

SOCIETIES FOR BOYS.

BY REV. M. P. HEFFERNAN.

It is an inexpressible joy to every sincere soul yearning for a spread and supremacy of truth and duty to read of the movement in favor of the organization of our boys into quasi military societies, having for their object the bringing of the boys regularly to their religious duties.

The latest news from Philadelphia brings the "glad tidings" that this movement there is headed by the Archbishop and the clergy of the diocese, and that each parish is to have its own "militia." The military feature is the best to make the boys "good soldiers of Christ;" it brings home to the boys' minds more readily their duties to God, their neighbor and themselves. The military system aids the mind by means of the systematizing influences it unconsciously introduces into the brain and its workings. In like manner it cultivates the memory and dispels absent mindedness, so common among boys. The necessity of responding promptly to every command, of watching untiringly for every order, sharpens the perceptions of those unused to intellectual activity and creates habits of attentiveness and mental appreciation. The system develops the moral faculties by the strict conception it imparts of the value of order, government, obedience and duty.

But what is of far more importance is that these military societies for our boys will keep the lads united to the Church and in touch with their pastors, faithful to their religious duties and interested in the maintenance and progress of the society by its attractive form and the encouragement it gives to all innocent games, healthful recreations and amusements.

Such a society for boys, in which the spiritual needs are supplied and the natural virtues and inclinations judiciously formed, so constituted that it can be suited to the varying circumstances of place and person and give a boy no excuse for not becoming a member of it, has long been a desideratum among Catholic organizations. For such a society, besides the deep and lasting impression it makes on a boy during his transition period from his youth to his eighteenth year—the character formation time, when those habits are formed which afterwards influence his life and conduct, has other and more tangible results, especially that it will be an abundant source of new life and vigor to the adult societies attached to the church.

However, it is not my intention to speak of the advantages of such organizations; these, I believe, are recognized by all. I wish, as one who has given the subject of Catholic young men's organizations some thought, merely to make one or two suggestions which may prevent failure in main taining a boys' organization.

The failure of many Catholic young men's societies can be traced to two sources—debts and factions. It may seem paradoxical to assert that the financial failure of these societies is due to excessive dues, but it is never theless true. In the first fervor of the organization twenty five or fifty cents a month seems very little for a young man to pay for dues, but a cool wave soon comes, many members fall behind and in a very short time the delinquencies amount to dollars, and then rather than pay such a large sum, which many can ill afford, they drop out of the society. It was an easy matter for a few rattle headed young men in the beginning to figure the amount of money that should come into the treasury each month and forthwith lead the society into heavy expenses, gorgeously furnished rooms, fine gymnasium, etc., but they forgot the members could never keep up to the high dues necessary for such luxuries, and they might have learnt from experience that such sky rocket societies are as short-lived as they are momentarily brilliant.

Now I maintain that were the dues of our young men's societies less than at present there would be fewer failures and larger memberships in these excellent organizations. Hence we would call special attention to the suggestion in the Catholic World for August last that in the society for boys the dues should be as low as possible and not more than 5 cents a month or 1 cent a week. Let me suggest that there be no regular dues at all among the boys, and in its place have a collection taken up at the monthly meetings, when each member may give according to his means or as much as he may choose to give. Compulsory taxes are always distasteful and offer a strong objection to many against joining the society. Taxes should only be levied to meet expenses, which in the militia for boys will be very light, and hence no need for a regular tax. Some people imagine that it is essential to a society, its first requisite, to levy a tax on each member, to demand a certain amount of dues once a month, and frequently the society is at a loss what to do with it. The time for expending the money in the treasury is sure to be a ripe occasion for differences, wrangling and hostilities among the members as to how they should dispose of it.

Factions are as equally destructive as excessive dues of many of our young men's societies. These spring up invariably out of the monthly business meetings, the election of officers, jealousies and the opposition to a few fellows who think "they know it all" and are intent on running the society according to their whims.

To prevent this in boys' societies I suggest that the monthly business meeting be abolished and the election of officers be taken out of the hands of

the boys. In lieu of it I propose that a number of prominent and experienced laymen of the parish be selected—say six, three appointed by the spiritual director and three elected by the boys, form a sort of executive committee, of which the spiritual director be the chairman, to transact all business, hear all complaints and appoint all the officers of the society. Besides avoiding petty squabbles among the boys, the advantage of having a number of laymen, men of business and experience, interested in the boys is inestimable. They would put the society on a firm foundation, remove a heavy burden from the shoulders of the spiritual director, and as they frequently mingle with the boys, will have more opportunities than the priest to discover the needs of the society. Moreover, the society will then be rescued from the precarious condition of dependence on the continuance in the parish of the spiritual director who happens to be a man of magnetism, holding the boys close to him by the sheer force of his own individuality. Frequently the change of director of such a society has a bad effect, for in his place a stranger may come who has little knowledge of and less liking for the work, with no experience or ability to manage such an organization. I am confident a committee of laymen would be a bulwark of defense to a society of boys and keep them steadily on their original line of operation.

Moreover, young men are prone to neglect religion more so perhaps than any other class. It is declared by competent authority that on an average only twenty-five per cent. of the young men of the United States attend church of any kind. The main object, therefore, of the society for boys will be to bring the youngsters to their religious duties once a month, and in the afternoon of that Sunday have a meeting at which an address be made by the director.

In conclusion we would respectfully urge the spiritual director to make his monthly discourse to the boys a striking feature of the society. It is a rare opportunity to be able to speak to a body of boys on the things that specially concern them. The address should touch their daily lives and tend to make them not only more practical and better instructed Catholics, but also men of equity and strong character in the business and social world.—Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times.

THOUGHTLESS CHRISTIANS.

They are Found in Every Parish—How They May be Recognized.

Attention has been called to several kinds of Christians who are listed among the undesirables. There are the "one-legged" Christians, who insist on adoring only one knee. The no made follower, who wanders into the next parish when there is a collection in his own. The modest believer who takes a position near the door and maintains it against all comers. The absent minded fellow who plants him self so regularly in your pew that you begin to think he has purchased a sitting in it from some one. The steady fast brother who imagines that the outside seat belongs to him personally and that he alone is justified in occupying it, and so on. We took the liberty of classifying them all as among those who could very well be missed from any church, but whose obnoxious presence made them everywhere distinctly visible.

We have another to add to this list. And when we think it over we are at a loss to know how we omitted any mention of him on all previous occasions. He should certainly have been placed at the head of the list. For he is the most un-Christian, the most exasperating and is certainly more condemned than any of the others. We have in mind the selfish, mean, contemptible, unfair individual who rushes into the confessional ahead of those who have been patiently awaiting their turn.

In writing we have used the masculine pronoun. We do not do this to leave the impression that the male Christians are the only offenders. They have plenty of female companions. In fact, in the present case, they far outnumber their brothers. There is a certain amount of fairness in man which makes him less liable to commit this fault. We do not know that he is deserving of any credit for this. If he had any different inclination the chances are that his comrades in his youth pounded it out of him. The gentle nature of woman deprives her of his desirable training, and perhaps accounts in this and some other respects for her indifference to the rights of others.

All difference aside, this is a serious matter and should receive the attention of any who have in the past offended. Those who have patiently waited should not be deprived of their rights. If they are, it is apt to send thoughts into their heads which have no place there at such a time. As a priest once said, the first thing a penitent should confess was what he considered the sin of having taken without permission another's place.—Advocate.

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DE VERE'S RECOLLECTIONS.

Noteworthy Incidents of the Irish Poet's Career.

The "Recollections" of the venerable Irish Catholic poet, Aubrey de Vere, have been issued in book form. The work is full of interest, treating as it does in a great measure of the intimate relations of the poet with some of the greatest men of his time, Gerald Griffin, Wordsworth, Sir William Hamilton, Sara Coleridge, Sir Henry Taylor, Tennyson, Newman and Manning.

Mr. de Vere, like every Irishman, has an eye for the humorous. In his chapter on "Old Times and New," an account of a day spent in a mail coach between Limerick and Dublin, there are many amusing touches. We quote:

A "REPEATER" "A short time before there had been a fiercely contested parliamentary election in Limerick. The repeal party had recently met many successes on those occasions; but on that one it had sustained a defeat. There had been a division among its ranks; and I remember a clergyman, I will not say of what denomination, expressing sad forebodings: 'Our candidate is a fine fellow; but when the question is as to the price of a vote I am afraid he is a trifle parsimonious.' Votes went high. Earlier a freeholder had managed to get paid twice over. He had plumped for one of the candidates, and perhaps received what he regarded as the value of one vote only, not of two. He left the court, got three front teeth drawn, had his head shaved, put on a red wig, returned so disguised that nobody recognized him, and voted for the rival candidate."

One of the travellers was "a pretty girl," with modest but arch eyes.

THE PARSON AND THE MAID.

"On the way she took out her rosary and began to say her beads. A Protestant clergyman beside her thought the opportunity a happy one for her conversion. 'What is the name of this large bead?' he said. 'A Pater Noster,' she replied. 'And what is the name of the smallest one?' 'An Ave.' 'And those priests make you say ten Aves for every one Pater! Now you see how much more they think of Mary than of her Son! What idolatry is that?' 'Well, the girl answered, 'I always thought that any one, even a parson himself, knew that one Pater was the equal of ten Aves any day.' There was another laugh, and the controversialist took to studying the signs of the weather."

NEWMAN AND MANNING.

Mr. De Vere's intimacy with the two great English Cardinals was of the closest kind. He helped Newman in his enterprise of founding the Catholic University of Ireland. He had followed Manning's path into the Catholic Church. In his journey thither he had "lay advisers as well as clerical." Carlyle was one of his dissuaders.

"I may as well mention that Carlyle was one of those who gave me the most curious form of warning. 'I have ridden over here to tell you not to do that thing. You were born free. Do not go into that hole.' I answered, 'But you used always to tell me that the Roman Catholic Church was the only Christian body that was consistent and could defend her position.' He replied, 'And I say so still. But the Church of England is much better not understanding, because her face is turned in the right direction!' I answered, 'Carlyle, I will tell you in a word what I am about. I have lived a Christian hitherto, and I intend to die one.'

His first meeting with Cardinal Manning was at Lord Danraven's in 1849. "He was ushered into the dining room some time after we had sat down, and I had a good opportunity of observing a man of whom I had heard so much. I well remember saying to myself, 'I see a word written on the forehead of that man, and that word is Sacerdos.'" Mr. de Vere indicates no wavering in that conviction. He rejects the unworthy imputation of intriguing ambition which the Cardinal's biographer was at pains to elaborate.

TWO OF THE CARDINAL'S LETTERS are printed, one on the occasion of his elevation to the archbishopate, and the other when he was created Cardinal. They certainly, Mr. De Vere rightly says, do not indicate gratified ambition. On the latter occasion the Cardinal wrote:

"I wish you were here with me. You say truly that this is a time of very mixed feeling. If I can better serve the Church, so be it! For myself, it is a restraint upon the liberty I have hitherto enjoyed. Moreover, any one who in the world's eyes rises high is thought to seek it or to love it; and that hinders his work for souls. God knows whether that has been so with me. And I will wait for the last day. . . . One thing I feel, as I said, it is like being told off to fight the persecution which from Berlin will spread wide, and for this I have a good will."

DE VERE'S LITERARY INTERESTS are of course a chief part of his life. The chapters on his poems, and how they came to be, will be read with keen satisfaction by the admirers of his serene and stately verse. Writing of "The Foray of Queen Meave" he pays a high tribute to Ireland's early poetry, and the "Red Branch Cycle. He says: 'The greatness of the early Irish poetry, and of the age that produced it, is brought home to us by its immense superiority to Ireland's medieval poetry, called "Ossianic," because it relates chiefly to Ossian. These later poems combine truth to nature with vigor and pathos, but they do not possess the breadth or the force of the epic fragments belonging to a far earlier date. They have not the

same inventive imagination or passion, nor are the characters as sharply delineated. The poetry of that first age, though very unequal, was great because the age was great."

CONSTANT PRAYER.

Some people think, or at all events act as if they thought, that prayer is a kind of spiritual luxury, a thing to practise as long as things go well and pleasantly, but to leave off when the times are dark. Others do not go as far as this, but look upon prayer as a duty to be done, a command to be obeyed, and if they grow careless about their other duties and obligations, this must share the same fate. Prayer and its necessity stand in an entirely different position. While it is perfectly true that prayer is a duty, yet the necessity of prayer is greater even than the duty of observing God's commands. To understand this you must remember the difference which exists between those things which must be done because God commands us to do them, and those things which must be done, or which we must have, because God has made them means to obtain our salvation. Perhaps the best way to make this clear is by a few examples.

Now, we all know that to tell a lie is a sin; that Almighty God has commanded us not to depart from the truth. Yet there are many persons so dull, and possessed of so little sense and intelligence, as to think that in some difficult circumstance it is right to tell a lie; for example, to save a friend from death or even from getting into small troubles. Well, suppose a man were to act in this way, thinking he was doing right. Would he commit a sin and offend God? By no means, if he did it in good faith. His ignorance would excuse him; it would not be a sin in such a case.

Take another example and a more important one. All Catholics know, owing to the advantages of their birth and education, that God has founded His holy Catholic Church, and that He preserves it in the world in order to teach His truths and to administer the sacraments which He has instituted as the means of grace and sanctification. He has commanded all men to enter this Church, and that they may be able to know that it is His Church, He has given to it certain notes of which no other body of men is in possession. But now, let us suppose that there are some men who, owing to their dullness of apprehension, their bad education, their prejudice or any other reason, are unable to see that the Catholic Church is really and in truth the Church of God; would they commit a sin on account of the mere fact that they do not do that which they did not know they are bound to do? By no means.

Ignorance in this case also excuses. It brings with it many disadvantages and entails many evils, but it is not at all in itself. But when we come to those things which are necessary, not merely because God has commanded or forbidden them, but because they are made by Him means to the end, then the omission of such things involves more serious consequences. If a thing is a means to the end, the end can not be attained unless the means is made use of; and if we could suppose a case in which a person were, even in an unblamable ignorance of such a means, that ignorance would not excuse him; he would not, and could not, without the means, get the end.

Now, there are some things which are necessary to salvation, not merely because God has commanded them, but as means to attain it, and among these things is prayer. If we wish to be saved prayer is so necessary that even ignorance will not excuse us from it. How foolishly, then, do those people act who leave off their prayers for every little misfortune or contradiction, when our Lord bids them pray at such times.—Sacred Heart Review.

The Bishop and "Bobby" Burns.

It seems that "Bobby" Burns at the beginning of his career fell in with that good old Catholic Bishop in particular, Bishop Geddes.

The Bishop greatly admired the "excellent poet" whom he took to be a man of uncommon genius. One can guess, however, they talked of other things than poetry from Burns' letter to the Bishop, in which he says:

"As I am conscious that, wherever I am, you do me the honor to interest yourself in my welfare, it gives me pleasure to inform you that I am here at last, stationary in the serious business of life, and have now not only the retired leisure but the hearty inclination to attend to those great and important questions—What I am? Where I am? and for what am I destined." Strange to say, the Bishop's copy of Burns' with additions, the poet's writing, became the property of a gentleman in Detroit, Mich. The fate of the volume since 1865 is not mentioned.—Catholic Columbian.

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THE FLIGHT INTO WALES. Confidence in God. Towards the end of the sixth century the Archbishops of London and York, seeing all the churches which had been subject to them destroyed by the Saxons and Angles, retired with other ecclesiastics into Wales, carrying with them the sacred relics of the saints; and England relapsed into paganism. The Welsh province of Caerleon, subsequently known as St. David's, or Menevia is thus, we are told, "invested with peculiar honor, since it alone never lost its faith down to the time of the so called Reformation." For three centuries following that calamity the Welsh sees were occupied. The hierarchy was re-occupied in 1850 by the command of Pius IX., and the throne of Menevia was again filled by a successor of St. David. "By the authority of Peter's voice that See was first established in Caerleon when the martial tramp of the Roman legions resounded within its walls, and by the authority of that same voice its authority has finally merged in the newly created vicariate." There were two other churches, in addition to the metropolitan Church in ancient times, in Caerleon—the church of St. Julius, to which was attached a community of nuns, and the church of St. Aaron, which was served by an order of canons. "The lives of these two tutelar saints bear witness to the influence of the See of Peter on the Church of early Britain. The authority of that See drew them on, and, journeying over land and sea, they applied themselves to sacred studies at the foot of the apostolic throne. On their return to their native land the Diocletian persecution broke out. They were seized as adherents of the proscribed faith, and, when they had endured sundry torments, and their limbs had been torn after an unheard of manner, yielded up their souls to enjoy in the Heavenly City a reward for the sufferings which they had passed through. After St. Alban and St. Amphibalus they have been esteemed the chief of the protomartyrs of Britain."—Sacred Heart Review.

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