

An Altar-boy's Christmas offering.

Vespers of the third Sunday in Advent were over, and twenty altar boys of St. Joseph's church were struggling their difficult way out of cassock and surplice, in a vestry far too dark and small for convenience. Pious people outside said sometimes: "What noisy boys! and just down from the altar, too!" But those in charge thought, even when sometimes finding fault, that perhaps the recording angel saw grounds for excuse.

Nevertheless the noise was worse than ordinary this Sunday. Christmas would come in ten days. On Friday night would be the final rehearsal for Solemn High Mass and Solemn Vespers. Who would be chosen for acolytes? Who for thurifers? Who to carry the torches?

Not a boy present but was a member of St. John Berchmans' Sodality. There was the rule, plain as words can make it:

"Let them endeavor to check, as far as they can do so prudently, all disorderly conduct in the sacristy or church."

Was nobody thinking of the rule? What a hulla-baloo there was!

"Boys!"

It was only the moderator, Stephen Clisson, last year an altar-boy like themselves. However, they all became silent, for they liked him; and, besides, his word might make things go hard with them when the longed-for decision came.

"What's all the talk about?"

"I tell you what, Steve!" spoke out a big curly-headed boy from a corner, where he was busily engaged in lacing up his shoes, after flinging his slippers into his bag, "If I don't get a torch this year, I'll leave and be done with it."