

The Church Guardian

OF MONTREAL.

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"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—Eph. vi. 24.
"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3.

VOL. XIII }
No. 40. }

PUBLISHED AT ST. JOHNS, P. Q., MARCH 16. 1892.

PER YEAR
\$1.50

LENT FOR YOUNG MEN.

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William Pitt was Prime Minister of England in his twenties. The "atrocious crime" of being a young man, charged against him, he flung back in splendid disdain. In England of the eighteenth century there was some ground for the charge. For youth to rule, save in the blood royal, was indecorous, to say the least. With us now, however, youth leads and rules, admittedly, to no inconsiderable degree.

Influence entails responsibility. Let not our young men harbor in their hearts pride at being influential, and let slip out of their hearts the sobering sense of the accountability that they must be held to.

Over one class their influence, naturally, is immense. I mean over younger boys. The "kids," as they are called, with an eager readiness follow and imitate those a little older than themselves. Anybody has been much with boys of different ages knows with what almost worshipful regard the lads look up to the young men. So, alas, when young men turn their backs on church-going, and slink away from Sunday-school work and parish work, they cast off one of the most powerful of natural forces provided for the salvation of boys. And the evil gets perpetuated and sadly increased. Those boys grow to be young men. Having been deprived themselves of the influence to the right that their natural leaders should have furnished them, they are even in a worse degree fitted for their own responsible leadership. And so there ensues a deplorable starting aside as a broken bow on the part of hosts of our young. Oh, for young men to stand at their posts of leadership and to realize their responsibility! In its massed working, theirs may be esteemed the most powerful influence of earth over boys. I have always deprecated the putting of good women on vestries and in rulerships in our parishes. To me the strong argument against this practice is the fact that the natural worshipful regard of boys is for young men, and that, if leaderships be filled by women, boys will not be ready to rally around the cause.

Young men bethink you of your accountability. It is no time for reckless disregard. The immediate future is yours to make. Your soon-coming middle life shall give it sustained vigor and practical shape. The later future the boys of the now will make. And you are moulding the boys of the now. Feel you not the home-thrust of the truth—influence entails responsibility?

Indeed there is a reverence due to the boys. "Reverentia debetur pueris." And there is a reverence due from old men to young men, considering the potencies enwrapped in the latter. And, young men, members of a race whose

changing, vanishing individual forms come and go in such quick ways as to startle, if not to sadden, you, I beg you, do not hug the delusion that you can do what you like and leave undone what you like, and that it won't much matter; that you can live unto yourselves and die unto yourselves, independent of others, and unlinked to others, and that be the end of it. I am quite sure, if I can get you to think, that you will perceive that how you carry yourselves, and what you do and what you fail to do, are followed by far-reaching consequences, to others as well as to yourselves, of most tremendous importance.

Now, let me assume that, in face of this mighty influence resting on you, you desire to do what is right, and are seeking out the best ways for doing what you desire. Among the many and other ways of doing right, will you suffer me to point out this one to you—KEEP LENT.

1. Because keeping it will send mind and thought specially towards the blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It may be said we should be always thinking of Him. Granted. That is true. But, will setting special times to think of Him hinder this always thinking of Him? Do the fixed, special three meals of the day hinder the constant nourishing that we seek to provide for our bodies? Does the special setting apart of one day in seven by divine law for holy worship hinder for the other six days thoughts of God and prayer to God? Nay, rather, may not the special times be food and spur and guide and impulse to the general duty? "What is everybody's business is nobody's business." Human nature voices that maxim; human experience finds it true. Along the line of the same maxim truths and duties that have no special times given to them may quite likely find that no time is given to them.

Instinctively from the first the Church set special times for thinking of Him—Christmas, Good Friday, Easter. At the first also forty hours before Easter seem to have been set apart, compassing the time from the Crucifixion on Friday afternoon to the Resurrection on Sunday morning; and soon after the forty hours of special observance became forty days. The thought of Lent is fixed on the Lord Jesus; earnestly on His Cross and the weight of love it bore; gratefully on His tomb, opened, empty, sun-lighted; trustfully on His session at God's right hand, the pleading intercessor to our great need. In love of Him, and thought of Him and out-reaching toward him, keep Lent, therefore.

2. Because earnest meditation upon the Lord Jesus will lead you to think of God the Holy Ghost. The "Plan of Redemption" is too often erroneously regarded as consummated in the Atonement. The blessed Redeemer is thought

to have finished His work then. But He Himself said, I will send "another Comforter." "He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." "I will not leave you comfortless; I [through Him] will come to you." "Lo, I [through Him] am with you always, even unto the end of the world." A vicar of Christ is on earth, and it is He the Holy Spirit, who came down on the day of Pentecost and has not gone back again. He, for Christ, so to speak, now actively carries forward on earth the redemptive work, enlightening reason, rectifying conscience, sanctifying souls, vitalizing sacraments, energizing the Church. Keep Lent, then, in fixing and fastening earnest thought upon the Lord Jesus. But stop not with His Ascension. Consider that His vicar, the Holy Spirit, afterward descended and is personally, actively carrying forward on earth the redeeming work. Then you will always name Him "He" and never "It." Then you may draw strength and courage from the fact that He, if you do not repel Him, is near you and within you to give help, in the great need you sadly know of, against the bad and for the good.

3. Because *unworldliness* is a want of to-day. Not unworldliness that is laziness. We have quite a store of *that*. Not unworldliness that is lack of common sense. We can furnish supplies of *that*. Not unworldliness that fastens look on the joys of the future and stumbles in negligence or irritation over the duties of the present. The less of it we have the better off we are. But the unworldliness that will hold up Christ as the Master, and keep down the world as the servant. The unworldliness that will heed the Holy Spirit whispering within, as well as business and society vociferating without. The unworldliness that shrinks from sin that God sees, as well as from crime that law seizes. Unworldliness that will not put material gain ahead of spiritual growth.

Young men; business and society, with their rightful duties and demands, press you hard. The pressure may mean the choking out of thoughts and things spiritual and eternal. Welcome, then, with all your hearts a set season wherein to waive back society and to cut off some of the tyrannies of business. By keeping Lent, through such retirement and excision, you may do your own higher selves great good and you will extend a benefit to the boys who look up to you, and to business and to society who look at you more keenly than you think.

4. Because *self-denial* is a Christian virtue well worth the while of young men to learn to practice. "If any man will come after me," saith the Master, "let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." It is not alone that self-denial is the acknowledged line of preparation for future triumphs. Spartan boys,