

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

WHY SOME CATHOLIC YOUNG MEN GO WRONG

(By Michael Zimmer, Warden Illinois State Penitentiary in Extension Magazine)

When we read the accounts in our daily papers of the crimes committed in our larger cities, and when we visit our penal institutions, we are surprised and shocked to note the overwhelming predominance of young men—yes, even of mere boys not yet out of their teens—found among the malefactors. This is a subject for serious consideration, and a great many well-meaning people are constantly endeavoring to ascertain the reason why so many of our young men go wrong.

A great many different reasons are assigned as explanations for this deplorable fact. Aside from those who try to analyze all crime by attributing it to a physical debility or a mental deficiency, overlooking entirely in their reasoning the moral weakness of our people, there are a great many social workers who, according to their own particular fad or fancy, judge pertinaciously the causes of the evil they witness and endeavor to apply the panacea. Thus we find the ardent prohibitionist places the blame on drink; the educator considers ignorance the cause of the wrong-doing of our youth; the settlement worker ascribes it to environment; the eugenicist says heredity is the cause of the wave of crime which is sweeping over the land.

No doubt these causes play great roles in the downfall of our youth, and undoubtedly are general contributing circumstances, but we also see that even where these self-same causes are missing, a great number of our boys still go astray. There seems to be another evil which lies at the root of all these, and that is the fact that our boys are inadequately prepared primarily to take up the strenuous battle of life. They have been neglected during the formative period, during the impressionable years of adolescence, and when they really begin to lay the foundation of their future career. A boy's education is not completed by the time he generally leaves school, because it is just then, more than ever, that he needs careful, loving guardianship and instruction. When he places the quiet havens of the school and home behind him, when he goes out into the world to win his own way, he must do this alone. His emancipation from the restrictions of the schoolroom brings him then a new liberty, and unless he is taught how to use it, it may very easily, and in a great many cases does, become confused in his mind and gradually develops into license. It is then that he enters the breakers, then that the battle begins. He encounters new dangers, he experiences new temptations. This is truly the critical period of his life when he needs a strong and watchful guide to lead him safely past the dangerous reefs that threaten his faith and morals.

Up to this moment of his life his mother has been able to bring him up just as she reared his little sisters, but now her loving, watchful eye detects a change in him, a change that she can not explain. She understands her little daughter thoroughly because she has experienced the same thing herself, but the boy is always a mystery to her. In these new experiences the youth is alone. Unlike his sister, who knows her mother as her natural companion and confidante, he can not approach the one who could and should advise and encourage him, because his father who has gone through the same or similar experiences is to him almost a stranger. He is filled with a sort of reverential awe of the head of the house. His father has fallen into the habit of referring to all questions concerning his young heir to the mother. He has never endeavored to gain the confidence of his son, and now when the time arrives that he could give the boy the benefit of his own often dearly bought experience, he discovers that they fail to understand each other.

It is true that parents, pastors and teachers have admonished, warned and threatened. But in the first flush of his new activity he imagines that they are behind the times, that things have changed. Hitherto, in the clean years of his life, he had looked up to his father in reverent awe, he had worshipped him as his hero, but always from a distance. The father on his part had not realized that his son was rapidly growing up; he had accustomed himself to think of his boy as an innocent child, and by the time he comes to realize the truth it is often too late, for he discovers that the boy has outgrown him.

The fathers of our day are practically strangers to their sons. They have become engrossed in the struggle to support their families, and the added burden of showing a lively interest in all that interests their sons seems too much for them to bear. And yet, if they did but realize the importance of this personal guidance, they would not hesitate, in a majority of cases, at least, to take up this burden, and their reward would be great and gratifying to see the readiness with which their sons would listen to the words of experience and advice given; provided always that this advice and admonition were reinforced by a good example.

When the boy enters his new life he is surprised to note how different are the practices of his associates from the principles he learned in school. There he was taught to be truthful and honest, he had been imbued with a love and respect for purity and virtue. And now, in this new world about him, he learns from the conversation and example of his fellow workers—yes, even his employers—that in order to be considered a man, he must be able to join in the whirl of pleasure about him, he must be able to relate his experiences. He is told that the Commandments were written for women and children, that in order to be the equal of his business associates he must lay aside those old-fashioned ideas and take a different view of life. He is led to believe that the little deceptions and acts that he had been taught to think were dishonest, and which he witnesses in his daily dealings with the men about him, are evidences of shrewdness and business acumen, that to be strictly honest and truthful in every-day business is unprofitable, and he is thus in danger of being gradually led away from his standards of morality. He comes to acquire the vices of men, vices which they consider accomplishments. As he is led deeper along the path which leads to drinking, gambling, etc., he finds that it is impossible for him to earn honestly sufficient to keep abreast of those with whom he is associated. At this crisis the tempter approaches him—he wavers—slips—falls is apprehended in due course—and finally embarks upon his downward course.

If this boy had had the assistance of one in whom he could have confided with candor and entire frankness, how different would have been his story! The priest and teacher may preach and teach the correct principles, but it is for our parents to show by their lives how these principles must be put into practice. If we would save our boys, the fathers must realize their sacred obligation to walk side by side with their sons, shoulder to shoulder, and point out unerringly the pitfalls they may encounter in their path of life.

This seems to me to be one of the crying needs of our day—more companionship and cordial, hearty good fellowship between father and son, which, in my opinion, will keep many a young man from going wrong.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE WHITE LILY

By Isabel Burke, Cork, Ireland, in The Columbian

He lay on a miserable bed of straw, his young life ebbing pitifully away. Poor little Michael, he had been ailing on and off as long as ever he could remember and he was not yet twelve years old. Alas! the seeds of consumption were firmly rooted in his frail body, it was now but a matter of months. The only one belonging to him in the world, his sister, Nellie, to whom his dying mother gave him in charge when he was yet a tiny lad, worked hard in a factory to support them both. She even took in needlework at night, so that she might be able to procure a few delicacies for her sick brother. The ladies of St. Vincent de Paul visited him and brought pretty flowers and delicious jellies. Sometimes they told him of a beautiful Lady, the Mother of Jesus, who watched over little children from her heavenly home, especially good children who prayed daily to her. One kind lady taught him the prayer of St. Gertrude and told him that the Blessed Virgin is piously believed to appear at the hour of death to those who recite it daily. From that moment Michael never let a day pass without reciting fervently this beautiful prayer.

"Nellie," said he one morning to his sister, "perhaps Our Blessed Lady will come to me when I am dying. That would be lovely, she would surely bring me to heaven."

With tears in her eyes Nellie kissed the hot little forehead. "Ah!" she thought, "what a sweet little life fading from this sad earth. How lonely I will be when God calls him!" The last days of August were coming to a close. It was hot and sultry the sun was fast sinking in the west. Michael, looking through the bed room window could see the Church of the Sacred Heart where he had made his First Communion and confirmation. He remembered, how when he was a very small boy coming from school he would go in to kneel before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. He often wondered how God could remain in that lonely tabernacle day after day. His love for man kept him there, so the good priest, Father Pat, told him. Ah! he was happy enough then, before this cruel cough came to wear him out. Many a time Nellie thought that he would pass away in one of those tiring fits of coughing. Poor, patient little heart. The angels watching over him smiled for they knew that the Divine Master would soon call him from this world of pain and suffering.

One evening later, when Nellie returned from her daily work, she found him sitting up in bed, holding a lovely white lily in a pot. "Look, Nellie," he said, "at what the kind lady brought me. Isn't it beautiful? You must water it every day so that it shall not wither." Nellie placed it on the window-sill near his bed, so that he could feast his eyes on it. How happy it made him during those weary hours of pain, this glorious blossom, emblem of purity. He

talked to it as though it were a human being. It knew all his secrets, his troubles, his hopes—the sorrows of a lonely, suffering child-life.

September was on the wane, the evenings were growing shorter. The little room seemed so dull in the gloaming. The lily, like some majestic taper, was the one bright spot around. Michael gazed on it lovingly. Suddenly an attack of coughing shook his weak frame, he was gasping and battled fiercely for his breath. The beautiful prayer of St. Gertrude rose to his lips. "Holy Mary," he prayed inwardly "give me breath and strength to pray." Soon he got ease, and as he murmured the prayer of St. Gertrude, a bright halo of light stood over the lily. Amazed, he looked at the flower, somehow the light seemed to envelop it so that he could only see it as through a mist. From the heart of the lily something was rising, so dazzling that he could scarcely look at it. As it gradually developed he recognized the face of Our Blessed Lady. She had a crown of gold on her head and was looking at him with such a loving smile. Over her head were written, in letters of gold: "Behold! the pure white lily of the bright and peaceful Trinity." His own lily had disappeared, but God's pure Lily stood in its place. He lay awe-struck, entranced, feasting on the glorious vision before him. Nellie came in, and seeing him so still said: "Michael, darling, what is the matter?" Getting no answer, she got frightened and ran to the presbytery close by for Father Pat. When she returned and had lighted the lamp, the good priest looked at Michael. "He is not dead, Nellie," he said, "but he is exhausted after one of those terrible fits of coughing." As he spoke, Michael murmured: "Oh, where is she, my beautiful white lily?" Then seeing the priest he said excitedly: "Father, Our Blessed Lady was here, she looked at me with such a loving smile and was calling me. Hear my confession now and give me the last Sacrament, so that I may meet her pure and spotless with Jesus on my breast."

"That night he slept so peacefully that Nellie thought he was better. When the first shades of dawn appeared on the horizon, to her amazement, he got out of bed and with an almost supernatural effort lifted the lily on to his bed. "Nellie," he said, "Our Lady is calling me, look, don't you see her there, and the angels all around her? Nellie, kiss me, put your arms around my neck."

With tears streaming down her cheeks, she kissed the dear little pinched face now beautiful with the light of heaven reflected on it. "Hold my hand, Nellie, until Our Lady comes, I will pray for you in heaven. Don't cry. I see her now. Good-by, darling sister." As he uttered those words his pure soul passed into God's keeping.

An angel-like form lay on the little straw bed. A glorious smile adorned those waxen features. On the cold, still breast lay the lily he had loved so well. "Nellie," said Father Pat, "do not weep; he is happy and at rest. Behold the efficacy of the beautiful prayer of St. Gertrude. Our Blessed Lady came to him and bore his sweet soul to Paradise, there to dwell forever with the pure White Lily of the bright and ever-peaceful Trinity."

CHOOSING A SCHOOL

AN AUTHORITY SPEAKS

The school time is now at hand. In many of the cities of the country, perhaps in the majority, lessons have already been resumed. The children have returned to their classes for a half day at least. The parents have made their decision as to the education of their little ones. The hierarchy and the vast majority of the clergy would welcome eagerly the wider spread of the lay apostolate. It means for the work to be more thoroughly organized; for those who are fitted for it by natural gifts and by training to have it placed before them as a job worthy of a red blooded Catholic man's best efforts; and for those who are deterred from it by circumstances or lack of aptitude to view it with sympathy.

The man who can and will manage a boys' club, or serve at Mass, or teach a class in Christian Doctrine or Bible History in a parish where there is no school or prepare children for first Communion or confirmation, under the pastor's direction should not be regarded by his Catholic neighbors as a nonentity or a merely coddle. He should be accepted as a legitimate part of the Church's everyday working system. Moreover, he should be the rule, not the exception.—New World

THE LAY APOSTOLATE

It is a healthful sign of the times, so far as Catholics are concerned, that the press, the pulpit and the platform are becoming more and more devoted to the discussion of the lay apostolate. In our great body of educated Catholic laymen there is resident a dynamic force that will never be known or appreciated until it is freely brought into play. We are still, in some quarters, held captive by prejudice; are puzzled, even resentful, over the entrance of the laity into fields where we have hitherto supposed the clergy alone might go. A lecturer for the Knights of Columbus tells how he addressed a mixed crowd one evening last winter on a few of the most obvious and easily understood phases of Catholic life. After the meeting an officer of the local council said to him: "I never hear one of you men speak that I do not think you should be studying in the Seminary." "That's a fallacy," objected the lecturer. "If I were attending the Seminary, or had graduated from it, you wouldn't listen to more than a quarter of what I have to say. If my words have any value at all, it is because they are spoken by a layman to his fellow-laymen."

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DR. CADMAN'S BROADMINDEDNESS

Reports from the Mexican border and particularly from the 3rd Regiment of Brooklyn re- interestingly writes Valerian in the Brooklyn Tablet. The Rev. Parker Cadman, a Congregational minister, is the regimental chaplain, and the Catholic soldier boys tell us that he goes around personally amongst them, saying, "if you are a Catholic go to Mass. If you can't go to Mass at least read the prayers at Mass out of your prayer book, and if you haven't one at least say your beads." No wonder that this broadminded minister is well liked by his soldier boys. His example is refreshing. He is so different from the rank and file of ministers who are so anxious to proselytize amongst the "Papists."

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Granny's Visits No. 2
Granny Visits the Newly-Weds
"Why, Granny! How are you? Goodness me, I am glad to see you; I am in such trouble. I tried to bake last night but everything turned out wrong. Then Billy came home tired and hungry and I had nothing nice baked for him. You are just in time to help me, and we'll make Billy feel good at dinner tonight."
"Surely, dear, I will do anything I can," said Granny. "Now first of all you must phone for a bag of Hunt's Diamond Flour."
"What's that! You've never used Hunt's? Well, no wonder your baking was a failure."
That afternoon when Billy came home the odors of the baking reached him and his face fairly beamed. He went straight off to the kitchen and kissed his wife.
"Something smells mighty good, Honey—you must have had better luck today. You bet, give me homemade stuff every time—I love it—and besides it knocks the bottom from the high cost of living."
"Billy," she answered smiling, "Granny was here and located the trouble. I was not using the right flour. Granny has always used
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