

ALTAR BOY, THEN PRIEST.

A Development That is not at all Rare in Occurrence.

The childhood shows the man
As the morning shows the day.

A familiar exemplification of this early foreshadowing of a future career is afforded by that not usually insignificant if occasionally diminutive member of every Catholic parish, the altar boy. If the child is father of the man, the server of the Mass is father of the celebrant. Not that every altar boy inevitably enters the priesthood; but the priest is almost invariably a development of the altar boy. The sedate and dignified middle-aged pastor, whom the younger members of his flock never dream of associating with concrete boyhood at all, need only revisit his natal parish to be greeted by many an old resident who remembers him as a little lad serving Mass for Father John—the Lord be merciful to his soul, and who very probably reminds the quondam server of a particular occasion when he came to grief by cracking the bell, upsetting the crucifix or tumbling down the altar steps in his hurry to "change the book." Comparatively few, perhaps, are familiar with the different phases of the evolution that develops "young Mike McCarthy" into "his Reverence Father Michael."

THE GOOD BOY OF THE PARISH.

It should be premised at the outset that the typical altar boy is pre-eminently the good boy of the parish. This statement does not at all imply that he is a goody-goody little prig, with downcast eyes and a countenance preternaturally demure, or that mischievous tricks and pranks do not appeal to his sympathies with a force not always resistible. To be "on the altar" is, indeed, a distinction which every Catholic boy rightly prizes as the equivalent of an exceptionally good certificate of character, and a privilege of which misconduct would certainly deprive him, so that his office proves not only a strong deterrent from the practice of boyish vices, but a potent incentive to the cultivation of exemplary habits. An altar boy addicted to truancy, given to quarrelling, deceitfulness, indolence or the use of improper language would be an anomaly too great to prove enduring, and as a matter of fact, in the average altar boy these unlovely qualities are conspicuously wanting.

The decade and a half of years that usually intervenes between the happy day when the young Catholic first serves Mass and the incomparably happier one when he first celebrates that adorable sacrifice is divided into three distinct eras: his boyhood, spent at home; his adolescence, spent in the seminary; and his manhood, when he serves an apprenticeship of varying length before attaining the dignity of serving Mass "all by his own self."

THE FIRST STEP.

For months he is a spectator of the different ceremonies and functions rather than an active participant therein—his duties consisting mainly in wearing his little red cassock and white surplice with becoming gravity, in standing, kneeling, at least with conspicuous awkwardness; and in occasionally ringing the bell, holding the basin while the priest is washing his fingers or carrying to and from the sanctuary a candlestick considerably taller than himself.

Rapidly mastering the details of the acolyte's various movements and more gradually accomplishing the laborious task of learning by heart the Latin responses, he finally hazards the opinion that he is competent to serve Low Mass alone; and, being allowed to try, he goes through the ordeal triumphantly, and is henceforth a full-fledged altar boy. True, there may still be some drawback to his perfect happiness. For instance, his inches may be too few and his lifting power too limited to warrant his attempting to move the missal from one side to the other. There used to be, in the "old chapel" down in St. George, N. B., about a quarter of a century ago, a missal stand and missal against which the writer remembers having had, during his early days an altar boy, a distinct grievance. In the first place, the altar was a pretty high one, and he had to wait a good many months after his installation in the sanctuary before growing tall enough, even by standing on his tiptoes, to take a good hold of the stand. When that desirable consummation was at last achieved he discovered that, while by exerting all his strength, he could raise stand and book from the altar, it would be a perilous undertaking to try to carry such a load even for a dozen steps. That missal must have weighed more than Webster's International Dictionary, and whether the massive square stand was made of mahogany or ebony it seemed to have acquired the specific gravity of lead. It was a red-letter day in that altar boy's career when he carried the mighty load all around the sanctuary to demonstrate his ability thereafter to "change the book."

THE GOAL OF HIS AMBITION.

Until his fourteenth or fifteenth year there is little in the life of the future priest to distinguish it from that of the ordinary schoolboy. Apart from his habitual presence at daily Mass, his more frequent intercourse with the pastor (whom he occasionally accompanies to some country mission), his greater regularity in the reception of the sacraments, and his more punctilious attendance at school and catechism class—our altar boy is much the same as other light-hearted, fun-loving lads of his age. What he will be when he

grows up is a matter to which, in all probability, he has not given very much of even such immature consideration as is possible to his boyish mind. It is a question too far removed as yet from the domain of the practical to occasion him "anxious days and sleepless nights," or even a passing hour's care.

An unconscious actor on the principle that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," he is far more taken up with the contest for school prizes, or the prospects of his base ball nine, than with remote contingencies regarding his career in manhood. His constant association with his pastor and the frequent part he takes in all the services of the Church can hardly fail in time to suggest to him the priesthood as the goal of his ambition. The idea first comes to him in the guise of a vague day dream, a castle in the air rather than a real possible or genuine hope, and it is probably scouted as preposterous on the ground that he is not good enough to be a priest.

A COLLEGE STUDENT.

When from fourteen to sixteen years of age the altar boy usually enters upon a new phase of his development. Recognizing the more than ordinary brilliancy of his parts, his teachers and pastor advise his parents to give him the benefit of a complete course of studies; and the schoolboy becomes a college student. As knowledge and piety, according to St. Francis de Sales, are the two eyes of the perfect ecclesiastic, so talent and virtue are two requisites essential to the youth predestinated to the priestly dignity; and, in point of fact, our typical altar boy is not more surely the good boy of the parish than he is the smart boy of the school. The change from home to college is, in many respects, a revolutionary one.

Our grown-up altar boy begins the third and last stage of his development—he enters the seminary. The most important epochs in the seminarian's career are his half-yearly examination and his "call" for orders, or his receiving notice that he is to advance another grade at the Christmas or Trinity ordination. The branches of ecclesiastical science are sufficiently numerous and difficult to warrant the approach of the examination. Not until he has pored in turn over Holy Scriptures, dogmatic and moral theology, canon law, ecclesiastical history, the councils, sacred eloquence, the liturgy and rubrics, and reviewed them all with unflagging industry, can he face the ordeal without fear or apprehension. His "calls," on the contrary, are joyous events, fit subjects for the congratulations of friends and his own acts of thanksgiving. His promotion to the sub-deaconship is the real climacteric of his career, for the reception of that sacred order sets him apart from the world and its business, consecrating him for life to the service of God and his altar.

THE SUPREME MOMENT.

Deaconship follows, with fuller powers and higher privileges, and finally dawns the day of days when the long-tried aspirant receives the plenitude of Holy Orders. With impressive solemnity the ordination rite proceeds, until at length the bishop pronounces these words of tremendous import: "Receive power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Mass, as well for the living as the dead. Amen"—and our altar boy is a priest forever. It is an exaggeration to say that words are inadequate to describe the varying emotions that thrill his soul as he fully realizes the exaltedness of his office, and the incomprehensible mercy and goodness of God in endowing him therewith.

Instead of attempting an analysis of his sentiments, let us rather accompany him to his home, where, on the following Sunday, in the old familiar parish church, he for the first time offers up the unbloody sacrifice of the spotless Lamb, and let us take our leave of him as, turning to the people with right hand raised in benediction, his eyes involuntarily rest on one countenance radiant among all the throng, with the transfiguring glory of ineffable gratitude and joy. Two glances flash a message of earth's most perfect love, and surely the Seraphim might envy the ecstasy of that moment when first from the altar of his boyhood's service the new priest's blessing falls upon his mother.—Arthur Barry O'Neill, C. S. C., in *Donahoe's Magazine*.

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MEETING IN THE FOREST.

A Chapter From Conan Doyle's Thrilling Story of the Refugees.

The following extract is taken from the current installment of Dr. A. Conan Doyle's new story, "The Refugees," in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*:

THE HAIRLESS MAN.

All day they pushed on through the woodlands, walking in single file, Amos Green first, then the seaman, then the lady, and De Catinat bringing up the rear. The young woodman advanced cautiously, seeing and hearing much that was new to him, and he was continually and anxiously examining the signs of leaf and moss and twig. So all day they journeyed amid great forests, with never a hint or token of their fellow-man.

But if man were absent, there was at least no want of life. It buzzed and chirped and chattered all round them, from marsh and stream and brush-wood.

That night they slept in the woods, Amos Green lighting a dry wood fire in a thick copse where at a dozen paces it was invisible. He had shot a wild-goose, and with the remains of their biscuit, served them both for supper and for breakfast. Late in the afternoon, Amos halted suddenly in the heart of a thick grove and raised his hand to his ear.

"Listen!" he cried.
"I hear nothing," said Ephraim.
"Nor I," added De Catinat.
"Ah, but I do!" cried Adele, gleefully. "It's a bell, and at the very time of day when the bells all sound in Paris."

"You are right, madame. It is what they call the Angelus. It is a bell, yes, I hear it now!" cried De Catinat. "It was drowned by the chirping of the birds. But whence comes a bell in the heart of a Canadian forest?"

"We are near the settlements on the Richelieu. It must be the bell of the chapel in the fort."

"Fort St. Louis! Ah, then we are no great way from my friend's seignury."

"Then we may sleep there to-night, if you think that he is indeed to be trusted."

"Yes. He is a strange man, with ways of his own, but I would trust him with my life."
"Very good. We shall keep to the south of the fort, and make for his house. But something is putting up the birds over yonder. Ah! I hear the sound of steps. Crouch down here among the sunnec, until we see who it is who walks so boldly through the woods."

A moment later a man pushed his way into the open, whose appearance was so strange and so ill-suited to the spot that even Amos gazed upon him with amazement.

He was a very small man, so dark and weather-stained that he might have passed for an Indian were it not that he walked and was clad as no Indian had ever been. He wore a broad-rimmed hat, frayed at the edges, and so discolored that it was hard to say what its original tint had been. His dress was of skins rudely cut and dangling loosely from his body, and he wore the high boots of a dragoon, and tattered and stained as the rest of his raiment. On his back he bore a huge bundle of canvas, with two long sticks projecting from it, and under each a large square painting.

"He's no Injun," whispered Amos. "And he's no woodman, either. Blessed if I ever saw the match of him!"

"Seems to me to have a jury-mast rigged upon his back, and fore and main stay-sails set under each of his arms," said Captain Ephraim. "Well, he seems to have no consorts, so we may hail him without fear. They rose from their ambush, and as they did so the stranger caught sight of them. Instead of showing the uneasiness which any man might be expected to feel at suddenly finding himself in the presence of strangers in such a country he promptly altered his course and came toward them. As he crossed the glade, however, the sounds of the distant bell fell upon his ears, and he instantly whipped off his hat and sunk his head in prayer. A cry of horror rose from every one of the party, at the sight which met their eyes.

The top of the man's head was gone! Not a vestige of hair or of white skin remained, but in place of them was a dreadful, crinkled, discolored surface, with a sharp, red line running across his brow and round over his ears.

"By the eternal!" cried Amos, "the man has lost his scalp."

"My God!" said De Catinat. "Look at his hands!"

He had raised them in prayer. Two or three little stumps projecting upwards showed where the fingers had been.

"I've seen some queer figure-heads in my life, but never one like that," said Captain Ephraim.

It was indeed a most extraordinary face which confronted them as they advanced. It was that of a man who might have been of any age and of any nation, for the features were so distorted that nothing could be learned from them. One eyelid was drooping from a pucker, and flatness which showed that the ball was gone. The other, however, shot as bright and merry and kindly a glance as ever came from a chosen favorite of fortune.

His face was flecked over with peculiar brown spots, which had a most hideous appearance, and his nose had been burst and shattered by some terrific blow. And yet, in spite of this dreadful appearance, there was something

so noble in the carriage of the man, in the pose of his head, and in the expression of his distorted features, that even the blunt Puritan seaman was awed by it.

"Good-evening, my children," said the stranger, picking up his pictures again and advancing towards them. "I presume that you are from the fort."

"We are going to the manor-house of Charles de la Noue, at Ste. Marie," said De Catinat, "and we hope soon to be in a place of safety. But I grieve, sir, to see how terribly you have been mishandled."

"Ah, you have observed my little injuries, then! They know no better, poor souls! They are but mischievous children—merry-hearted, but mischievous. But I tell you, I am a man of spirit, and I will not let them push me forward, and I must even seat myself on this log and rest myself, for the rogues have blown the calves of my legs off."

"My God! Blown them off! The devil!"

"Ah, but they are not to be blamed. No, no; it would be uncharitable to blame them. They are ignorant poor folk, and the prince of darkness is behind them to urge them on. They sunk little charges of powder into my legs and then exploded them, which makes me a slower walker than ever, though I was never very brisk."

"Who are you, then, sir; and who is it who has used you so shamefully?" asked De Catinat.

"Oh, I am a very humble person. I am Ignatius Morat, of the society of Jesus. And as to the people who have used me a little roughly, if you are sent on the Iroquois mission, of course you know what to expect. I have nothing at all to complain of. Why, they have used me very much better than they did Father Jégus, Father Breboul, and a good many others whom I could mention. There were times, it is true, when I was quite hopeful of martyrdom, especially when they thought that my tonsure was too small, which was their merry way of putting it. But I suppose that I was not worthy of it—indeed, I know that I was not—so it only ended in just a little roughness."

"Where are you going, then?" asked Amos, who had listened in amazement to the man's words.

"I am going to Quebec. You see, I am such a useless person that until I have seen the Bishop I can really do no good at all."

"You mean that you will resign your missions into the Bishop's hands?" said De Catinat.

"Oh, no. That would be quite the sort of thing which I should do if I were left to myself, for it is incredible how cowardly I am. You would not think it possible that a priest of God could be so frightened as I am sometimes. The mere sight of a fire makes me shrink all into myself ever since I went through the ordeal of the lighted pine splinters, which have left all these ugly stains upon my face. But then, of course, there is the order to be thought of, and members of the order do not leave their posts for fear of causes. But it is against the rules of Holy Church that a man should perform the rites, and so his dispensation, I shall be even more useless than ever."

"What will you do then?"

"Oh, then, of course, I will go back to my flock."

"To the Iroquois?"

"That is where I am stationed."

"Amos," said De Catinat, "I have spent my life among brave men, but I think that this is the bravest that I have ever met."

"On my word," said Amos, "I have seen some good men, too, but never one that I thought was better than this."

"But you have no gun and no food. How do you live?"

"Oh, the good God has placed plenty of food in these forests for a traveler who does not eat very much. I have had wild plums and wild grapes and nuts and cranberries, and a nice little dish of tripe de mere from the rocks."

The woodman made a very face at the mention of this delicacy.

"I had as soon eat a pot of glue," said he. "But what is this which you carry on your back?"

"It is my church. Ah! I have everything here—tent, altar, surplice—everything, but I cannot venture to celebrate service without the dispensation, but there is one thing which I would have you do for me, continued the Jesuit.

"And what is that?"

It is but to remember that I have left with Father Lamberville, at Onondaga, the dictionary which I have made of the Iroquois and French languages. There, also, is my account of the copper mines of the Great Lakes, which I visited two years ago, and also an orrery, which I have made to show the northern heavens, with the stars of each month as they are seen from this meridian. If I ought were to go amiss with Father Lamberville or with me—and we do not live very long on the Iroquois mission—it would be well that someone else should profit from my work."

"I will tell my friend to-night. But what are these great pictures, Father; and why do you bear them through the wood?" He turned them over as he spoke, and the whole party gathered around them, staring in amazement.

They were very rough daubs, crudely colored and gaudy. In the first, a red man was reposing serenely upon what appeared to be a range of mountains, with a musical instrument in his hand, a crown upon his head,

and a smile upon his face. In the second, a similar man was screaming at the pitch of his lungs, while half a dozen black creatures were battering him with poles and prodding him with lances.

"It's a damned soul and a saved soul," said Father Ignatius Morat, looking at his pictures with some satisfaction. "These are clouds upon which the blessed spirit reclines, basking in all the joys of paradise. It is well done this picture, but it has had no good effect, because there are no beaver in it, and they have not, they have little reason, these poor folk, and so we have to teach them as best we can through their eyes and their foolish senses. This other is better. It has converted several squaws and more than one Indian. I shall not bring back the saved soul when I come in the spring, but I shall bring five damned souls, which will be one for each nation. We must fight Satan with such weapons as we can get, you see. And now, my children, if you must go, let me first call down a blessing upon you."

And then occurred a strange thing, for as he raised his hand to bless them, for as he raised his hand to bless them, he saw that the Protestant kness to the earth, and even old Ephraim found himself with a softened heart and a bent head listening to the half-understood words of this crippled, blinded, little stranger.

"Farewell, then," said he, when they had arisen.

And so they left him, a grotesque and yet heroic figure, staggering along through the woods with his tent, his pictures, and his mutilation. If the Church of Rome should ever be wrecked, it may come from her weakness in high places, but assuredly it will never be through the fault of her rank and file, for never upon earth have men and women spent themselves more lavishly and more splendidly than in her service. * * *

MONSIGNOR SATOLLI ON SUICIDE.

Monsignor Satolli, the apostolic legate, and who is at the head of the Catholic Church in this country, without any hesitation declared that suicide is criminal under all circumstances, says the *San Francisco Examiner*.

"Suicide is always a crime," was his response to the question. "No possible conditions can make it otherwise. There are circumstances when a man may rightly sacrifice his life, but he can do so only for two causes, the good of his country and the upholding of his religious faith, his duty to God and his country being at all times paramount. We have instances of these cases, though they may not in a strict sense be called suicide, where a man does voluntarily battle for his flag, or becomes a martyr to his principles of religion."

"Even when a man takes his own life in order to relieve his beloved family from the sufferings of poverty by endowing them with the money for which his life has been insured, the criminality of the act is in no wise mitigated; his duty to God is higher than that to his family. Life is a God-given gift, and He alone, except where the law declares it forfeited, has the right to take it. The Catholic Church doctrine on this point is clear and unalterable, and will remain so until the Almighty rescinds the commandment: 'Thou shalt not kill.' This the Church interprets to mean the murder of another or one's self."

"As many countries have no laws penalizing suicide, as did the old English laws the Church has adopted a policy which is believed to be an important deterrent to self-destruction: it does not permit the burial of the suicide in consecrated ground, as it holds that by this act he has voluntarily excommunicated himself."

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