

MODESTY AND MODERNITY

By M. de R. SWANTON

IF any thing is certain in this uncertain world it is that we, and all that surrounds us, will change. Nothing remains the same; everything alters, sometimes suddenly, sometimes so slowly and imperceptibly that it is only when we look back and see the difference between the present and the past that we can realise how great a transformation has taken place.

Now, when God made this world of change in which we live He knew that it would soon become a world of chaos unless certain immutable standards were set up for our rule of conduct and guidance through life. Therefore, as we learned long ago from our Catechism, He gave His Ten Commandments to Moses, the leader of His Chosen People, on Mount Sinai in 1491, B.C.

These Ten Commandments given to us by God Himself nearly three thousand years ago, never have been and never can be superseded. They are still and will forever remain the changeless Standards of Right by which we, as Catholics, are bound to measure those fallible customs and conventions, opinions and outlooks, ideas and ideals which to so great an extent, mould and influence our daily lives.

We know that the Ten Commandments are all equally binding; but it is undeniable that the average person finds some more difficult than others. One, the Sixth, is called "*The Difficult Commandment*," from which description we may deduce that the average person finds it the most difficult of all.

It has always been difficult for all average men and women—no less difficult for some of the great Saints than for all the great sinners—but nowadays it is exceedingly difficult. In fact, without the great out-pouring of grace which has come to the world as a result of frequent Confession and Communion, the world would by now, in all probability, have been again overwhelmed in the degradation of the Roman Empire.

The other Commandments retain their full significance in the world about us today. Theft, lies or murder, as well as their lesser forms like pilfering, fibs or minor *injuries* to one's neighbour are still outside the Pale of "a decent person's" conduct. Such things are "not done" and their penalty is social ostracism. But greater and more frequent becomes the condonation extended to breaches of the Sixth Commandment by modern paganism.

The great bulwark of Purity, which it is the object of the "Difficult Commandment" to protect, is Modesty—and the fact that this Commandment is admittedly difficult, very difficult, should warn one that its bulwark is vitally important. When the bulwark is broken down the citadel is more easily overcome.

In Ireland, unlike other countries, the bulwark has only been shaken, but sufficiently shaken to cause alarm; and as Modesty is peculiarly a feminine virtue, to the women of Ireland falls the principal duty of safeguarding it. We begin from an advantageous base—we are Catholics; we love Purity (even the Catholic sinner; deep down, loves purity). But do we know what Modesty demands from us? If we don't we cannot defend Purity; and probably the deterioration in the observance of Modesty which is becoming noticeable among us is due to an ignorance of what it requires from us.

The little Catechism, which was probably the first—and unfortunately, in many cases the only—theological primer which most of us have ever read, puts the position very clearly in its answers to two questions. You remember them?

"Q. *What* else is forbidden by the Sixth Commandment? "A. All immodest looks, words and actions, and everything that is contrary to chastity.

"Q. Are immodest songs, discourses, novels, comedies and plays forbidden by the Sixth Commandment? "A. Yes; and it is sinful to join in them, to encourage them or to be present at them."

These statements are pretty clear, aren't they? But, lest there be any room for doubt, suppose we look a *few* of these words up in the dictionary.

"Immodesty" is defined thus—"unchastity, indecency, immoderation; wanting in the restraint required by decency; impropriety of manner or behaviour."

'Chastity' is defined as "moral or sexual purity."

Moral means "related to morality or morals, ethics, mode of life, general conduct as right or wrong."

These definitions are plain and easily understood, leaving little ground for uncertainty as to meaning or implication. Suppose we now consider how the practical application of these rules affects us in our daily lives as Catholic women.

KEEPING THE RULES

We all know perfectly well that if we wish to live as decent people we must keep the Commandments of God. But while fully meaning to do so in a general way, do we sometimes add a more or less sub-conscious, saving clause to the effect that though, please God, we will never break one gravely by, for example, committing murder, perjury or adultery, still, some of the lesser breaks are very hard to avoid—and then they don't really matter so much. do they? and so on ...

Quite. But you know, too, how habit grows on one. How quickly something which has been excused in theory takes practical shape; how often the half-given consent paves the way for the action itself.

For instance: a small fib isn't such a grave matter after all, one might think; still, custom grows on one so easily that a habitual fibber will be able to lie convincingly on occasion—and to the practised liar, perjury itself is by no means impossible. Take the Seventh Commandment: a person who has acquired the habit of 'pinching' small items here and there is likely enough to continue and extend her activities until there is a tremendous sensation and the law of the land steps in to put a stop to them at last. And the Sixth Commandment comes to be broken in somewhat the same way! little acts of immodesty, like trifling fibs or petty thefts, break down the moral defences which are the soul's only guard against mortal sin. The rest is easy.

You know, don't you? that under the law of the land if a person sees another about to commit a crime and says or does nothing to prevent it being committed he or she becomes what is called "an accessory before the fact" - and so guilty themselves of a crime and punishable for it. Similarly, if a person knows that *a* crime has been committed and hides the criminal or conceals the evidence he or she becomes "an accessory after the fact" and punishable by law even though that person may be otherwise quite unconnected with the crime.

Well, should not much the same idea operate with regard to the Ten Commandments, the most important laws of all? Not only should we spend our lives in trying to keep them ourselves but we should also do our best to help others to keep them and to prevent them from breaking them. We have no right to shrug our shoulders and ignore or condone the breaking of any commandment by another, still less to be the cause of their doing so.

Now, the future adulteress—appalling word, but why not call a spade a spade?—starts in much the same way as the fibber and the pilferer, and, like the "accessory before the fact," we have no right to ignore or condone those first minor acts of immodesty of her's, well knowing, as we do, where they will lead. Wouldn't it have been kinder to pull up the light-fingered girl when she pinched her first trifle, than to let her think she got away with it *successfully*, and so encourage her to continue until it took a term in gaol—and social ruin—to cure her, perhaps? The bad book, the indecent frock, the salacious joke, the unclean play or film—reading, wearing, telling or seeing any of these is a sin against the Sixth Commandment—and knowing where they lead, should not every decent Catholic join in the effort to prevent them being committed or else be prepared to shoulder both the responsibility and punishment due for the later disastrous career of the offender?

To look at the thing from another point of view: we all admit, probably, the truth of the old saying "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." Undoubtedly, we are generally likely to be less severe upon the peccadilloes to which we are prone ourselves: but the reverse also holds good, and if we have suffered from the effects of another's wrong-doing, we can see justice with a great and perfect clarity.

Suppose, therefore, that the incipient liar mentioned before had made you the butt of her untruths, would it be unreasonable to assume that you would take early and effective means of silencing her dangerous tongue? Or the petty thief—imagine, if she were one of your acquaintances, and each time she came to your house you missed some trifle: a book, a handkerchief, some powder or perfumes nothing frightfully expensive or important—yet straw, showing the wind's direction, the trend of her character. Wouldn't you take mighty good care, all the same, not to leave her alone for long with your pearl necklace? And if, later on, you did

hear that she had been arrested for shoplifting, would you really be much surprised? But I fancy that long before she got to that stage she would have ceased to be welcomed at your home.

Still, you may say, the liar or the thief hurts others but the sinner against the Sixth Commandment injures nobody except herself; and, if she does not care, why should others bother about her? But does she injure no one except herself? What of the bad example she gives to everybody in her set? What of the effect of her conduct on those below her in station or of another religion, either of whom are especially likely to be influenced by her moral outlook? Does she not besmirch and belittle the fair name of Catholic womanhood and drag clown those deals of honour and decency which have always been the pride of our race? Like the rotten apple which starts decay through a whole barrel of good fruit or the mischief-maker who can set an erstwhile peaceful neighbourhood aflame, the sinner by immodesty carries evil wherever she goes. She injures not only herself but every member of her sex; and those who condone her moral lapses must accept responsibility for at least part of the immeasurable evil she spreads amongst those around her.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Not since the days of ancient Greece and the luxury of the Roman Empire before its downfall has the cult of the body reached greater heights than today, when, under the harmless title of "Physical Fitness", the youth of the world is being enrolled for the pursuit of health and beauty.

Among the nations there are today literally millions of young people who, because of this bodily health campaign, have revolutionised their lives. They have voluntarily agreed to avoid anything injurious to physical fitness and to adopt the ways and means best calculated to promote strength and vigour. Hence, they train their bodies *by* special drill and exercises; they play prescribed games; they learn to work and hold themselves, well; their food is dietically correct; they avoid excess of alcohol or tobacco; they shun dirt and darkness and they seek the sun and light.

So much care, and effort and attention paid the improvement of our mortal bodies while, in such a pitiably large proportion of cases, the immortal soul is utterly neglected.

What better form of Catholic Action could there be than that we should do for the soul what so many pagan peoples are doing for the body? We are not responsible for what happens in other lands—but we are responsible for what happens here. All over the world, whenever and where-ever the Church needed missionaries, Irish men and women have always answered the call and in every country on earth they are to be found, spreading the Faith by precept and example. Surely, the least we at home can do is to practise what they preach:

There is an opportunity today for Irish women to start a campaign of cleanliness—real cleanliness, not just the skin-deep variety—which is about the most urgently needed movement on earth. The seekers after physical beauty know well that cleanliness is the first essential condition of good looks the daily wash has become the basic law.

But an unwashed body is pleasant compared to an unclean soul: and the filthiest offences with which it can be soiled are those against the Sixth Commandment. They are those against which Nature itself revolts, and which, alone in the long catalogue of sins, are punished even in this life with loathsome diseases so that the culprit is marked among his or her fellows with a brand as clear as Cain's.

We Catholic Irish women know the rules; we now what should be done. Why not apply these rules in our daily lives and prove to the world that our Faith is real and affects our conduct? Where should we start? With the small things, the things that scarcely seem to count but which are, in reality, the most important of all because they are the necessary forerunners of all the larger issues, both good and bad. The little details of our behaviour; the way we dress, how we talk; the papers, books and magazines we read; the places we frequent; the things we do or omit. Let's run over them one by one, shall we? and see *if* we could do better in thought, word or deed.

Take dress, for example, women's dress, I mean. It is an enormous subject really, the whys and wherefores of which have filled many a thick volume. It varies with every land, clime and epoch; it is influenced by war and peace; by national as well as private adversity or prosperity; by social revolutions; by custom and convention; by

the wealth, rank and above all—by the character of the wearer.

In olden times the apparel of the different orders of society were strictly regulated by law, the lower grades being entirely prohibited from wearing materials similar to those of the nobles. You remember how, in the days of the old Roman Empire, when certain colours were reserved to the rulers, hence the "purple and fine linen" of kings; while, among the classes of people who had to wear distinctive garb, were prostitutes—who were thus set apart and identified for what they were. Sack-cloth was the penitential garment.

To jump a few centuries, a very good illustration of the effect of social revolution on dress is the difference between the exaggerated extravagance and lavish adornment of costumes worn in England during the reigns of the Stuart monarchs and the extreme sobriety of attire insisted upon by the "Roundheads" during the Commonwealth; their closely cropped heads also contrasting strongly with the flowing locks favoured up to then. Apropos of short hair, you remember too, don't you? that the fashion of cutting women's hair was inspired in France during the Revolution when the idea of wearing it "à la victime", that is, cut short at the neck as though in preparation for the guillotine, was considered very chic.

Apart from various forms of religious or academic attire we have in our own day seen many forms of dress adapted to show the political or social opinions of the wearers. National dress still, happily, lingers in many lands. In Holland, delightful pictures are presented by the typical "Dutch Girl", and the Tyrolean peasant's costume has been known to influence fashions through Europe and America. In France, the women of every Department proudly wear their distinctive cap, from the Breton headdress to the big black bow of Alsace. And our own picturesque country cloaks or the scarlet petticoat or shawl of Galway grey do much to enchant the visitor to our shores.

LOCAL CUSTOM

Kipling's well-known lines to the effect that—

"The wildest dreams of Kew are the facts of Katmandhu, "And the crimes of Clapham chaste in Martaban" are nowhere more applicable than in the realm of women's dress because custom, local and national, is one of the most potent factors governing the propriety or otherwise of feminine attire.

Think, for example, of the immensity of the gulf which separates the conventional dress of the high-caste Hindu women of India and the female inhabitants of the South Sea Islands. The Hindu woman is veiled from head to foot; and no man save her husband, ever sees her face. She views with an interest not untouched with contempt the white woman whose unveiled face and less rigid mode of conduct permits familiarities between the sexes reminiscent to a Hindu of the lower orders, the "Untouchables," whose very shadow is to them defilement. The native girl of the South Sea Islands, on the other hand is born to accept an almost complete nudity as her normal state and for her, in consequence, there is nothing wrong with the idea because the custom of her country permits it. In fact the S. S. girl who tried the effect of Hindu attire among her own people would soon be laughed, if not stoned, off the beach. But woe betide the Hindu woman who tried to dispense with the veil. She would lose caste irredeemably were she ever seen without it not to mind what would happen were she to attempt to introduce the cus-cus necklace and loin-cloth as a substitute for her own dignified and beautiful robes. Either of these extremes is wrong in these latitudes where our standards of decency bring mid-way between those opposing poles of thought, neither the veiling of the one nor the nudity of the other is correct.

The outlook of the twentieth century differs upon many points from that of the nineteenth, and not least in its ideas as to what constitutes feminine modesty. We smile, for instance, at the voluminous skirts and wasp waists of the Victorians but—we raise our brows quite critically at what we consider the excessive décolletage of her evening frocks.

We should remember, however, that she would probably laugh out loud at many of our present day fashions (we do so ourselves once their novelty has passed) while the average length of our walking skirts would simply shock her. Both cases are examples of the influence of custom and conventions.

The world surrounding the Sub-Deb. of today is a vastly different one from that which her mother knew even twenty years ago. Thanks to the wonderful development of air travel distance is now measured in terms of time.—Paris is but so many minutes from London—and Dublin but a little longer from either of these great cities. Hours now

separate the American and European continents where weeks once lay between.

The net result of all this to the modern girl is that in place of her mother's restricted holiday field she has the greater part of Europe and America from which to choose her pleasure ground. And when vacation time has passed and the holiday-makers have returned how gaily they chatter round the tea-tables of suburban villa and country house alike with descriptions of glamorous scenes or exciting adventures they enjoyed in distant lands_

But above all, the talk will be of clothes; for what lies nearer to the youthful feminine heart than news of the latest colour schemes; different materials, a subtle change of style. For that is one of the results of this rapid locomotion; fashion travels as fast as the speediest 'plane so that the novelty of the Paris or New York streets today may be seen in London or Dublin tomorrow; the styles worn at the fashionable English or American beaches are available here within days, not weeks.

SUITABILITY

And why not? So many of the fashions one sees abroad are delightful and becoming; others, perhaps, capable of being adapted to one's needs for everyday life at home. For that is really the whole point; isn't it?—adaptation—seeing and recognising new fashions as they come and making them suitable for wear in our own local surroundings.

We have learned that it pays well to put a bit of thought into the decoration of our homes so that we avoid crude contrasts or a jarring note of the wrong colour in an otherwise harmonious room. And dressing appropriately pays even better---I mean, suiting the dress not only to the occasion but to the background. The sort of thing one wears on Ladies' Days at the Horse Show has little in common with the kit in which one attended the Point-to-Point in the Spring. Still, if one does get the two mixed up one will merely be put down as the feminine counterpart of the man who combines " tails " and a black tie or brown boots and a topper.

But the Catholic girl who sun-bathes on an Irish public beach dressed like a prostitute on a third-rate foreign music hall stage offends, not merely the canons of good taste; but the revealed Law of God. She is nothing but a little female cad, by birth and upbringing an Irish Catholic; but who in her frantic efforts to attract the attention she has otherwise failed to obtain, betrays the honour of her Church, her race and her sex, by displaying as much of her naked body as she dare. Undoubtedly, she gets attention—but surely, not the kind she seeks; for if she only knew the comments about her, the "jokes" of which she is the butt, she would be both mortified and humiliated.

The Irish Catholic girl who adopts public nudism—so far as her nerve and local behavior permit--is responsible for the giving of much scandal because the standards of decency of the average frequenter of Irish resorts is definitely apart—I do not say above or below—that of people in other countries; and for every sin of immodesty of thought, word or deed, caused by her, she and she alone is responsible.

If, when she is abroad on holidays, the Irish Catholic girl feels it necessary to rival the most obvious cocotte in the neighbourhood in the indecency of her dress, that is her own affair to settle with her own conscience; because there will probably be very few onlookers sufficiently interested in her behaviour either to admire it or to condemn. But, at home, things are different. We are a great Catholic nation, with a great tradition for purity in the past—and a great determination for its continuance in the future. Our standards of decency, public morality—call it what you will—are governed by the infallible laws of God. We cannot ignore or condone breaches of these laws no matter by whom they be committed. The golden' mean, the happy medium between the public attire of the Hindu and the South Sea Island women is our standard. We need not go veiled like the one—we must not go naked like the other.

The better educated a girl is, the better her state in life; the greater, probably, the influence she wields on these others around her to depend on her, and the greater the necessity that her conduct in such matters be above reproach.

FILM FASHIONS

Some girls have a touching—alas, generally unjustified—faith in the power of a film star's attire to invest them, too, with the glamour radiated so successfully by her.

At the Pictures they watch her—a girl chosen out of thousands for her physical perfection—garbed, in consequence, as lightly as will get past the censor, and looking, they think, the ultimate syllable of nonchalant perfection. Fascinated, they gaze and illogically, they argue:—"she looks lovely dressed like that—and I should too."

Her "shorts" are decidedly shorter than theirs ... and her bathing suit—nothing much in front and less than that behind, as they say—no doubt, these scanty, two-piece rigs are a lot more, well, intriguing than the "regulation" ones most of the girls are wearing. Immodest? Indecent? Cheap? Rot! A girl must make an impression if she wants to stand out from the crowd ...

And out of their limited resources they buy, or make—or alter what they've already got—into the closest imitation they can, or dare go, to the coveted costume, ignoring the fact that in far-a-away film land endless expense and a thousand details of design and finish went to the production of that artificial vision of feminine allure; the film star. Ignoring, also, the still more unfortunate and important point, namely, that in a million to one cases the Hollywood or Elstree assayer of feminine charm would clothe them in nothing more revealing than a sack, these optimistic but misguided young women proceed to array their—undeniably—mediocre figures in the (more or less) successful copy of the costume designed to display as far as possible the beautiful body of a famous (or infamous) actress.

So girls of all sorts, the short and the stocky, the long and the lanky, the fat and the scraggy, the pigeon-chested and the knock-kneed insist on exposing their regrettable physical misfortunes to the ironic gaze of the easily amused world about them. Undoubtedly, they create an impression, but alas, scarcely the one they intended.

If only she could realise it, modesty pays the average girl better than immodesty because, apart from every other consideration, a very high degree of bodily perfection is necessary before it is safe to over-expose the usual feminine figure before eyes which today have become very critical. Whatever about the standards of decency, the standards of beauty were never higher, and, compared with that of any leading celluloid queen, the figure of the average girl is pitifully imperfect. Thick ankles, over-developed muscles, coarse skins, goose flesh, surface veins, spots and pimples, acne, blackheads, superfluous hair and a hundred other blemishes, one sees them everywhere—and how they put one off ! One is sorry, of course, for these afflicted people but common sense cannot help asking why on earth do girls display their physical drawbacks so naively when the exercise of a little judicious decoration in the shape of more clothes would completely hide their misfortunes? After viewing dozens of pairs of crude bare legs, more or less badly made-up, the sight of a pair of svelte, silk-clad ones is amazingly attractive.

There is no doubt that we are commencing to realise that girls, like salads, look best when "dressed". As a pointer in this direction it is interesting to recall that the heads of several of the leading dress-making establishments in both London and Paris have ruled against any of their mannequins being permitted to pose without stockings. Two reasons were given for this decision; one was that as a result of the modern craze for games and exercise girls legs have, in the majority of cases, become so muscular that their one-time smooth and slender contours have been lost; while the other reason was stated to be the opinion of the fashion specialists that bare legs with any form of day attire—save of course, bathing dress—presented an unfinished and an unlovely picture.

CHILDREN'S DRESS

Before leaving the subject of dress, there is one other point that ought to be mentioned and that is the astonishing carelessness of some mothers in regard to the dressing of children.

Naturally, nobody in her senses would for a moment suggest anything like a return to the absurdly ugly and unhygienic clothing inflicted on children, in the not so long ago either. But there is no reason why we should now go to the other extreme, and, in our quest for charm and chic, dress them in a way that is often little short of immodest.

It is, of course, little girls who are usually so wrongly dressed. Short, trim little skirts on them are both

pretty and practical; but when these diminutive garments are extra brief and neither knickers nor panties are worn, then they become immodest and are a grave reproach to those responsible.

How any mother can allow her small daughter to romp and play with her brothers and other youthful "boyfriends" without knickers on is incomprehensible and quite disgraceful. Yet one sees this abominable lack of the commonest kind of decency not only in the dress of kiddies playing in poor streets but in the homes of well-off people, with complacent, self-satisfied mothers in command. It cannot be a question of cost in either case because a few pence will buy either the little garments or the material necessary for them: so one can only conclude that it is the grossest kind of carelessness which should be stopped right away.

Another thing. No matter how young a child may be, he or she should never be allowed to take either a sun or sea bath in public minus a suit. At every continental hydro where "light" treatment is given, children of all ages play together in the sunshine, but, although all other clothing is, of course, discarded, knickers are invariably worn. Yet, on the beaches and streets of Catholic Ireland one sees all too frequently children most indecently or immodestly dressed—the result not of appalling poverty, but of unpardonable neglect on the part of their parents.

In the home, too, particularly in the nursery and the bathroom, a delicate sense of modesty should be inculcated in her children from their earliest infancy by every Catholic mother.

SUN-BATHING

The question of sun-bathing closely affects that of modesty now that the tanning fad of a few years back has developed into a trans-continental habit.

Each summer the medical men, who are by no means agreed as to the universal benefits which enthusiasts declare to result from sun-bathing, issue warnings regarding the danger of over-doing the exposure. And each summer, with equal regularity, we read in the newspapers of illnesses and accidents which have overtaken those who disregarded medical advice.

Doesn't Shakespeare say somewhere "Experience teaches like none other—but he doth take dreadful high wages," or words to that effect? It is a funny, fact that we must burn our fingers before we will believe that the pretty flame will hurt us. We insist on buying our experience no matter how crushing the cost. Take this question of sun-bathing, for example. If some people had their way our public parks and beaches would all be turned into nudist colonies because, although the sun's rays shine just as powerfully in private gardens or on to sun-roofs, the sun-bathing fan of certain mentality takes little interest in the game unless he or she can do it in public.

Now, the Church, no less than the medical profession—although for a different reason—is concerned about the dangers of over-doing sun-bathing. But, while we may, if we wish, disregard the advice of the doctors and stay all day in the full rays of the sun clad only in our birthday suits (and so risk getting a burn that may easily end fatally) we are not equally at liberty to ignore the commands of God. There is no objection to anybody taking extensive or even complete sun-baths provided that they are taken in private; but *public* sun-bathing must observe the standards of decency required by the Sixth Commandment, and Catholics are everywhere bound to co-operate in this most important matter.

This does not mean prudishness nor carrying things to scrupulous excess. Here, as in most other ways, the happy medium is the path to follow, the Golden Mean of St. Thomas which lies between the two extremes, the prudery of the past and the nudity—perhaps--of tomorrow.

It is the women of a country who are the arbiters of its standards of morality. What they say goes, because in such matters they lead the men. It is up to the Catholic girls and women of Ireland to see that they do not fail in their trust.

GAMES AND SPORTS

Games and sports enter more and more into the life of the average girl of today until it seems that there must be very few who do not belong to a club of one sort or another. Golf, camogie, hockey, lacrosse, lawn tennis, badminton, cycling, swimming to mention but a few popular pastimes all claim their devotees here as in other

lands.

It is not enough merely to play games, today, either. One must play them well if one does not wish to be dubbed a "rabbit"; and it goes without saying that one must play them correctly. One must learn the rules and study them until their observance becomes instinctive because failure to do so would probably be interpreted as proof that one were ignorant—or a cheat.

One must know and observe all the "rules of the game" —not forgetting those ordained by the Church. If you wish to look it up in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* you will read that one of the functions of the virtue of modesty is "to dispose to moderation in games, sports and jests--taking into consideration the circumstances of person, place and season".

Irish girls, on the whole, do not allow their enthusiasm for these forms of diversion to outrun their discretion as happened at some sports meeting in Italy under the Fascist regime when the Vatican, through the *Osservatore*, had to speak very clearly and strongly on the matter.

There was a very fine example of one girl's courage in sticking up for her principles in England some years ago. One of the semi-finalists (*as* she then was, I think) for the Davis Cup was scheduled to play in a lawn tennis match on a Sunday. Her Church—she was not a Catholic--forbade its members to play games on Sundays; and, true to her religion, this girl refused to play. There was lots of talk in the papers, with the usual sneers, ridicule, and protests, but that loyal daughter of her Church stood firm, her principles stronger than her human respect. She was a fine example of moral courage and one we should do well to follow whenever the rules of God clash with those of the club or game.

Isn't it Beverly Nichols who says he would forbid all women to play games or sports of any kind, save a little gentle sculling on some river back-water of a summer afternoon because he considers that the world holds few less pleasant sights than a woman who has just exerted herself unduly ?

Without, perhaps, going quite so far as that, it might be advisable for many girls if they were to moderate their sports activity to a degree proportionate to their strength —which is but little more than half that of a man.

In theory, a week-end spent hiking or cycling with a mixed club may be a very pleasant and healthful time, but in actual practice it is not always as good as it sounds either for soul or body. Certainly, young people cooped up in a city all the week want and need to get away from it when they are free at the week-end. Because of this, it will be all to the good when there are plenty of Catholic hostels established throughout the country. These should be at convenient distances from town and from each other; so that there will always be assured ample accommodation for large hiking or cycling parties of suitable type and at the right cost. At present these hostels are a distinct want.

LIBRARIES

One of the most notable developments of this country is the remarkable increase in the number of the reading public Libraries of all sorts, good, bad and indifferent, have sprung up on every side to cater for this vast body of new readers who can afford to borrow, if not to buy books. And the quantity of magazines published weekly and monthly has multiplied almost beyond count.

The great majority of the books in our Irish libraries are harmless, if not excellent, reading, but occasionally those of another type are to be found. For instance, not so long ago, I was stunned to find among a parcel of books I brought home from a well-known Irish library one which contained several abominable references to the Blessed Virgin. Such a volume in a public library, kept up out of the rates paid by a population so predominantly Catholic as ours, is intolerable.

Suppose you find that the book you brought home from the library is bad, filthy: don't continue to read it, and don't leave it around for others to read either, any more than you would if the poisonous article in question were some rotten foodstuff sold to you in mistake at the grocer's or the butcher's.

In the later case, you would not fail to complain to the shop about the disgraceful goods they sold you, and you would see that you get compensation or satisfaction. Do the same with the library. Complain about the disgraceful book; and see that they do not replace it on the shelves with the other volumes lest it contaminate someone less

well able to look after themselves than you. In this way you will do three good deeds in one; you will prevent that particular book from injuring any other people: and you will have struck a telling blow against pagan literature; and you will have performed a valiant Catholic action.

All that has been said regarding books, and their connection with or influence on modesty, applies with at least equal force to magazines, films or plays.

You recall the words of the little Catechism which we learned as children

"Q. Are immodest songs, discourses, novels, comedies and plays forbidden by the Sixth Commandment?"

"A. Yes; and it is sinful to join in them, to encourage them, or to be present at them."

Our bounden duty, then, is to avoid and to put down by every means in our power, anything and everything in the way of films, plays or magazines, newspapers or books of a type calculated to lead to breaches of the Sixth Commandment.

So far, we've only been thinking negatively, so to speak; on this subject of rotten reading. We have merely been considering the poisonous or semi-poisonous items that may find their way into our mental menus. What about the healthful parts of our literary diet? What of those corrective or curative additions to our mental meals, those intellectual vitamins and minerals which we must, have *to* balance the dross, to keep our ideas right and our minds attuned to a correct Catholic outlook on affairs of the day?

We get them all in the Catholic press. Nobody who can afford a daily newspaper can afford to be without at least one weekly Catholic paper. Nobody who subscribes to a weekly or monthly magazine connected with business, hobbies, fashions, fiction or world affairs generally can afford not to balance them with an equal number of Catholic magazines, most of which are so cheap that several can be bought for the price of one packet of cigarettes or one seat at the pictures.

If we do our best to keep our reading right there will not be much wrong with our ideas and opinions which are the guide-posts to our conduct.

BARGAIN COUNTERS

Don't you think that there is much truth in the saying that in this world one is mostly taken at one's own valuation? Certainly, it is hopeless to expect others to value us more highly than we value ourselves. A pound, they say, will always fetch twenty shillings, and there must definitely be something wrong with a sovereign that is offered for less. Only imperfect articles are cheap. Sub-standards and damaged goods can, of course, be sold—but not at the full price. And not, usually, if the perfect commodity be available, because who wants to buy spoiled fruit? or the shop-spoiled remnants of the bargain counter.

The most typical "bargain counters" in the country are those questionable dances which develop into "petting parties," where there is plenty of drink and no supervision. These affairs belong to no special class; and whether they take place in a city dance-hall, a village barn or a country house the results are often the same and the responsibility of the organisers is very grave indeed.

Irrespective of the social class of the majority of those present at such dances they are third-rate affairs; and no girl who does not wish to be labelled "shop-soiled" or "second-hand" should go to such places because her presence there implies failure at better class functions. It is no compliment to be asked to these "bargain-counters," but rather a warning that one's name is not as fair as it was and that one's value is dropping accordingly.

Remember, you will be taken, mostly, at your own valuation—and an inferiority complex never got anyone anywhere. Don't mark yourself "Cheap—for quick disposal." Your good name is the most precious and most easily damaged of all your possessions. It is worth guarding *at any cost*.

CATHOLIC ACTION

It is only within comparatively recent years that we have realised that it is not enough for us to be Catholics in name and belief; we must be Catholics in word and deed as well. Catholic Action must overcome Human Respect in the small, everyday affairs of life as well as in the graver issues. When deciding on a course to be followed we must take the longer view of the point at stake, viewing not just the immediate result—which may be more or less unimportant—but

the ultimate consequence to ourselves and to everyone and everything likely to be affected.

In the growing fight against paganism the Children of Mary have a special mission—the preservation of modesty as a powerful bulwark against all attacks upon the Sixth Commandment. On the day of our consecration to Mary we promised "never to do or say anything, or to permit those subject to us to do or say anything, against her honour." As Children of Mary we have no prouder heritage than our traditional love of purity and unfailing devotion to the Immaculate Conception. Mary is "our tainted nature's solitary boast"—and even God Himself had no greater gift to bestow upon His Mother than purity.

Pope Pius XI paid our country unique honour when on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress, he gave us Mary as Queen of Ireland. It was as a queen, too, that she is represented to have appeared at Knock; and it is as our queen that she claims our love and loyalty.

The Children of Mary are her special soldiers; pledged above all others to her service and defence; the personal bodyguard, as it were, of the virtue she particularly loves and typifies. Who would be a traitor to such a cause? Who would be a deserter from such an army and such a queen?

Let us ask Mary to protect us always; to keep us true to the vows of our childhood; and, when the journey is over, to bring us safely to the white Feet of Him Who said:

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."
