor. It rarely occurred that my mother organized a festive afternoon, this happened very rarely. She sent us to the candy store for two-three petits fours, and opened a jar of bottled fruit. At these occasions she locked the door, so that Grandma wouldn't find out, because she would have considered it thoughtlessness. This is how our life passed. I missed caresses the most, because I saw that another mother would give a beating to her child, if he was naughty, but soon after she would hug and kiss him. My brother and I spent a lot of time together in my childhood, because he was only allowed to go to play if he took me along. But I was really a nuisance to him. He would pick me up and run with me, because he wanted to catch up with his mates. He also only completed the four classes of elementary and four classes of middle school, and didn't learn any kind of trade afterwards, because he helped my father on the market.